

Community & Political Participation of Municipal Employees:  
An Analysis of the Community and Political Participation of Municipal Employees in the  
City of London.

MPA Research Report

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### **Executive Summary**

The requirement of the public service to be politically neutral has been the basis for legislation and policies which attempt to regulate the behaviour of government employees. However, recent challenges at the Supreme Court have suggested that these conditions actually violate human rights. This is significant in the study of local government because municipal policies addressing political activity vary greatly across the province of Ontario. It is these workers who face a unique connection to their community as both employees of the municipality and citizens. This study looked at which types of community and political participation municipal employees favour. It also looked at the effect of political activity regulations on participation. This study used a primarily quantitative approach with an opportunity for individuals to answer an open-ended qualitative question. An online survey was created which asked a variety of questions about political activities. These range from community service to voting. The city of London, Ontario was selected as a case study.

This study attempted to broaden the knowledge about municipal employees as both government employees and citizens. The data was rich and shed light on a variety of areas that had not previously been studied. Employees in the municipal public service are highly educated and have been working with the city for a significant amount of time. They also consider themselves to have a high amount of discretion in their duties and most interact with the public everyday. For many, the commitment to public service transcends the workplace and translates into exceptional levels of participation in the community. It is important to note that an outstanding number volunteer in the community; however, they are hesitant to join community service organizations. For many individuals, their jobs created a consciousness both at work and at home about how participation would be perceived by others. In some cases, this evolved into hesitancy about raising concerns about problems they encountered in the government. Many described intrinsic rationale for their public service at work and at home which should be recognized. These individuals should be acknowledged for their community service and the balance they face as employees and citizens of the city. Municipal workers have tremendous faith in the electoral system shown through extraordinary voter turn-out rates at all levels of government. However, when it comes to participation in election campaigns most are reluctant to engage in overt forms of participation. When it comes to informal methods of participation, these individuals should be considered more facilitators than participators. A minority of individuals had contacted a councillor about an issue outside of work. However, the majority had encouraged others to contact their councillor.

The city of London has limited formal policies regulating the political behaviour of employees. It appears that broad policies dealing with ethics and conduct have varying interpretations by individuals that they are intended to regulate. Employees displayed varying knowledge about policies and legislation governing political activity. However, it appears that clarification about policies and procedures would be valuable. While most said that their position as a municipal employee did not affect their community/political behaviour, a significant portion said that it did. For many, the position of municipal employee had a significant impact on community and political involvement. Furthermore, it appears that various demographics are affected in different ways. Interestingly, their position appeared to have both a negative and a positive effect on behaviour. There may be constraints for some on which types of participation they choose but this survey highlights that overall participation rates were high. It could be explained by the nature of their employment with the City or perhaps, the extraordinary type of person who chooses to work in local government.

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## Table of Contents

1.0	Introduction	7
	1.1 Context	7
	1.2 Purpose of the study	7
	1.3 Research questions	8
	1.4 Theoretical perspective	8
	1.5 Definition of terms	10
	1.6 Significance of the study	10
2.0	Review of the Literature	11
	2.1 Discussing community and political involvement	11
	2.2 Understanding relevant legislation	15
	2.3 Policies of municipalities in Ontario	20
	2.4 Policies in the city of London	21
3.0	Methods	23
	3.1 Research design	23
	3.2 Sample and population	25
	3.3 Instrumentation and materials	26
	3.4 Delimitations and limitations of the study	28
	3.5 Variables in the study	30
	3.6 Data analysis	30
4.0	Works Cited	58
5.0	Appendices	63
	5.1 Letter to the CAO	63
	5.2 Notice sent to employees	64
	5.3 Consent page	65
	5.4 Questionnaire	66
	5.5 Municipal electoral ward map	72
	5.6 Provincial/Federal electoral ridings	73

## Tables and Figures

### Tables

3.2.1	Number of municipal employees in the City of London	26
3.5.1	List of variables	30

### Figures

3.6.1	Highest level of completed education	32
3.6.2	Years of service working for the municipal government	33
3.6.3	Degree of discretion in daily job tasks	34
3.6.4	Community service volunteering in the last 12 months	35
3.6.5	Voting in municipal, provincial and federal elections	37
3.6.6	Voting by community service	41
3.6.7	Participation in an election campaign	42
3.6.8	Job effect on activities undertaken by union status	46
3.6.9	Job effect on activities undertaken	49
5.5.1	Municipal electoral wards	72
5.6.1	Provincial/Federal electoral ridings	73

## **1.0 Introduction**

### **1.1 Context**

This paper will examine the community and political participation of municipal employees. Public administration theory places significant focus on the requirement of political neutrality of its workers. It is this requirement which has been the foundation for limitations on the political activity of all levels of government employees. For many, these constraints apply both at work and at home. Within the last twenty years, the legality of these policies has been challenged at the provincial and the federal levels. However, this is a debate that has rarely occurred in the municipal realm. Therefore, it is important to examine the community and political activity within which these individuals engage and how these conditions affect the types of activities chosen. This is especially important considering the unique context of municipal government and with the balance that these individuals face as both employees and citizens of the city.

### **1.2 Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study is to identify patterns in the community and political participation of municipal employees. It will look at various types of political involvement and dissect preferences among different segments of employees. Furthermore, it will examine political activity policies and how they affect the community and political activities which employees choose. In addition, significant focus will be placed on the municipal level and will provide comparisons to other levels of government. This paper will focus on the municipality of the city of London and the rationale for this selection will be discussed in the sample and population section.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

The research questions are as follows: Are municipal employees participating in political activities outside of the work setting? Do the constraints on political activities in the workplace affect the types of activities undertaken? This paper will attempt to describe which types of political activities that municipal employees participate in or abstain from participation.

### **1.4 Theoretical Perspective**

The theoretical underpinnings of this study are deeply rooted in Kenneth Kernaghan's writing on public administration theory and Mark H. Moore's writing on public sector managerial behaviour. These authors were selected because of their widely accepted views in the field and their relevance to this particular area.

Kenneth Kernaghan explains that there are three central ideas that are necessary to the administration of the Canadian Government. They are ministerial responsibility, public service anonymity, and political neutrality (Dunn 101). In regards to this study, the most applicable aspect of this framework relates to political neutrality. Traditionally, it has been believed that it is the elected officials who make policy decisions and the public employees who execute these directives (Dunn 106). This model maintains that a neutral public service will strengthen a democracy by carrying out the will of the people as delegated by the politicians (Dunn 106). This assumes that workers should carry out the wishes of the elected government without opposition. It is believed that this requirement will protect politicians to ensure that they receive impartial policy advice (Dunn 108). It is also accompanied by a separation between the political and

administrative realms. It is believed that the merit system accompanied political neutrality and further provided some insulation from political forces such as patronage appointments (Dunn 108). Traditional approaches to bureaucracy and views on the public service are constantly shifting and evolving (Dunn 102). The review of literature section of this paper will examine more of the changing rationale of this paradigm.

