PSD RESEARCH CONSULTING SOFTWARE

Levels of Service Report

FORTFRANCES BOUNDLESS

Report by: PSD

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Introduction

Levels of Service – Introduction

The primary responsibility of a municipality is to ensure that they are providing adequate and sustainable services to their community. This outcome should be supported by organizational objectives, mission statements, and official plans that outline the rationale for these activities.

To ensure that organizational objectives align with expected service outcomes, it is necessary to develop a process for the systematic measurement, monitoring and evaluation of an organization's level of service. A level of service (LOS) can be defined as the user-focused outcome of an asset's performance. Simply put, a level of service is a measure of how well a municipality provides for its citizens in a cost-effective and efficient manner.

Managing levels of service involves balancing three key factors: cost, performance and risk. Any decision to increase or decrease the provided levels of service will have an impact on each factor. Increasing a level of service will lead to higher costs but would lead to a decrease in risk and an increase in asset performance. For example, improving the rideability of your roads is a level of service increase, but comes with an added cost to the tax-payer. Conversely, a decrease in level of service will mean lower costs but an increase in risk and a decrease in asset performance. For example, decreasing the level of service of your parks by not making them accessible or up-to-code will save you money but will also affect the quality of life for your residents. As a result, managing your levels of service is about understanding the trade-offs involved and aligning cost, performance and risk with both your organizational objectives and the desires of community stakeholders.

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PSD Roadmap: Workshop

On August 22nd, 2018 PSD facilitated a workshop with the Town of Fort Frances staff to develop a customized levels of service framework. The initial presentation and discussion illustrated the importance of levels of service in an asset management program and the role that it should play in decision-making moving forward. Second, the workshop focused on developing meaningful level of service statements, technical and customer levels of service that take into consideration the availability of data and the ability of these indicators to provide actionable data.

The workshop concluded with an interview of Town staff on the various internal and external factors and trends that may affect their ability to provide expected levels of service in the future. The results of this interview are summarized in the Section titled **Factors Impacting Levels of Service in Fort Frances**.

Fort Frances Attendees:

Travis Rob, Operations and Facilities Manager

Dawn Galusha, Deputy Treasurer

Crystal Tan, Asset Management Plan Coordinator

Trish Law, GIS Expert

PSD Attendees:

Matthew Smith, Asset Management Research Analyst

Mai Abdou, Asset Management Consultant

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Developing a Level of Service Framework

How to Measure Levels of Service

Performance measurement is a key component of the effective management of levels of service; it allows you to analyze how well you are meeting the needs and expectations of your stakeholders and identify where there are gaps that need to be addressed. Developing realistic levels of service using meaningful key performance indicators (KPIs) is instrumental in managing citizen expectations, identifying areas requiring higher investments, driving organizational performance, and securing the highest value for money from public assets.

To facilitate this process, it is useful to develop a framework for tracking and evaluating the levels of service. This requires the translation of organizational objectives and expected service outcomes into key performance indicators that reflect evolving demand on infrastructure, the organization's fiscal capacity, and stakeholder input. Using a centralized database that houses levels of service alongside the KPIs that measure/assess the achievement of those LOS will enable the Town to better collect and scrutinize the current performance of their assets. In addition, the Town will be able to establish target levels of service that reflect the fiscal capabilities of the municipality, its corporate and strategic goals, and changes in demographics that may place additional demand on service areas.

Core Values

As a guide to developing and measuring levels of service, it is useful to understand what the public values in the provision of municipal services. The following table provides an overview of the values that the municipality should strive to accommodate when delivering services to the public:

Value	Description
Accessible	Services are available and accessible for customers who require them.
Reliable	Services are provided with minimal service disruption and are available to customers in line with needs and expectations.
Safe	Services are delivered such that they minimize health, safety and security risks.
Regulatory	Services meet regulatory requirements of all levels of government.
Affordable	Services are delivered at an affordable cost for both the organization and customer.
Sustainable	Services are designed to be used efficiently and long-term plans are in place to ensure that they are available to all customers into the future.

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Developing a Level of Service Framework

The following graphic provides a simple guide to develop a Level of Service Framework in four steps. Each stage includes a definition, process, and example.

