

# Staff Report

Presented By: Tammy Grove, Municipal Solicitor  
Meeting Date: February 9, 2026  
Subject: Annual Legal Services Summary (2025)  
Attachment(s): None

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## **Recommendation**

That Council receive the Annual Legal Services Summary report for information.

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## **Report Summary**

The purpose of this report is to provide a high-level summary of the Legal Services provided by the Municipal Solicitor in 2025.

## **Background/Analysis**

Legal Services in 2025 were dominated by Real Estate and Development-related matters, reflecting the Town's ongoing growth, subdivision activity, infrastructure needs, and land-related inquiries. The second largest category was Contract/Commercial Work, including leases, service agreements, funding agreements, and procurement-related reviews. Civil Litigation, while smaller in number, required significant attention due to ongoing court applications, insurance-related disputes and matters involving external counsel. The distribution of legal work for 2025 is summarized below:

### **1. Work Distribution and Volume**

#### **Number of Active Files**

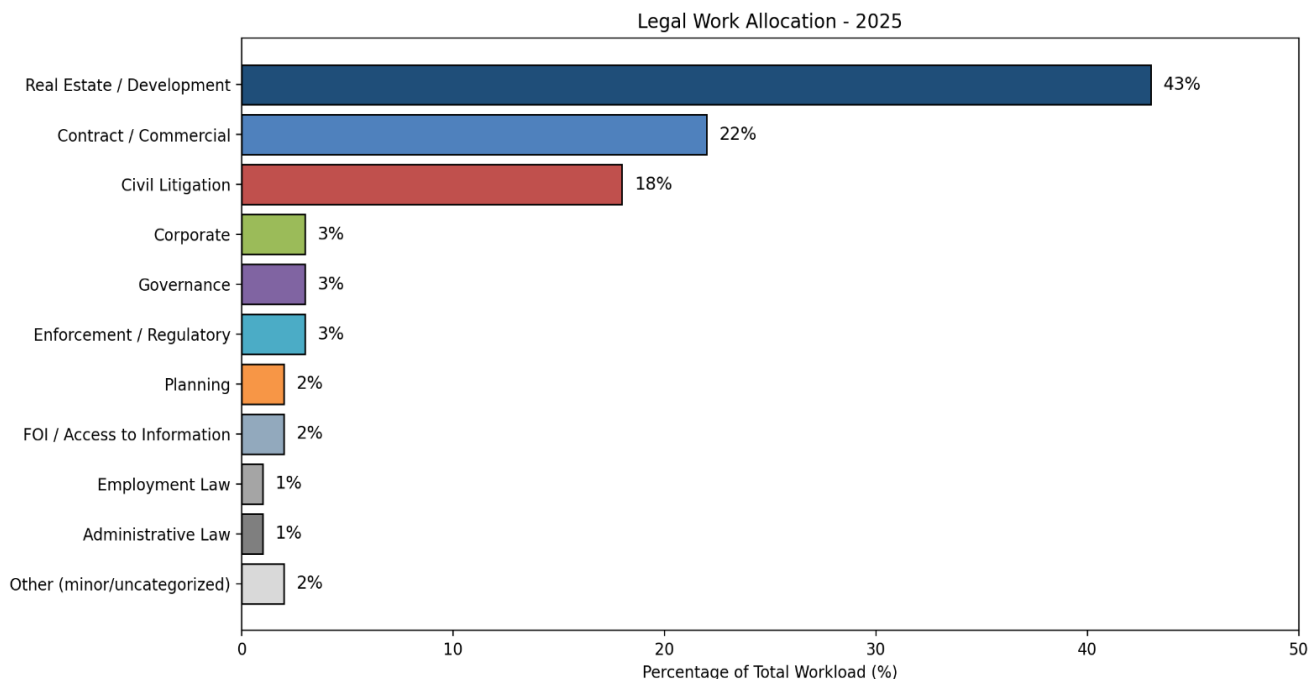
In 2025, the Municipal Solicitor handled 103 active files, with the level of service varying depending on the subject matter and work required, in addition to providing support to other Departments. Approximately 25% of the Municipal Solicitor's files were matters opened in 2024 that, due to the nature of the matter, were required to be carried forward into 2025.