Mark Moore made valuable contributions to public sector management theory in his book Creating Public Value. He explains that “the aim of managerial work in the public sector is to create public value” (Moore 28). The task of municipal managers is to “make their organizations more valuable, in the short and long run” (Moore 211). This suggests that individuals employed in the public service are highly knowledgeable about political and administrative processes. Individuals engage in political management and “to achieve their operational objectives, public managers must often engage actors beyond the scope of their direct authority” (Moore 113). Therefore, managers use their discretion to build support for their programs in the community. This might include mobilizing citizens or engaging community actors to build support for new programs or services (Moore 118). Understanding how employees interact with their community and government on a personal level may actually broaden the knowledge of political management within the organization.

## **1.5 Definition of Terms**

### Political Activity

*Political Activity* in local government may be divided into three categories according to Brian E. Adams. There are more traditional methods such as participating in elections, voting, volunteering for political campaigns, contributing to campaigns and running for office. There are engaged methods which include being involved in the decision-making process directly or by encouraging officials to take action. These may include attending council meetings, organizing protests, or circulating petitions. There are also community based initiatives which by-pass local government and address community issues through civic organizations (Adams 3). In order to recognize this broad reaching definition the study is entitled the *community and political* participation of municipal employees.

## **1.6 Significance of the study**

A study of the community and political participation of municipal employees is important for several reasons. First, a thorough understanding of types of political participation that municipal employees favour will broaden the knowledge about the balance between being a government employee and a citizen of the community. Second, comparing municipal regulations on political activities to workers in other levels of governance will uncover more about the unique nature of working for local government. Next, a greater understanding of how the restrictions affect the political activities that these workers choose to participate in will provide more information on the policies

which are already in place. Finally, it may assist in the development/ redevelopment of policies that address this issue.

## **2.0 Review of the Literature**

The purpose of this literature review is three fold. It will provide a background to the issue of political activity and municipal workers. Next, it will identify patterns in both the political participation of Canadians and studies about government workers. Additionally, it will stress the importance of this research in filling in some of the gaps between what is unknown and already known in this field. This review is divided into two sections. The first section will discuss the arguments made by academics with regard to the community and political participation of government workers. The second section will examine the relevant legislation and policies that apply to the political participation of government employees.

### **2.1 Discussing community and political involvement**

Woodrow Wilson suggested separating the administrative and political realms of public administration, strengthening each sector independently (Moore 32). Therein, the administrative sector is expected to carry out the policies laid out by democratically elected officials. This is where the importance of political neutrality in public administration is rooted. As discussed above, this neutrality is the basis for regulating the political activities of government workers. Political neutrality means that public employees must abstain from activities that “impair or seem to impair their impartiality or the impartiality of the public service as a whole” (Dunn 105). This is a broad

definition, with prohibitions that have traditionally expanded beyond the workplace into the personal lives of government workers. The concept of political neutrality in practice includes refraining from politically criticizing the elected officials or the administration (Dunn 106). The data analysis section of this paper sheds light on some of the unintended consequences of this requirement.

However, this concept in the theory and the practice of public administration is at the pinnacle of a paradigm shift. New practices are advising more political freedoms for workers. Therefore, it is an important time to survey the political actions of these individuals. It is also essential to expand the piecemeal knowledge about municipal workers related to aspects of their political activity by providing a comprehensive study of this unique demographic of Canadian society.

It is recognized that even though politicians wield much of the authority, public employees have significant influence in the operations of the government (Dunn 107). This is the foundation for Mark Moore's discussion noted above regarding political management. It may be necessary to accept that these powerful individuals function politically both inside and outside of the workplace. This study does not suggest that the political activism and beliefs of a worker affect the way in which they do their job. However, this would be an interesting topic for further examination at a later date. This study attempts to identify patterns in the preferences and level of activity within which those municipal workers engage. If it can be asserted that these individuals are political in their own lives, the next step would be to research what the implications are on the administrative process. More research on this topic is important because very little is written about the political activity of municipal workers in Ontario.

There is a delicate balance between political neutrality and political rights (Inwood 281). Contemporary practices support siding with the promotion of democratic freedoms of public sector workers (Inwood 281). Many academics support the notion that individuals employed in the public sector should be permitted to exercise the same rights as other citizens (Dunn 109). A large proportion of the Canadian population is employed in the public service. Restricting the activism of this segment of the population is constraining the rights of a significant portion of the population (Dunn 109). There is also concern that these types of restrictions prevent many informed and educated citizens from joining the public service (Dunn 109). Conversely, many would argue that easing restrictions on government workers raises significant questions about the way democracy is administered. Furthermore, this group is highly educated and well informed about governmental affairs which are two demographic traits which would typically lead to higher levels of activity in politics (Dunn 109). Past research suggests that there are several factors which influence whether or not an individual will participate in the political arena: socio-demographic characteristics like age; “attitudes towards the extent of perception of control over life chances (mastery); experiences as a youth in the political process; and whether one actively follows politics in the news” (Keown 35). The data analysis section shows that this may have led to the variability of participation rates amongst municipal employees.

New theories suggest that the ideal of complete neutrality in decision making is not practical. Recent practices recognize that “in reality, there are no neutral persons” (Dwivedi et al. 72). Furthermore, it is the definition of what exactly is *neutral* and what is *political* that is debatable. There are many aspects of political behaviour and these can

range from voting to different types of community involvement. For example, the belief that personal behaviour is actually political is a principle that drove the feminist movement. The tendency to prefer non-voting methods of participation is applied to citizens-at-large where many segments of the community seek direct action over traditional electoral models of governance. It is believed that roughly half of all citizens participate in voluntary groups (Dyck 219). Some of these groups may participate in political activities. Therefore, findings from studies on municipal workers present new information applicable to all of Canadian society.

Both workers and citizens are changing the way in which they interact with formal political processes. Administrative roles are changing as governments are attempting to develop ways to increase citizen engagement in decision-making. As discussed above, leaders recognize that democracy is reinforced by citizen involvement in decision-making (Good 6). It is important to consider that these workers may play both involved citizen and possible facilitator roles. Therefore, politicians are relying more heavily on government workers to suggest policy advice which is relayed through public consultations (Good 188). These workers have to use innovative methods to engage citizens in political processes (Graham et al. 1). These new forms of citizen engagement and changes in administrative processes may promote increasing political savvy on the part of the public employee. Furthermore, political awareness and increased community involvement of the municipal worker may improve the responsiveness of the government. This is a trait that many individuals bring up in the open-ended qualitative section of the questionnaire which is discussed in the data analysis section. Clearly new concepts on bureaucratic processes are necessary for citizen engagement models of

governance to flourish (Graham et al. 9). This is one more reason that understanding the complex balance as both employee and citizen is so important.