Core Values

- **Definition:** A description of the service outcome expected by the public
- **Process:** Establish and define core values based on expectations of stakeholders from the delivery of municipal services
- **Example:** Accessible & Reliable

LOS Statement

- **Definition:** A high-level statement that aligns with organizational objectives and describes the desired service output
- **Process:** Use the core values to develop level of service statements for each asset class or service area
- **Example:** Road Network - "The road network is convenient and available to the whole community with minimal service disruptions; service requests are responded to promptly"

Technical LOS

- **Definition:** A key performance indicator measured internally that indicates how an organization is performing in relation to the level of service
- **Process:** Choose technical levels of service that best measure whether the service that is being provided is consistent with the level of service statement
- **Example:** Lane-km of arterial roads per land area in the municipality (km/km^2)

Community LOS

- **Definition:** A simple, plain language description of what the customer receives
- **Process:** Choose community levels of service that describe technical levels of service in terms that easily and effectively communicate the service being provided by the municipality
- **Example:** Description, which may include maps, of the road network in the municipality and its level of connectivity

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High-level Service Indicators

While technical levels of service provide a detailed quantifiable measure of how well the Town is providing services to the community, they may not always represent the true level of service being provided. When analyzing levels of service, the municipality should consider both the overall cost, risk and performance being provided (high-level service indicators) as well as more detailed and specific service metrics (technical levels of service) that will be further explained within the Level of Service Framework section to come.

Measuring and evaluating levels of service is a matter of finding a balance between the three key indicators: cost, performance and risk. Within this framework these indicators are measured according to the following criteria:

Indicator	Metric	Measurement
Cost	Annual Reinvestment Rate	$\frac{Annual\ Capital\ Expenditures}{Total\ Asset\ Class\ Replacement\ Value} \times 100$
	Target Reinvestment Rate	$\frac{Annual\ Capital\ Requirement}{Total\ Asset\ Class\ Replacement\ Value} \times 100$
Performance	Overall Condition	% of assets in very good, good, fair, poor and very poor condition
Risk	Overall Risk Distribution	% of assets in very low, low, moderate, high and very high state of risk

The following infographic provides an example of how this data can be integrated into the Town's Level of Service Framework and is not indicative of current data on the Town's Road Network. As Fort Frances develops its next Asset Management Plan, these high-level service indicators should be updated accordingly for more accurate, realistic reporting and analysis. Finally, these three indicators can be analyzed to determine an overall level of service trend over the next 10+ years. Each asset class is given a projection of either increasing, sustained or decreasing levels of service. The value of this visualization is to aid municipalities in understanding the trajectory that their assets are taking due to their maintained condition and performance, and where best to allocate money to bridge the current and target reinvestment rates and improve the level of service trend of said assets.

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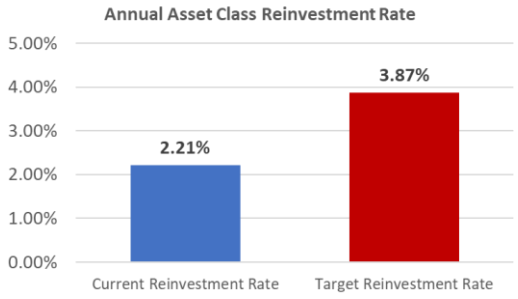
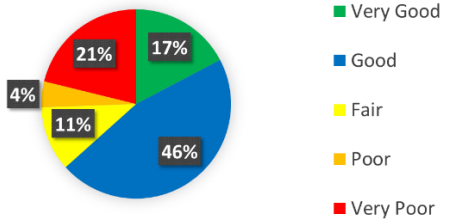
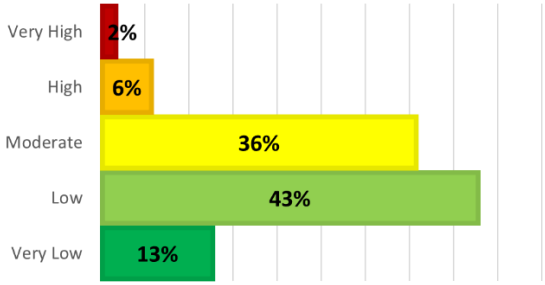
	Annual Reinvestment Rate	Condition	Risk	LOS Trend
Road Network				

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Fort Frances's Level of Service Framework

As part of PSD's Roadmap, the Town worked alongside PSD staff to develop a centralized database for tracking and evaluating provided levels of service. The following tables outline the Town's customized levels of service framework. Levels of service should be tracked annually for all asset classes. Regular evaluation will allow the Town to identify service deficiencies and develop asset management strategies to adequately address them and create realistic and achievable target levels of service. Technical and Community Levels of Service that are now required to be measured as part of Ontario Regulation 588/17 have been highlighted in green.