Although the number of files handled has decreased slightly from 120 in 2024, the complexity of the matters has increased significantly, and the work on matters has increased dramatically i.e. multiple steps and documents. In addition to the ongoing litigation matters, there are a number of files that involve extensive engagement by the Municipal Solicitor, including ongoing

preparation of documents and engagement with third parties. This does not include those matters referred to under “Other Services” below. As a result of an increase in complexity of matters, the volume of litigation matters and the Municipal Solicitor’s capacity, it was necessary to engage external counsel to handle and/or co-counsel on some files.

### Areas of Law

The graph below identifies the areas of law that the Municipal Solicitor addresses. Please note that there may be overlaps, for example a litigation matter may also fall under real estate.



The above categories include:

- **“Real Estate / Development”** includes land acquisitions and dispositions, easements, site plans, subdivisions, heritage bylaws, title work, and land inquiries.
- **“Contract/Commercial”** includes commercial contracts, leases (i.e. Tennis Club, Arts Centre, other corporate leases), service agreements (RFQs, locate services, VON, supplier agreements), funding agreements, cost-share agreements, template and policy standardization. In 2025, 55 agreements were reviewed and/or drafted compared to 48 in 2024.
- **“Civil Litigation”** includes active litigation matters, as well as threats of potential litigation and in some cases, included working with external counsel. The subject matter included, but not limited to, slip and fall claims, MVA defenses, property disputes, bankruptcy matters, declaratory actions, etc. In 2025, the Municipal Solicitor was involved with 13 litigation files and 5 potential litigation files (18 in total).
- **“Corporate”** includes Westario, BASWR, corporate structure review/advice.
- **“Governance”** includes Strong Mayors Powers, internal processes and policies.

- **“Regulatory/Enforcement”** includes AMPs review, tree by-laws, encroachment matters, etc.
- **“Planning”** includes providing legal opinions/advice on Planning Act matters.
- **“FOI/Access to Information”** includes FOI requests and IPC matters.
- **“Employment Law”** includes providing support to the HR department on matters.
- **“Administrative Law”** includes providing support on appeal matters.

## **2. Other Services**

In addition to the services provided above for which files are opened, the Municipal Solicitor also regularly reviews matters being brought forward by staff on the Agendas for both Regular Council Meetings, as well as the Planning Meetings and provides regular input and assists from time to time with bylaw preparation, when deemed necessary. The Municipal Solicitor also provides answers to distinct questions from various internal staff from time to time for which a matter is not ‘opened’. These “other” legal services are not accounted for in Section 1.

## **3. Status of Major Initiatives**

In 2025, the annual Business Plan highlighted a focus on Lease Templates as a Major Initiative. The Lease Template was finalized and attached to an Information Report to Council on October 27, 2025.

## **4. Internal Matters**

In addition to the Lease Template initiative, the Municipal Solicitor has also been actively involved in creating other agreement templates, such as a Funding Agreement template. The intention is to continue with these initiatives to ensure efficiency and consistency across the organization.

## **5. Observations & Trends**

- a) Continued growth in Saugeen Shores impacts legal workflow: The high proportion of real estate and development files reflects sustained growth in the community.
- b) Increased focus on modernization and standardization: Work on contract templates, funding agreements, and governance indicates a strategic shift in the organization towards efficiency and risk management.
- c) Litigation remains steady: Although not the highest volume category, litigation matters consume a significant portion of time due to complexity and procedural obligations.
- d) Rising demand for FOI and transparency-related work: FOI and IPC matters point to increased public engagement.

## **Linkages**

- Strategic Plan Alignment: Strategic Pillar 2: Building the Best Municipal Team
- Business Plan Alignment: CAO Business as Usual

## **Financial Impacts/Source of Funding**

No costs or revenue is associated with this report.

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