## **2.2 Understanding relevant legislation**

The second research question focuses on the impact of a policy on behaviour. Therefore, it is valuable to examine the legislation that regulates the political behaviour of municipal employees. Many cities have policies regarding the political activities of their public workers. Municipal workers are in an interesting position because of the variation of municipal policies that occur across the province. Provincial and federal governments require that employees take leaves of absence from their positions while seeking political office and they are expected to resign if elected at their *own* levels of government. However, often municipal policies require employees to take leaves of absence if they want to run in *any* level of election. This requirement may not be practical for full-time municipal employees who would like to run in local government elections because they would have to resign to accept a part-time councillor position. This section will begin with a discussion of the provincial and federal legislation regarding political activity. It will also look at the policies of some municipalities in Ontario and will conclude with a discussion of the policies of the city of London.

The legislation regulating the behaviour of municipal employees is administered by the province of Ontario. The Municipal Act section 258.1 explains that employees of the municipality are ineligible to be elected as a member of council (Ontario, 2001, c. 25, s. 258). This also extends to individuals who are not employees of the municipality but who hold an administrative position within the municipality. It is the Municipal

Elections Act that outlines that “an employee of a municipality or local board is eligible to be a candidate for and to be elected as a member of the council or local board that is the employer, if he or she takes an unpaid leave of absence beginning as of the day the employee is nominated and ending on voting day” (Ontario, 1996, c.32, s. 30). If they are elected, then they are expected to resign from their employment position within the municipality. The above conditions are those that the province requires. However, some municipalities have more strict regulations regulating political activity. These will be discussed later in this section.

This review has already briefly analyzed some of the conditions of other levels of government and this section will continue this discussion. Both the provincial and federal governments have significant resources available online for determining what political activity is acceptable for employees. The Public Service Act of Ontario applies to employees of the province. It also explains that no employee can engage in political activity that could place them in a position of conflict with the interests of the crown. This act is more explicit about the levels of acceptable political activity. It defines political activity as doing anything in support or in opposition to a federal or provincial party or does anything in support or in opposition or support to a candidate in a federal, political or municipal election or finally “comments publicly and outside the scope of their duties of his or her position on matters that are directly related to those duties and that are dealt with in the positions or policies of a federal or provincial political party or in the position publicly expressed by a candidate in a federal or provincial election” (Ontario, 1990, c.47, s. 28.1). It explains that “no crown employee shall engage in political activity in the workplace” (Ontario, 1990, c.47, s. 28.1). Also, no person may

associate their position with political activity. This is difficult to completely comprehend because some administrative situations require political behaviour or significant political knowledge. Interestingly, the Act explains that the employees have the right to decline to participate in political activity.

Certain provincial employees face increased restrictions on their political activity. These include deputy ministers, members of the Ontario public service senior management group, full-time heads, vice chairs and members of agencies, boards and commissions, commissioned officers and detachment commanders with the Ontario Provincial Police. These individuals are forbidden to participate in political activity beyond the following activities: vote in any level of elections, contribute money to parties or candidates, be a member of a federal or provincial party, or attend all candidates meetings. They are entitled to be a candidate in a municipal election only with the approval of their deputy minister and may hold municipal office with the approval of their deputy minister (Ontario, 1990, c.47, s.28.3). The Act explains that “the deputy minister shall grant the application for leave or approval if he or she is of the opinion that the activity or office would not interfere with the performance of the employee’s duties and would not conflict with the interest of the Crown.” (Ontario, 1990 c. 47, s. 28.3). Therefore, even restricted individuals may run and hold positions in municipal office with simply obtaining the deputy minister’s approval. The majority of employees who are unrestricted individuals working for the province may seek nomination or campaign on a municipal election without taking a leave and may hold municipal office if their activity or office would not interfere with the performance of the employees duties and would conflict with the interests of the crown (Ontario, 1990, c. 47,

s.28.4). However, if they run for provincial or federal office, they must take a leave of absence. Interestingly, crown employees who have face-to-face contact with the public and who are likely to be perceived by those members of the public as having power over them, may only solicit funds on behalf of a person or party while on leave of absence. This is also controlled for those crown employees who supervise other crown employees (Ontario, 1990, c. 47, s. 28.4). Instructions for deputy ministers explain that unrestricted employees should have their applications for leave of absence to run in elections granted.

The federal public service commission also has explicit guidelines for the political activity of its workers. The Public Service Employment Act (PSEA) explains entitlement and the rules for political activities of federal government workers. The act explains to employees that they may participate in any political activity as long as it “does not impair or is not perceived by others as impairing your ability to perform your duties in a politically impartial manner” (Canada, political activity). The public service commission reminds an employee that even if the PSEA does not apply, the values and ethics code for the public service still applies. Therefore, speaking out to the media about the government may not necessarily be against the PSEA but the employee could face disciplinary action under the code (Canada, political activity). Employees are expected to seek the permission of the public service commission before seeking nomination to become a candidate in a municipal election (Canada, political activity). However, they do not have to take a leave of absence without pay. Federal employees who wish to seek the nomination for a provincial or federal election must take a leave of absence without pay to do so (Canada, political activity). The Act explains that “an employee ceases to be an employee on the day he or she is declared elected in a federal, provincial, or territorial

election” (Canada 2003, c.22, ss.12, 13). Deputy heads are forbidden from participating in political activities that are beyond voting (Canada 2003, c.22, ss.12, 13). Since changes to the Act in 2005, the public service commission has strengthened its authority in regulating the political impartiality of the federal public service (Canada, political activity). The investigations branch of the public service commission watches over the activities of employees (Canada, political activity).

Furthermore, the federal government instituted the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms which applies to all Canadians, including government employees. “The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms provides all Canadians with ‘*freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression*’ and any restriction should be only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society” (Canada, Political Activity). In addition to the afformentioned section 1, section 2 (b) *freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression* and 2 (d) *freedom of association* were the basis for easing restrictions on the political activity of federal employees. In the early 1990s several federal public employees challenged the PSEA on the basis that the restrictions on political activity were inconsistent with the constitution. The most notable case is *Osbourne v. Canada (Treasury Board)* in 1991 at the Supreme Court. This case nullified many of the personal political restrictions facing much of the broad public service with the exception of deputy heads (Supreme Court of Canada).