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Water System

Core Value	Level of Service Statement	Community Level of Service	Technical Level of Service
Accessible & Reliable	A reliable water supply is provided with minimal service disruptions; system failures and service requests are responded to promptly; water connections are available and accessible to all properties within the public water network	Description, which may include maps, of the user groups or areas of the municipality that are connected to the municipal water system	% of properties connected to the municipal water system
		Description, which may include maps, of the user groups or areas of the municipality that have fire flow	% of properties where fire flow is available
		Description of boil-water advisories and service interruptions	# of connection-days per year due to water main breaks compared to the total number of properties connected to the municipal water system
Safe & Regulatory	Safe drinking water is supplied to all Fort Frances customers by Operations and Facilities Division; legislative and regulatory requirements are promptly complied with to maintain the Drinking Water Quality Management System; processes and procedures are modified according to Safe Drinking Water Act to improve operations and customer satisfaction	Description of customer satisfaction with water quality	# of connection-days per year where a boil water advisory notice is in place compared to the total number of properties connected to the municipal water system
			# of water quality customer complaints
Affordable	Water services are affordable, and infrastructure is managed cost-effectively for the expected level of service	What is the bi-monthly residential water bill?	(Annual residential water bill / average household income) * 100
			O&M Cost (includes treatment and distribution)/ pipe km length
Sustainable	A Drinking Water Quality Management System is established and regularly reviewed for continuous improvement; equipment and infrastructure is upgraded to reflect necessary improvements to meet expectations and population forecasts	When was the last time that the Town's DWQMS was reviewed?	% of the water system that is in good or very good condition
			% of the water system that is in poor or very poor condition
			DWQMS reviewed annually

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Wastewater System

Core Value	Level of Service Statement	Community Level of Service	Technical Level of Service
Accessible & Reliable	Reliable wastewater service is provided with minimal service disruptions; system failures and service requests are responded to promptly; sanitary connections are available and accessible to all properties within the public sewer network	Description, which may include maps, of the user groups or areas of the municipality that are connected to the municipal wastewater system	% of properties connected to the municipal wastewater system
			% of sanitary mains flushed annually
			# of sanitary sewer main backups
Safe & Regulatory	Wastewater is managed to minimize risk/hazard to public health; full compliance with all regulatory requirements is achieved	Description of how combined sewers in the municipal wastewater system are designed with overflow structures in place which allow overflow during storm events to prevent backups into homes	# of events per year where combined sewer flow in the municipal wastewater system exceeds system capacity compared to the total number of properties connected to the municipal wastewater system
		Description of the frequency and volume of overflows in combined sewers in the municipal wastewater system that occur in habitable areas or beaches	
		Description of how stormwater can get into sanitary sewers in the municipal wastewater system, causing sewage to overflow into streets or backup into homes	# of connection-days per year due to wastewater backups compared to the total number of properties connected to the municipal wastewater system
		Description of how sanitary sewers in the municipal wastewater system are designed to be resilient to avoid sewage overflow into streets or backup into homes	
		Description of the effluent that is discharged from sewage treatment plants in the municipal wastewater system	# of effluent violations per year due to wastewater discharge compared to total number of properties connected to the municipal wastewater system

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Affordable	Wastewater services are affordable, and infrastructure is managed cost-effectively	What is the amount of the bi-monthly residential sewer bill?	(Average annual residential sewer bill / average household income) * 100
			O&M Cost (includes treatment and collection) / km pipe length
Sustainable	Wastewater resources are used efficiently, and long-term plans are in place for the sustainability of wastewater treatment and infrastructure	When was the last time that the AMP was reviewed?	% of the wastewater system that is in good or very good condition
			% of the wastewater system that is in poor or very poor condition
			AMP reviewed annually

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Stormwater System

Core Value	Level of Service Statement	Community Level of Service	Technical Level of Service
Accessible & Reliable	Stormwater system is reliable and provided with minimal service disruptions; service requests are responded to promptly within the municipal stormwater network	Description, which may include map, of the user groups or areas of the municipality that are protected from flooding, including the extent of protection provided by the municipal stormwater management system	# of customer complaints of surface flooding due to storm events
			% of storm sewer mains inspected
			% of catch basins cleaned
Safe & Regulatory	Stormwater system protects property and people from the impacts of flooding and minimizes exposure to risk	What level of storm intensity is the municipal stormwater network designed to handle (e.g. 1 in 5-year)?	% of properties in municipality resilient to a 100-year storm
			% of the municipal stormwater management system resilient to a 5-year storm
Affordable	Stormwater system is affordable and managed cost-effectively for the expected level of service	What is the O&M cost to maintain the stormwater network / household?	O&M Cost / km of storm sewer and urban ditches
Sustainable	Stormwater assets are managed efficiently, and long-term plans are in place for the sustainability of stormwater infrastructure	When was the last time that the AMP was reviewed?	% of the stormwater system that is in good or very good condition
			% of the stormwater system that is in poor or very poor condition
			AMP reviewed annually

