



Subject: Adoption of Use and Acceptance of Electronic Signatures Policy for the Town of Tillsonburg

Report Number: CS 25-014

Department: Corporate Services Department

Submitted by: Amelia Jaggard, Deputy Clerk

Meeting Type: Council Meeting

Meeting Date: Monday, April 14, 2025

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT report CS 25-014 titled “Adoption of Use and Acceptance of Electronic Signatures Policy for the Town of Tillsonburg” be received as information; and
- B. THAT Council direct staff to present a By-Law to Adopt a Use and Acceptance of Electronic Signatures Policy for the Town of Tillsonburg.

BACKGROUND

In 2000, the Province of Ontario enacted the Electronic Commerce Act, 2000 (ECA), allowing municipalities to conduct business using electronic signatures. The acceptance of electronic signatures has the potential to expedite workflow processes and enhance customer service, supporting both current operations and future municipal initiatives.

The Electronic Commerce Act, 2000 establishes conditions for ensuring the reliability and authenticity of digital signatures and electronic submissions. This legislation affirms the legal validity of electronic documents and sets requirements for their validity, their admissibility as evidence and, in the case of signed agreements, their enforceability against the parties that executed them. Unless there are rules specific to a given area of law, an electronic document will have the same legal effect as a paper-based one. An electronically signed document that verifies its origin and integrity is legally enforceable against the parties who executed it.

Third-party software (such as DocuSign and Adobe Digital Signatures) allows for verification using passwords or PIN numbers and uses data encryption technologies. This software protects the integrity of the document by confirming the absence of any modifications made to the document since it was finalized or signed.

DISCUSSION

Staff are recommending adoption of an Electronic Signature Policy. Electronic signatures have been legally recognized for decades and are now widely used across all sectors. Formal adoption of a policy is anticipated to support efficiencies for

administrative purposes and records keeping, while ensuring compliance under existing legislation.

Conducting business electronically has become the standard for many businesses to increase efficiency, promote convenience, and modernize workflows. The shift away from paper-based processes accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic, reinforcing the need for digital solutions.

The attached Electronic Signature Policy for the Town of Tillsonburg provides guidance on when electronic submissions are considered official and acceptable by the Town. It further identifies types of documents for which electronic signatures will be acceptable and the way an electronic signature must be provided. Adoption of this policy is anticipated to expedite some workflow processes, reduce recordkeeping requirements, and enhance contract management.

CONSULTATION

I.T. Manager

FINANCIAL IMPACT/FUNDING SOURCE

The Town will utilize existing software licensing, including Laserfiche and Adobe Acrobat, to fulfill the requirements of this policy. These platforms are already included in the general government services software budget lines.

The Clerk's Office may explore the use of DocuSign for specific cases, particularly for public-facing documents, as it provides a user-friendly web interface. A DocuSign subscription is \$53/user/month. If this fee can be accommodated within the general government services software budget, no additional funding will be required; otherwise, the cost would be incorporated into the following year's budget.

CORPORATE GOALS

- Lifestyle and amenities
- Customer service, communication and engagement
- Business attraction, retention and expansion
- Community growth
- Connectivity and transportation
- Not Applicable

Does this report relate to a specific strategic direction or project identified in the Community Strategic Plan? Please indicate section number and/or any priority projects identified in the plan.

CS 25-014

Goal – The Town of Tillsonburg will strive for excellence and accountability in government, providing effective and efficient services, information, and opportunities to shape municipal initiatives.

Strategic Direction – Continue to develop digital service delivery while maintaining counter and telephone channels.

Priority Project – N/A

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A – Adoption of Use and Acceptance of Electronic Signatures Policy