### **2.3 Policies of municipalities in Ontario**

The policies set down by individual municipalities addressing the political and community participation of municipal employees is quite inconsistent across the province of Ontario. Some of the restrictions appear to be well beyond what the provincial legislation has outlined for municipalities. The city of Toronto has a clear policy entitled “Employees Seeking Election to Political Office.” The city of Toronto explains that all employees are eligible for leave while running and leave must be taken for those running in municipal elections. However, it is clear that employees are not expected to resign if they are elected to any other non-municipal level (Toronto, Employees Seeking). However, they also have a policy entitled Employee Participation in Municipal Election Campaigns. This policy explicitly states that “employees must ensure that any involvement in a municipal election campaign does not adversely affect their ability to perform their duties as employees of the city of Toronto. Restrictions address the need for employees to be and to appear impartial.” It also provides a lengthy list of those who should not be involved in campaigns beyond voting and attending candidate meetings. The restricted positions include city manager, deputy managers, by-law officers, directors, division heads, elections staff, and secretariat staff having relations with councillors. Having a list of restricted positions at the municipal level is very rare in the Province of Ontario. The Code of Conduct applies to all employees and explains “in the context of an election campaign, no member shall use the services of persons during hours in which those persons receive any compensation from the city. No member shall compel staff to engage in partisan political activities or subject staff to threats or

discrimination for refusing to engage in such activities.” (Toronto, Employee Participation).

The city of Hamilton has both a Code of Conduct and a Candidacy for Political Office Policy. It states that employees running for political office must disclose their candidacy to the city manager. Furthermore, it states that employees running for municipal, provincial or federal office must take an unpaid leave of absence. If they are elected to municipal office, they must resign (Hamilton, Candidacy). The requirement to take an unpaid leave at any level of election is more restrictive than what the legislation outlines.

The city of Ottawa is another municipality which has significant constraints on the political and community activities of its employees. The policy warns workers about personal involvement affecting conflict of interests or perceived conflict of interest. While the City warns that individuals must consider their professional position when making personal decisions, they are reminded that their personal activities do not belong in the workplace. It also explains that employees wishing to run for municipal, provincial or federal level of elections must take a leave of absence without pay (Ottawa, Political and Community Activity).

#### **2.4 Policies in the city of London**

This limited examination of municipal policies shows that they are significantly varied and display a broad range of limitations on activities. While the city of London has limited formal policies outlining community and political behaviour, it is more closely tied to the legislation outlined by the province on these activities. Therefore, it

may be less likely to be challenged on the basis of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms as being overly restrictive.

Reviewing the information package for the 2006 municipal elections is a beneficial way to understand how the regulations governing elections are explained to employees and the public. The report cites the Municipal Act and explains that employees and those who hold administrative positions may not be elected to council (London, Information 11). It also goes one step further and instructs employees to take a “leave of absence beginning as of the day the employee is nominated and ending on the voting day” (London, Information 13). The package however, does not explain how to go about taking the leave of absence or what the protocol is if the individual is elected to council or a position at any other level of government.

The City also has a Code of Conduct for municipal employees. It explains that employees are expected to conduct their duties in a respectful manner and abide by confidentiality regulations and perform duties in the best interests of the corporation. The policy explains that “employees who engage in any supplemental employment or business shall do so in a manner which will not interfere with/place in conflict or be reasonably perceived to interfere with/place in conflict with the performance of their duties as a Corporation employee or in which an advantage would be derived from their employment with the Corporation.” They are encouraged to report this to their “manager where a conflict or perceived conflict does exist.” Furthermore, they are not permitted to “use Corporation property or permit Corporation property to be used for activities not associated with the performance of their duties unless authorized to do so.”

Furthermore, the code also explains the disciplinary process to be followed if this code is violated (London, Administrative policies).

### **3.0 Methods**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This research employs primarily a quantitative approach. However; there are elements of the qualitative model found within. John Creswell in Research Design: Qualitative & Quantitative Approaches describes one of the preferred methods of combined research design models which is called the *dominant-less dominant design*. This study utilizes mostly quantitative but also embodies a qualitative aspect to the study. He explains that “the advantage of this approach is that it presents a consistent paradigm picture in the study and still gathers limited information to probe in detail one aspect of the study” (Creswell 177).

In Research Decisions: Quantitative and Qualitative Perspectives Ted Palys explains that “designing thoughtful, interesting, and appropriate questions, providing an ethical context in which respondents will be most likely to give insightful and candid responses and understanding just what we have at the end of the process” are essential considerations in doing survey research. These factors drove the development of a questionnaire designed to gather information about municipal employees. This survey is available in Appendix section 5.2. Surveys often receive a response rate between 10% and 40% (Palys 151). Since the survey was administered online, it may be considered a problem that the researcher was not readily available to resolve any confusion over the questions (Palys 151). However, the researchers’ email was posted four times throughout

the survey and the absence increased privacy which may have boosted the comfort level of participants and honesty of responses. More of the delimitations and limitations of this study will be discussed later in the paper.

An important component of this study is to confidently describe the political preferences of municipal workers. A survey enables the researcher to collect data on the presence or absence of a political characteristic both quickly and conveniently. A survey is the preferred method when gathering this type of information about a vast number of participants. An online survey provides the researcher with a significant amount of cost efficient and convenient information. Online surveys are developed at the University of Western Ontario by the Social Science Data Networks Services (SSNDS) for graduate students. The internet is a format with which municipal employees are familiar. The web address to the online survey is easily attached to an email so that participants can simply click on the link and be connected to the questionnaire. The survey was available from Wednesday, July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2007 until Sunday, July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2007. On Wednesday, July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2007, an initial memorandum via email notifying employees of the survey was sent out to workers by the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) with a link to the online survey. On Tuesday, July 10<sup>th</sup> 2007, a reminder memorandum from the CAO was sent out to workers four days before the closing of the survey. The flexibility of an online survey allowed for the time frame of the survey to be extended while awaiting permission from the City to administer the study. The quantitative data collected is easily converted into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) format for analysis. The qualitative information was examined multiple times and themes were identified and coded. The themes and highlights from this analysis are presented after the quantitative data in the analysis

section. The survey is cross-sectional such that the data is collected at one specific point in time.

### **3.2 Sample and Population**

The city of London was selected for a number of reasons, one of which was convenience because of the location of the University of Western Ontario within the municipal boundary. It is located in southwestern Ontario and is Canada's tenth largest municipality (Marketing 4). In 2006 the city had a population of 352,395 (Marketing 2). The city government is led by fourteen ward councilors, four board of control members and the mayor. Appendix section 5.5 contains a map of the municipal ward boundaries. The administrative side is led by the Chief Administrative Officer, Mr. Jeff Fielding.