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Road Network

Core Value	Level of Service Statement	Community Level of Service	Technical Level of Service
Accessible & Reliable	The road network is convenient and accessible to the whole community with minimal service disruptions; service requests are responded to promptly	Description, which may include maps, of the road network in the municipality and its level of connectivity	Lane-km of arterial roads (MMS classes 1 and 2) per land area in the municipality (km/km^2)
			Lane-km of collector roads (MMS classes 3 and 4) per land area in the municipality (km/km^2)
			Lane-km of local roads (MMS classes 5 and 6) per land area in the municipality (km/km^2)
Safe & Regulatory	The road network meets all minimum maintenance standards	Description of minimum maintenance standards for road network (road surfaces and sidewalks)	# of customer complaints related to the road network
			# of customer complaints related to the sidewalk network
Affordable	The road network is managed cost-effectively for the expected level of service	What is the O&M cost to maintain the road network per household?	O&M costs for paved roads / lane-km (excluding winter control)
			O&M costs for unpaved roads / lane-km (excluding winter control)
			Winter control costs / lane-km
Sustainable	Long-term plans are in place for the sustainability of the road network	When was the last time the AMP was reviewed?	AMP reviewed annually
		Description or images that illustrate the different levels of road class pavement condition	% of the road network that is in good or very good condition
			% of the road network that is in poor or very poor condition
			Average pavement condition index for paved roads in the municipality
			Average surface condition for unpaved roads in the municipality

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Bridges & Culverts

Core Value	Level of Service Statement	Community Level of Service	Technical Level of Service
Accessible & Reliable	Bridge structures provide reliable access to the road network for vehicles and/or pedestrians	Description of the traffic that is supported by municipal bridges (e.g. heavy transport vehicles, motor vehicles, emergency vehicles, pedestrians, cyclists)	% of bridges in the municipality with loading or dimensional restrictions
			# of unplanned bridge closures
Safe & Regulatory	Bridges structures provide safe vehicular and/or pedestrian passage, and all structures are fully compliant with regulatory requirements	Description of the OSIM inspection process	% of bridges inspected every two years
Affordable	Bridges structures are managed cost-effectively for the expected level of service	What is the O&M cost to maintain bridges per household?	O&M costs for bridges / household
Sustainable	Long-term plans are in place for the sustainability of all bridge structures	When was the last time the AMP was reviewed?	AMP reviewed annually
		Description or images of the condition of bridges and how this would affect use of the bridges	Average bridge condition index value for bridges in the municipality

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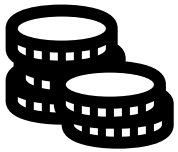
Factors Impacting Levels of Service in Fort Frances

The provision of desired levels of service is not simply a matter of proper asset management. There is a wide range of internal and external factors that may impact the ability of a municipality to provide reliable public services. As part of the Level of Service Workshop, PSD interviewed Town staff to gain greater insight into the challenges and opportunities facing the municipality now and into the future. The following sections summarize the results of this interview:



Fiscal Capacity

Maintaining municipal infrastructure and providing desired levels of service requires the allocation of adequate financial resources. Fiscal capacity and budget constraints are a constant concern for staff across all departments attempting to manage the maintenance and rehabilitation of municipal infrastructure. While there is a keen understanding of the benefits of a proactive approach to managing the lifecycle of infrastructure assets, there is often not enough funding to engage in more proactive maintenance, rehabilitation and replacement activities leading most municipalities to take a reactive approach to managing their assets. Managing the infrastructure deficit and aligning the current reinvestment rates to the target reinvestment rates is a key concern, not only for the Town of Fort Frances, but for all municipalities. Moreover, with the advent of social media, residents have become more scrutinizing of their Town's infrastructure in comparison to neighbouring towns and have developed high unattainable expectations. With a lack of adequate funding available to complete all required capital and operating activities, it is critical that Town staff develop and support a network-wide risk assessment framework to prioritize infrastructure projects and ensure that limited funds are dispersed effectively to achieve the greatest benefit to the community and manage their growing expectations.

