



Pelham, Fort Erie and Wainfleet get innovative in addressing legal costs, hire shared solicitor

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Pelham, ON – The Town of Pelham, the Town of Fort Erie, and the Township of Wainfleet are pleased to announce the joint hiring of Jennifer Stirton as the municipalities' shared in-house Solicitor.

For more than 15 years, Stirton has defended municipalities across southwestern Ontario in a wide range of cases. A graduate from Osgoode Hall Law School in 2002, in the top nine percent of her class, Stirton also holds an Honours Bachelor of Science from McMaster University.

Stirton articulated and practiced at a national firm in Toronto until 2005 before joining McCall Dawson LLP, a litigation firm in London focusing on municipal clients, practicing as an associate and a partner. Stirton has represented municipalities and other local public authorities before all court levels in Ontario.

"I am thrilled to be the new Town Solicitor for the Town of Pelham, Town of Fort Erie, and Township of Wainfleet," said Stirton. "I look forward to focusing on the legal needs of the three municipalities in service to the communities."

The innovative initiative is expected to reduce legal costs and is, to the municipalities' understanding, the first such shared in-house position in Ontario. The agreement positions all three municipalities to reduce their legal expenditures, supporting financial sustainability.

"Local governments in Niagara are again being municipal innovators," said Pelham Mayor Marvin Junkin. "All three municipalities will be saving our taxpayers money and bringing valuable expertise and skill to our teams, while engaging in cost-sharing services with our municipal neighbours. This hiring is significant on many levels."

Stirton will take over routine legal matters, leaving conflict work and specialized work to the municipalities' highly capable external legal counsel.

The process, beginning in March 2020, received full support from all three Councils. In the agreed-upon terms, Stirton will be a direct employee of the Town of Pelham; however, all three municipalities will contribute towards employment costs.

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It is anticipated that the exact amount of time worked for any municipality will vary from month-to-month but is expected to ultimately result in a 40-40-20 (Pelham, Fort Erie, Wainfleet, respectively) split based on historical data. If the percentage paid by each municipality requires future adjustment, contractual and budgeting processes will address the issue.

All three municipalities warmly welcome Jennifer Stirton to Niagara and look forward to benefiting from her skills and knowledge in the years to come.

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