



GRAND VALLEY

STAFF REPORT

To: Mayor and Members of Council
From: Donna Tremblay, Deputy Clerk/Communications Coordinator
Meeting Date: January 14, 2025
Report Number: **2025-002**
Subject: ServiceOntario – Marriage Licence Modernization Program

Recommendation

THAT Council receives Report – ServiceOntario Marriage Modernization Program;
AND FURTHER THAT Council directs staff to prepare and present the necessary By-law for adoption.

Executive Summary

Purpose

To provide Council with information on the ServiceOntario Marriage Modernization Program

Key Findings

- The Marriage Licence Modernization (MLM) program is an overarching initiative which aims to streamline the marriage licence process
- Soon-to-be-married couples can apply for marriage licences online through a secure portal in participating municipalities
- The online marriage licence program is more efficient and convenient for Ontario couples to apply for a marriage licence

- The MLM program reduces the need for multiple trips to the municipal office

Financial Implications

There is no fee for participation in the MLM program. The fees for marriage licences will remain the responsibility of the Town as set out in the Tariff of Fees By-Law.

Report

Background

The Town of Grand Valley issues marriage licences pursuant to the Marriage Act. Individuals that wish to be married in Ontario must complete the following steps:

1. Complete a marriage licence application
2. Provide 2 pieces of government-issued identification for each person getting married;
3. Provide supporting documentation, such as original certificates of divorce (if applicable)
4. Pay the licenced fee; and
5. Sign the marriage licence in-person at the Municipal Office, sworn before the Licence Issuer (Clerk or Deputy Clerk)

The Province of Ontario, through the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement (ServiceOntario), has been working on a phased approach to modernize the marriage licence application process through the Marriage Licence Modernization (MLM) program. This initiative aims to streamline and transform both the paper-based marriage licence application process for applicants and the issuance process for municipalities in Ontario by moving towards a digital delivery model that minimizes physical touchpoints.

MLM is using a phased implementation approach with iterative improvements to features and functionalities and gradual rollouts to municipalities.

The first phase was in the Spring 2021, when ServiceOntario enabled electronic signatures on marriage licence application forms and developed a PDF tool for municipalities, where applicants could see a proof of the marriage licence prior to obtaining their licence.

The second phase was launched in March 2023 to six municipalities. Since then, the service has explained its features and functionalities to bring more value to the public and participating municipalities and improve application and issuance processes.

Based on expressions of interest, municipalities across Ontario are being selected for participation in the program. The Town of Grand Valley has been selected to participate in the second phase, with implementation expected in February 2025.

Discussion

Grand Valley has provided an online application and payment process for marriage licences for some time. Moving to the provincial online application process will simply require a link to the Service Ontario site and decommissioning of the Town's online application form. The Town will continue to accept and process paper applications for applicants who are unable to submit electronically.

Both the Clerk and Deputy Clerk will remain the contact for marriage licences and would receive training and support from ServiceOntario.

The advantage of moving to the provincial portal is a clearer process for the applicant, use of functionality from ServiceOntario including an online appointment booking system, ServiceOntario templates to print marriage licences, which will reduce errors in the transferring of information and a shift of responsibility to ServiceOntario for the care and control of supporting document for the applicants.

Staff are recommending entering into an agreement with the Province of Ontario (attachment 1) to participate in the online application process. It is anticipated that transition to the provincial process would begin in late February 2025.

Financial Impact

There is no fee for participation in the MLM program. The fees for marriage licences will remain the responsibility of the Town as set out in the Tariff of Fees By-Law.

Consultations

ServiceOntario

Attachments

Attachment 1 – Marriage Licence Modernization Phase 2 Participation Agreement with Province of Ontario

Attachment 2 – Being a By-Law to authorize an agreement with the Province of Ontario for Marriage Licence Modernization

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