Municipalities typically have few means at their disposal to raise adequate and sustainable funding to meet operational and capital requirements. As a result, they are heavily dependent on both provincial and federal grant programs to maintain and replace municipal infrastructure. Any fluctuations in annual grant funding secured can have a dramatic impact on provided services. Staff have noted that their complete reliance on grant funding, especially for underfunded assets such as roads, storm sewers, and bridges is a major vulnerability; the Town will be applying for OCIF top-up funding for their roads as they are in a worse condition then their underground infrastructure. They also noted that due to delayed responses with the FCM grant applications, they were unable to complete projects such as the zoom-camera program in time. Nevertheless, staff attempt to apply for as many available grant funding programs as possible, and in the absence of reliable grant funding programs, the Town will have to explore how existing revenue sources can be leveraged to ensure that existing municipal infrastructure is adequately maintained.

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Aging Infrastructure

The condition and performance of municipal infrastructure assets directly correlates to the quality of services a municipality can deliver to its residents. Aging and deteriorating assets increasingly remain in service past their estimated service lives due to a lack of fiscal capacity to replace or rehabilitate as needed. Staff expressed particular concern about the current state of underground infrastructure with water and wastewater assets being in poor condition. Due to age and deterioration, there is concern that a significant portion of this infrastructure will need to be replaced soon and that planning will be required to ensure that adequate funding is allocated to address these needs. Typically, Council is less inclined to see these types of projects as particularly attractive which may further contribute to their continued underfunding. In addition to underground infrastructure, there is also concern about the current condition of buildings and community facilities since these assets are dealt with on a primarily reactive measure. Additional capital investment may be required in order to meet both the existing desires of citizens and as a tool to attract population growth and economic activity.

Climate Change and Weather Events

Forecasting for infrastructure needs based on climate change remains an imprecise science. However, broader environmental and weather patterns have a clear and direct impact on the reliability of critical infrastructure services. As such, it is important that the impacts of weather events on municipal infrastructure are accounted for in the development of asset management strategies. In recent years, the town of Fort Frances has experienced a higher rate of extreme rainfall causing damage to core infrastructure. These events have in turn placed more pressure on the operational mitigation and maintenance of assets; thereby allocating less funding and resources for capital projects. In the future, collecting climate change and weather data will allow the Town to set up mitigation plans and allocate the proper funding to fortify their systems from often unpredictable environmental events thereby shifting from a reactive to a proactive approach.

Demographic Change and Expected Growth

Municipal demographics can also serve as an infrastructure demand driver, and as a result, can change how a municipality decides to allocate its resources. Population growth is also a significant demand driver for existing assets and may require the municipality to construct new infrastructure to parallel community expectations. The Town has experienced a decline in population forecasts, and therefore, has yet to implement any growth strategies to deal with capacity issues or infrastructure usage. However, Staff had indicated that the Town has a majority aging community which will affect the types of services the Town and Council prioritize such as snow removal/winter management and accessibility of sidewalks and roads. Over time, growth projections should be accounted for in short-, medium- and long-term capital projections to better identify the costs associated with population growth.

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Community Expectations

The general public will often have their own opinions about how a public service should be delivered. Municipal staff are tasked with balancing requests from the public with the reality of available funding to provide the best service possible at the lowest total cost. This can be a difficult task as there is often a significant gap between expectations and reality. Town staff remarked that there has been a noticeable increase in service expectations in recent years, in line with the advent of social media. This has been particularly noteworthy for snow removal, parks and recreation programming and facilities. Managing these expectations can be a tricky task, but it can also be made easier through the development of a level of service framework and the use of community and technical levels of service to better communicate the scope and resources required to provide adequate services to the community. Overall, no noticeable changes have been recognized across the different services that the Town offers, except for a decrease in water usage with the loss of a major industrial customer.

Organizational Change and Capacity

Managing municipal assets and delivering public services requires adequate organizational capacity. The availability of staff to facilitate these projects is a concern for many municipalities. Succession planning has become one of the key challenges that an aging municipal workforce faces as senior staff progress towards possible retirement. The loss of knowledge and experience that accompanies staff departures can have a dramatic impact on the ability of an organization to continue operations and provide services to the level that's previously been expected.