In an attempt to minimize sampling error, all individuals on the City of London employee mail-out list were given the opportunity to participate. However, since all employees were not on this list, it may be considered *convenience* sampling. The data analysis section begins with an identification of the demographic of those who responded to the survey. Three hundred and thirty seven individuals responded to the survey. Approximately two thousand two hundred employees received invitations to participate in the study. This is a response rate of approximately 15.3%. Even though the response rate is low, valuable information can still be used to identify patterns from this sample of the population. Henceforth, the term respondent and employee will be used interchangeably. There are 2,133 full-time employees with the city of London and most have access to computers. The total number of City of London employees is 3,386. Figure 3.2.1 shows the breakdown and number of municipal employees. The survey was

mainly sent to full-time employees with the city of London. However, it was administered in the summer and some full-time workers would have been on vacation during the time of the survey. It is believed that some of the casual

<b>Figure 3.2.1</b>				
<b>TOTAL # OF EMPLOYEES - JUNE 2007</b>				
<b>CITY OF LONDON</b>				
<b>EE GROUP</b>	<b>FT</b>	<b>PT</b>	<b>TEMP</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Local 107 (outside workers)	537		202	<b>739</b>
Local 101 (inside workers)	704	4	48	<b>756</b>
Casuals (parks + rec)			786	<b>786</b>
Fire (union)	405			<b>405</b>
Dearness unions	114	190		<b>304</b>
Mgmt/Admin	373	13	10	<b>396</b>
<b>Total City of London</b>	<b>2,133</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>1,046</b>	<b>3,386</b>
Source: City of London				

workforce, temporary outside workers, and part-time Dearness workers also were notified of the survey. In addition, it is possible that certain clusters of workers would have been less likely than others to respond to the survey. For example, there are 537 full-time outside workers who may not necessarily have convenient access to computers every day in their jobs. It is also important to note for example the effect of fire fighters on results. There are 405 fire staff and like some other workers, they do not necessarily have their own computer but they would have had access through the fire halls. Copies of the final report were made available to any employee who requested one.

### **3.3 Instrumentation and Materials**

A self-designed survey was developed by the researcher Jennifer Harmer. It was developed with modifications provided by the project supervisor Dr. Martin Horak and the ethics review committee. The survey was piloted with five municipal employees. This process confirmed that it should take approximately ten minutes to complete the survey. The online survey consisted of three pages. First, the welcome page outlined the

confidentiality and anonymity of the survey. It also had the researcher's contact information and the participant had to acknowledge their consent to participate in the study before they were allowed to proceed. This directed the participant to the questionnaire page which was divided into five sections. There were general information questions which provided basic demographic information about the participants. The second section gathered information about involvement in community service. The third section focused on information on voting habits. The fourth section gathered information on formal political activity, for example if the individual had ever participated in an election campaign. The fifth section asked about informal political activity, for example, if a person has ever organized a protest or signed a petition. The sixth section was on the municipal policy and provincial legislation. The participants were then asked to submit the survey which took them to a page thanking them for their participation and allowed them to contact the researcher at this point again. The majority of the questions were comprised of categorical scales and asked about the presence or the absence of a characteristic. There were two rating scales, one which asked participants to rank how active they were in the community on a scale of 0-10 (0 meaning not at all and 10 being highly active). There was a qualitative component to the study. It consisted of one open question at the end of the survey and allowed participants to comment on the participation of municipal employees in the community and in politics.

### **3.4 Delimitations and Limitations of the Study**

*A delimitation:*

The use of an online survey will allow for any employee on the mail-out list to receive a copy of the questionnaire. Since most employees had the opportunity to participate in the survey, it can be said that the findings are representative of the city of London. However, since it is only studying one location, the findings may not be generalized in every municipality across the province. More about the sample size and population will be discussed in future sections.

*A limitation:*

Not all city of London employees have a City of London email account. Therefore, it must be noted that some employees were not included in the study. In addition, some employees with email accounts may have limited access to email due to the nature of their work, such as outside workers.

*A limitation:*

Employees may not have time or desire to complete an online survey. However, the notification of the survey came from the CAO's office and therefore may have increased legitimacy with some employees and motivated them to complete the survey. Furthermore, a reminder notice was sent to individuals to remind them of the project. Additionally, this survey was sent early July and some employees may have been away on vacation or too busy either returning to work or preparing to take their vacation.

*A limitation:*

Employees may not have felt comfortable answering questions of this sensitive nature when the survey was forwarded to them by the municipal administration. For this reason, an ethics review was completed at the University of Western Ontario. At the city, consent was given by senior management and union presidents to proceed with the study. Furthermore, individuals were asked to complete a consent form with their survey. In addition, they were invited four times to contact the survey administrator if they had any questions about completing the survey. Furthermore, it was made clear that the city administration did not receive raw data and responses were kept by the researcher and remained confidential and anonymous.

*A limitation:*

The survey was designed to gather information about individuals who participate in their community and in politics. However, it must be noted that those who volunteer/participate in the community may be more likely to volunteer to respond to the survey. Therefore, it is possible that the number of individuals who participate in the community may be over represented in this study.

### 3.5 Variables in the Study

**Figure 3.5.1**

<b>Variable Name</b>	<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Item on Survey</b>
<b>Variable Grouping #1: Community &amp; Political Participation</b>	<b>Descriptive Research Question #1:</b> Are municipal employees participating in political activities outside of the work setting?	<b>See sections:</b> Community Service, Voting Habits, Formal Political Activity, and Informal Political Activity.
<b>Variable Grouping #2: Knowledge of Policy</b>	<b>Descriptive Research Question #2:</b> Does the restriction on political activities in the workplace affect the types of activities undertaken?	<b>See section:</b> Municipal Policy.

### 3.6 Data Analysis

The purpose of this analysis is to a) identify patterns in the community and political participation of city of London employees and b) to compare this data to available data from Statistics Canada which studies the habits of the Canadian public. Additional data on volunteering and participation came from the 2004 Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (CSGVP). Election results came from the City of London, Elections Ontario, and Elections Canada. The findings of this research project are divided into four main sections. First, there is a broad overview of the demographic information gathered by the survey. The analysis then answers the first research question which asks if municipal employees are participating in political activities outside the work setting. Then, the second question addresses the issue about the restriction on political activities in the workplace if it affects the types of activities undertaken. Finally, the report analyzes the data gathered by the qualitative comment section of the survey.

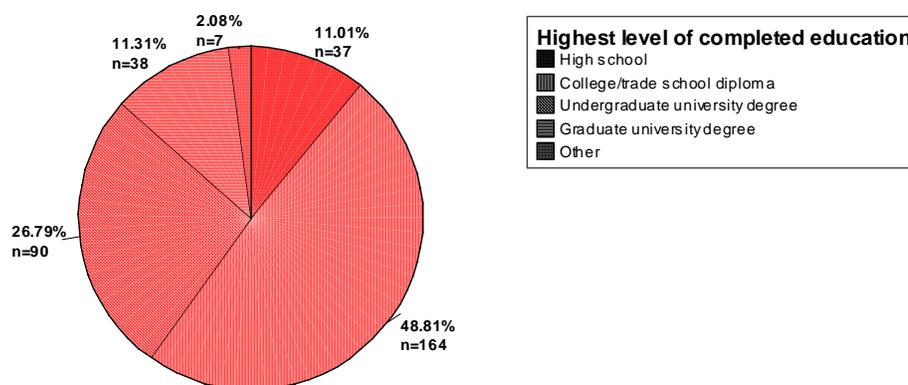
Many respondents took the time to provide meaningful comments about the topic and it is important to discuss these findings separately.

