

## **Why Staff Recommend this Initiative**

Over the last five years, there has been a significant increase in real estate transactions and agreements due to projects like the Lakeview District Energy Facility, the Hurontario Light Rail Transit line, the Dundas Bus Rapid Transit Project and the Matheson Noise Wall Project. The volume of project-related work and other individual files has led to files being outsourced to external law firms in order to meet required timelines, resulting in a significant increase in external legal fees.

## **Details of Service Change**

The real estate group in Legal Services is currently comprised of three lawyers and only one law clerk, whereas efficient law departments operate with more law clerks than lawyers to maintain productivity and cost-effective service delivery. The Real Estate Law Clerk performs a crucial role and is responsible for many important transactional duties, including due diligence, the preparation of closing documents, attending to the payment of closing funds and registering all necessary land-related agreements on title. The Real Estate Law Clerk also supports the Revenue Section of the Finance Division by conducting tax sales.

Legal Services is experiencing a severe pinch point created by having only one law clerk to process all real estate transactions generated by the lawyers. This request is to add one Real Estate Law Clerk, starting in 2025, in order to increase productivity by freeing up the lawyers to focus on complex issues and assigning the more routine and administrative work to the new law clerk.

## **Service Impact**

The negotiation and completion of commercial real estate transactions is often guided by very strict timelines. Failure to meet these timelines by the real estate group can have a significant impact on the success of various projects that are critical to Council, City staff, and external stakeholders.

Large transit infrastructure projects require the acquisition of land and easements from hundreds of property owners. If these easements are not negotiated and acquired amicably and in a timely fashion, they will need to be acquired through expropriation proceedings that are highly adversarial and complex. It is anticipated that the additional capacity created with the addition of the new real estate law clerk will have the beneficial impact of helping to meet important timelines and reducing Legal Services' dependency on external lawyers, thereby reducing the City's overall expenditure on legal fees.