In recent years the Town has experienced a high rate of turnover at both the senior and middle management level, with most management positions seeing turnover in the past five years. This issue is not confined to management as many of the Town's operators are also new and are not yet subject matter experts with a keen grasp on the condition of the assets. As managers and operational staff leave the organization it is critical that the knowledge and experience of these employees is preserved and/or transferred to existing staff who can take on these roles and ensure that levels of service are managed consistently and effectively. This is extremely critical considering the recent changes to the Minimum Maintenance Standards (MMS) that will affect how operators maintain some of the assets and services that the Town offers. Fortunately, staff remarked that there are succession planning strategies in place and that the Town's middle management team is full of young, capable individuals.

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Recommendations/Next Steps

Operationalizing Levels of Service

Establishing a holistic and realistic level of service framework for all core and non-core infrastructure assets is arguably the most impactful part of the AMP process because it dictates the kind of lifecycle management and financial strategy that a municipality should employ. The Town's main priority is to develop and evaluate current levels of service that pertain to their assets. Once evaluated, these LOS metrics act as indicators or thresholds by which the municipality can gauge how well it is maintaining its assets and keeping its residents satisfied. Upon setting those thresholds, the Town should then look at the proposed levels of service that it wants to target. The Town can choose to maintain, increase, or decrease their level of service deliverable based on informed and calculated decisions that involve different stakeholders and that incorporate a prioritization technique, risk matrix, and financial forecast.

A simple example of this procedure is as follows: if upon the evaluation of the Town's road network, only 30% of roads are found to be in a Good to Very Good condition, then the Town may propose an increase in the level of service to 50%; this decision to increase the roads level of service, however, can come at the cost of allocating less funding to other assets and will alter the kind of lifecycle activities performed on the roads network. Municipalities, then, must have a clear understanding of what they are able to afford and provide to their citizens in terms of expected levels of service, and how best to prioritize and allocate their limited funding to achieve those deliverables.

Recommendations

The impact of each recommendation, and the effort to complete it, are identified at a high-level. This is based on an understanding of the Town's current state of asset management practice, organizational capacity, and financial condition. Both impact and effort can be classified as high, medium, or low. Where impact is high, and effort is low or medium, this represents a relatively quick win for Fort Frances staff and Council in advancing the Town's asset management program. Where impact is high, and effort is also high, delivering on these recommendations will likely require a long-term approach with dedicated staff and financial resources. Using this matrix, the Town can prioritize efforts to implement recommendations more effectively and efficiently. Depending on how the Town decides its staff and financial resources are best prioritized, some, all, or none of these recommendations may implemented, in whole or in part.

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Recommendations	Estimated Impact and Effort	Timeline for Completion
Measure current levels of service for core infrastructure assets • Include roads, bridges & culverts, water, sewer, storm as defined in O. Reg. 588/17 • Include the mandated metrics identified in Table 1-5 of O. Reg. 588/17 • Include current data from at most two years prior to the AMP completion	**Impact:** High **Effort:** Medium	July 1, 2021
Measure current levels of service for all core and non-core infrastructure assets • Include requirements above to encompass all municipal infrastructure asset categories as outlined in O. Reg. 588/17 • Include current data from at most two years prior to the AMP completion • Consider adopting relevant reporting metrics like those outlined in the National Water and Wastewater Benchmarking Initiative (stormwater), Canada Infrastructure Report Card (all infrastructure), and Municipal Benchmarking Network Canada (all infrastructure)	**Impact:** High **Effort:** Medium	July 1, 2023
Communicate current levels of service to the public and engage in public consultation to tackle growing service expectations and priorities • Implement public engagement process to align proposed levels of service with community expectations • Communicate effects of level of service changes on the cost, risk, and performance of associated assets	**Impact:** Medium **Effort:** Medium	Continuous once measured
Identify and measure proposed levels of service for all core and non-core infrastructure assets • Include proposed levels of service for each of the 10 years following the year of AMP completion • Identify risks associated with proposed levels of service on long term sustainability of municipality and ability to afford them	**Impact:** High **Effort:** Medium	July 1, 2024

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Recommendations	Estimated Impact and Effort	Timeline for Completion
Evaluate levels of service on an annual basis and adjust proposed levels of service in collaboration with Council in an effort to balance community expectations with cost, risk and performance • Identify and engage defined stakeholders, roles, responsibilities and timelines for completion • Consider further institutionalizing through a formal Levels of Service policy	**Impact:** High **Effort:** Low to Medium	Annually after July 1, 2024
Provide adequate human resources to meet asset management requirements • Evaluate Town's existing capacity and identify resources required to meet O. Reg. 588/17	**Impact:** High **Effort:** Medium	Continuous

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