### **Identifying the Municipal Worker**

It is essential to begin with an understanding of the sample group who responded to the survey. This section identifies the demographic information gathered in the survey. Much of this data was gathered in the general information section of the questionnaire. According to gender, the greatest number of individuals who responded to the survey was female. Females represented 51.9% of the valid percentage of respondents whereas males represented 48.1% of the valid percentage.

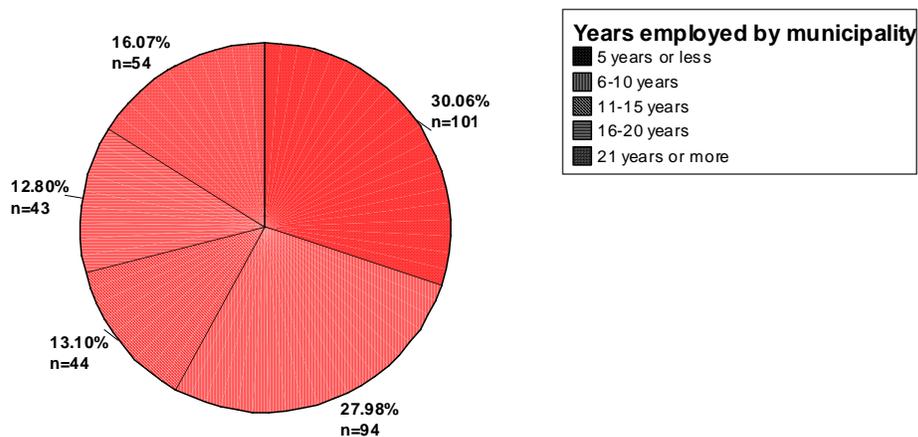
The municipal public service is a highly educated sector with over 85% of respondents who have completed either a college diploma or a university degree. When asked about their highest level of education, the most common response was a college/trade school diploma with 48.8% of respondents who noted that this was their highest level of education. This was followed by 26.8% with a university degree, 11.3% with a graduate degree, 11% with a high school diploma and 2.1% other were recorded as the highest level of education. Figure 3.6.1 shows the breakdown of the highest levels of completed education. The vast majority of respondents are both residents and employees of the city of London. Over three quarters (80.6%) live in the city whereas 19.4% live outside the city limits. This is an important distinction because this study is trying to identify the participation of individuals in this community.

**Figure 3.6.1 Breakdown of highest level of completed education from all respondents**



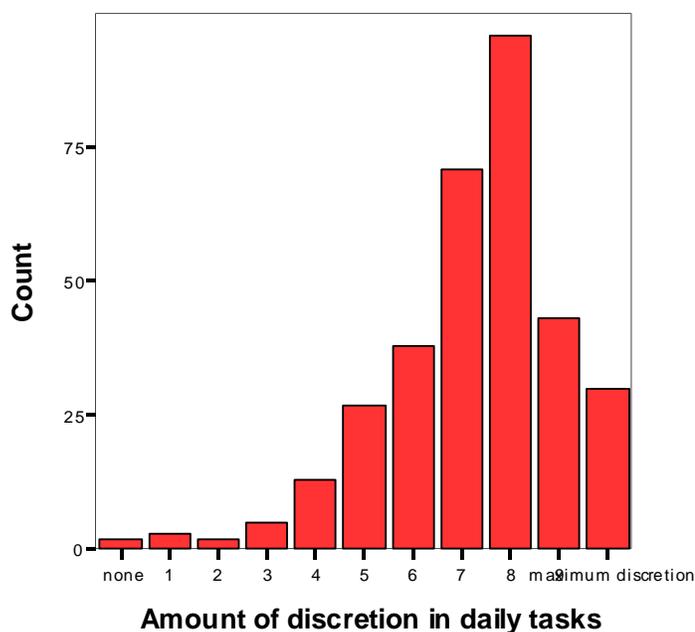
Now that background information has been established, it is important to examine patterns in work conditions. The data on number of years employed by the municipality is somewhat deceiving. The most common response was five years or less (30.1%). This was followed by 28% of respondents with 6-10 years with the City, 13.1% with 11-15 years, 12.8% with 16-20 years, and 16.1% with 21 years or more. Even though the most common answer was five years or less, this actually translated into a high number of employees with a significant amount of experience with the City. For example, 69.9% of respondents have been with the city of London for six years or more. Figure 3.6.2 elaborates on the years of service of all respondents. Approximately one-third (36.9%) of employees were supervisors of other workers which leaves 63.1% of employees without this role. The majority of workers belong to a union in their jobs at the City, with 62.7% as members of a union whereas 37.3% are not.

**Figure 3.6.2 Years of service breakdown from all respondents**



It is valuable to further examine the duties of these individuals. A significant number of employees have interaction with the public on an average day. That is, 67.4% interact with the public whereas 32.6% of respondents do not. It is interesting to note that when asked how much discretion they have in the daily tasks of their job, employees considered themselves as having a significant amount. When asked to rank their discretion between “0” (no discretion) and “10” (maximum discretion), the most common response was an “8”, with 92.4% of respondents feeling that their discretion ranked half way (“5”) or higher. Interestingly, gender was not a factor in the ranking of discretion in one’s position. Furthermore, there was no relationship between supervisory position and ranking of discretion. This suggests that employees in a wide variety of positions consider themselves as having high levels of discretion. Figure 3.6.3 shows the rankings of discretion.

**Figure 3.6.3 Respondents were asked to rank the amount of discretion their have in completing the daily tasks of their job**



### **Political activity outside of the workplace**

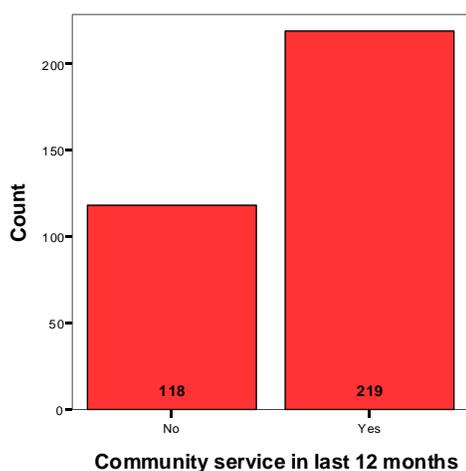
Now that information about the broad municipal service has been identified, it is essential to revisit the research questions guiding this study. The first research question asks if municipal employees are participating in political activities outside of the work setting. The answer is complicated but it appears that workers are participating in political activities outside the work setting. Since the definition of what is political has broad characterizations, this paper will examine community service, voting behaviour, formal political activity, and informal political activity.

#### **Community Service**

Figure 3.6.4 shows that municipal employees are heavily involved in volunteering in their community. However, they are modest about their involvement. The majority (65%) of employees had been involved with community service volunteering in the last

twelve months whereas 35% of employees had not done any volunteering. This is higher than national patterns where the CSGVP found that 45% of the Canadian population aged 15 and over volunteered during the one year before the survey (Canada, Highlights 10). While this data is not an ideal comparator because it focuses on the broad Canadian public, it is the most recent and extensive study done on the topic. Therefore, it is valuable in pointing out patterns in Canadian society. Even though most volunteered, employees did not appear to consider themselves highly active in the community. When asked to rank their level of activity outside their job in the community, both the median response (half of the cases were above and half below) and the mode (the most common) response was “5”. Comparing the responses of the two questions, 35% said they had not volunteered in the community in the last twelve months and 5.2% ranked themselves as having zero activity in their community outside work. This suggests that a significant number are active in the community in others ways than volunteering. Therefore, it is helpful to examine how many are members of community based organizations.

**Figure 3.6.4 Completed community service volunteering in the last 12 months.**



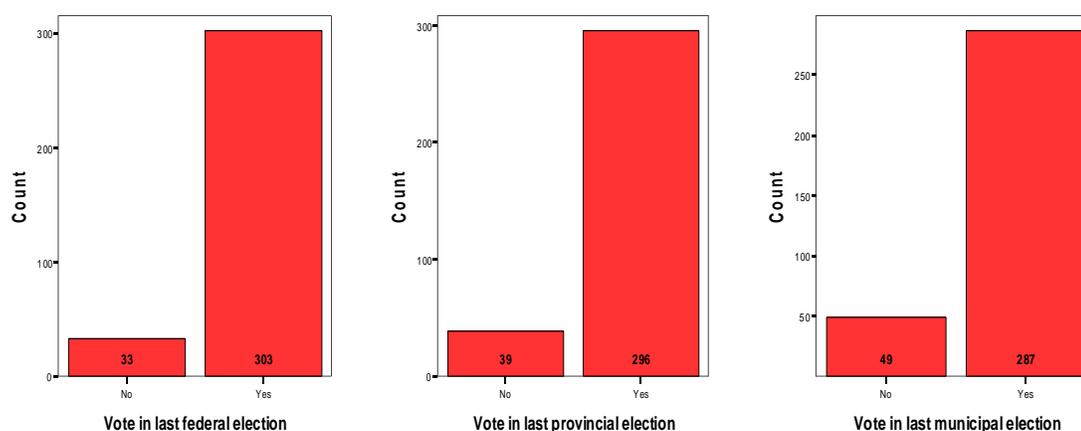
Surprisingly, a strong majority (61.7%) were not members of community based organizations compared to 38.3% who said they were members. This is in stark contrast to national patterns on community involvement. The CSGVP reported that 66% of Canadians aged 15 and over reported belonging to a community group or organization (Canada, Highlights 11). In the City of London study, gender had no impact on whether or not an individual volunteered or was a member of a community organization. However, education was a factor in whether or not an individual participated in community service. Those with graduate (81.6%) and undergraduate (68.9%) university degrees were more likely than those with college (59.8%) or high school (67.6%) diplomas to have volunteered in the last twelve months. This relationship is significant at the 95% confidence level. Furthermore, supervisory status was a factor in whether or not an individual chose to volunteer in the community. It can be said with 95% confidence that individuals who supervise other workers are more likely to volunteer than those who did not supervise other workers. It is 75.4% of those who supervise other workers who volunteer, compared to 58.9% of non-supervisors who also volunteer. However, there is a relationship between education and whether or not someone is the supervisor of other workers. It can be said with 95% statistical confidence that the higher the education, the more likely they are to be a supervisor of other workers. The highest rates of volunteering were reported in the category of employees who had been with the city 15-20 years and the lowest in the five years or less range. Perhaps those who have been working with the city longer are more settled in the community or have had more opportunities to participate. However, upon examination of all years of service

categories, there was no link between years of service and percentage of employees who volunteered in the community.

### **Voting**

This section will discuss the voter turn-out rates of municipal employees. It will be compared to voter turn-out data from the City of London, Elections Ontario, and Elections Canada. Municipal employees are turning out in remarkable numbers for elections at all levels. Of the three last elections (federal, provincial, municipal), municipal employees had the highest turn-out rate at the federal election where 90.2% of employees went to vote. This was followed by 88.4% of employees who went to vote in the provincial election and 85.4% of employees who went to vote in the municipal election. One would think that since all these individuals work for the municipality, their highest turn-out would be at municipal elections. However, this tendency of high turn-outs at federal, then provincial, followed by municipal elections is a pattern that is consistent with turn-out patterns across the country. Strong voter turn-out rates across the board suggest that this group is participating for reasons other than self-interest (such as a belief that they should be involved because it affects their job). Figure 3.6.5 shows the numbers of municipal employees that turned out to vote in the last federal, provincial and municipal elections.

**Figure 3.6.5 Number of municipal employees that turned out to vote in the last federal, provincial and municipal elections**



The last federal election was held on January 23, 2006. In the 2006 general election, the overall voter turn-out was 64.7% with an average turn-out of 66.6% in Ontario (Elections Canada). Interestingly, this is an improvement from the 2004 election which had an overall average of 60.9% and 61.8% in Ontario (Elections Canada). Overall, federal voter turn-out in London is higher than the national and provincial average. However, there are significant variations in federal voter turn-out rates across London. One must note that there are several federal electoral ridings that encompass the City of London. Appendix section 5.6 includes a map of the electoral ridings. They are London-North, London-Fanshawe, Elgin-Middlesex-London, and London West. During the 2006 election, the turn-out in London West was 70.6%, Elgin-Middlesex-London had a voter turnout of 66.2%, London-North Centre reported 66.1%, and London-Fanshawe had 62.2% (Elections Canada). London North had a significant decline in the turnout in a bi-election on November 27, 2006 and had a turn-out of 42.2% (Elections Canada). Considering all this data, it is important to remember that this study reported that 90.2% of municipal employees turned out to vote in the federal election.

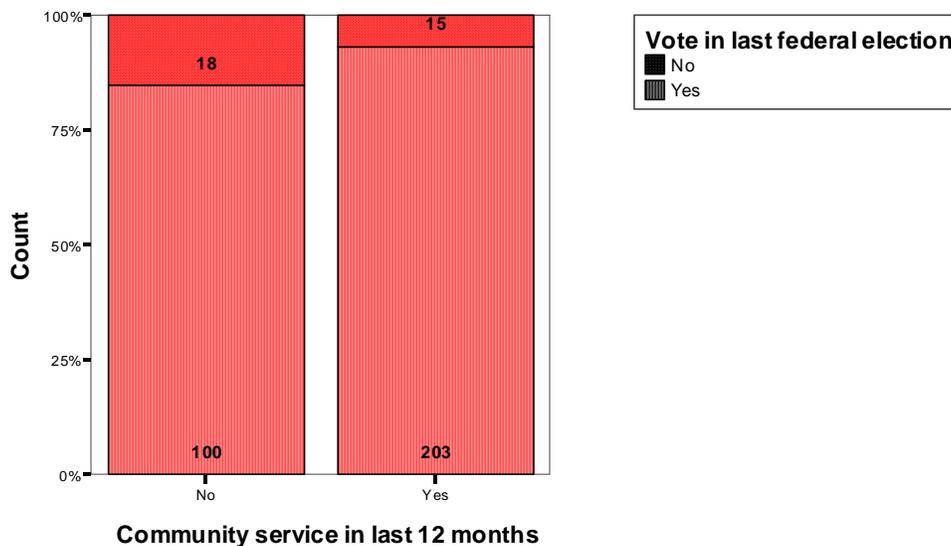
The last provincial election was held on October 2, 2003. Overall, the provincial voter turn-out was 56.9%. This is a decrease from 58.3% in 1999 and 62.9% in 1995 (Elections Ontario). All of London's ridings boasted higher turn-outs than provincial averages except for London-Fanshawe. Voter turn-out is best understood when it is dissected into various regions of the city. Appendix section 5.6 includes a map of the electoral ridings. There are four provincial ridings that are located in the city of London which were discussed in the section above. London North Centre, London-Fanshawe and London West have no rural polling stations whereas almost half of Elgin- Middlesex- London's polling stations are rural. Interestingly, it was the only local riding with rural polling stations that had the highest voter-turn out. Elgin- Middlesex- London reported a turn-out of 60.3%, London West had 60%, London North Centre had a voter turn-out rate of 56.4%, and London-Fanshawe had 52.4% of voters turn-out to vote (Elections Ontario). This study reported that 88.4% of employees voted in municipal elections.

The last municipal election was held on November 13, 2006. Across Ontario, the average voter turn-out in 2006 municipal elections was 41.3%. This is up from 40.2% in 2003 (AMO). Municipalities reported a range of turn-outs between 10% to 76% (AMO). The city of London also reported a higher voter turn-out than provincial turn-outs. In the 2006 London municipal election, voter turn-out was at 42.9% with 102,637 votes cast in the election (London 2007). In 2006, "voter turnout was the highest since the Municipal Election of 1997" according to City Clerk Kevin Bain (London 2007). This was accompanied by an increase in advanced voter turn-out by 24.4% over the 2003 election (London 2007). This study found that 85.4% of municipal employees turned out to vote in that election.

It is important to further dissect the data gathered on this exceptionally high voting group. Gender appeared to be a factor in whether or not an employee was likely to vote in some elections. There was no relationship between gender and voting at the municipal level. However, men (93.2%) were more likely to vote than women (83.7%) at the provincial level. Also, men (95%) were more likely than women (85.5%) to vote at the federal level. Both of these findings were significant at the 95% confidence level. Interestingly, education and residence in the city in which they work was not a factor in voting at any level.

Those who volunteer in the community are more likely to vote at all levels of government. Eighty nine percent of those who volunteered also voted in municipal elections compared to 78.8% of those who did not volunteer voted in the municipal election. This is also true for provincial elections. Ninety three percent of those who volunteered voted in the provincial election whereas, 80.3% of those who did not volunteer voted in those elections. Figure 3.6.6 shows that ninety three percent of those who volunteered voted in the federal election whereas 84.7% of those who did not volunteer voted in the federal election. All three of these comparisons are statistically significant at the 95% level.

**Figure 3.6.6 Employees that volunteered in the community in the last 12 months were more likely to vote in the last federal election than those who did not volunteer.**

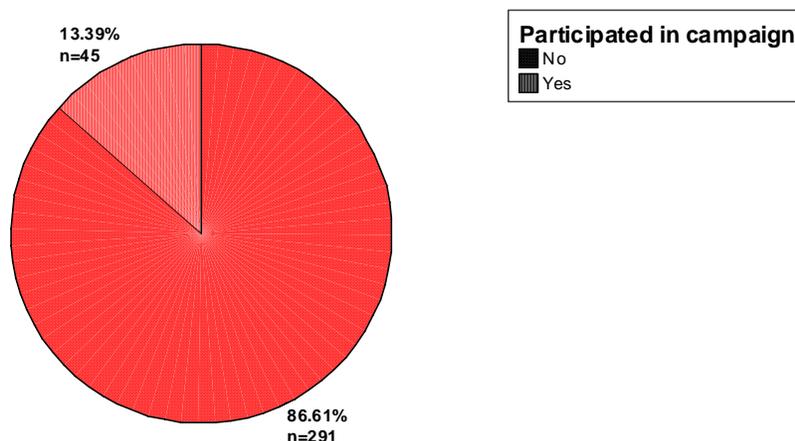


### Formal Political Activity

While municipal employees are turning out to vote in elections at all levels, they are not lining up to be involved in political campaigns. Figure 3.6.7 shows that only 13.4% of those surveyed say they participated in the campaign of an individual or party running for any public office compared to 86.6% who said they were not involved. Interestingly, the trend of preferred level of government involvement reverses when participation is examined, instead of voting. Almost all of those who said they were involved in campaigns, participated in the campaign of a municipal election. This is 9.5% of all respondents said they were involved in a municipal campaign. This was followed by 6.2% of the total population who participated in a provincial election and 5.6% participating in a federal election. Only 0.3% of the sample participated in an

election of a school board representative. The preferred type of involvement was posting signs/advertisements with 9.2% of the total sample, followed by canvassing door to door (6.8%), other involvement (3.9%), and telephoning voters or donors (2.1%).

**Figure 3.6.7 Municipal employees that have participated in the campaign for a party/individual running for office in the last five years**



Many municipal employees have not contributed funds to any election campaign in the last five years. This means 87.1% have not contributed money and 12.9% had. Past studies indicate that the likelihood of donating and subsequently the amount given increases with age, education, and household income” (Canada, Highlights 13). Since this study indicates that municipal employees are highly educated and many have been with the organization for many years, they are the prime demographic for making donations of this nature.

Surprisingly, a noteworthy number (2.1%) of municipal employees had run in an election for public office. Actual numbers of the breakdown will not be reported in this section because this represents less than ten respondents. These individuals chose local

government elections to run in over any other level. The majority of those that ran chose school boards, municipal government, followed by provincial and then federal candidacy. Interestingly, there was no relationship between education and whether or not they ran in an election. In this study, gender did not appear to be a factor if someone ran as a candidate in an election.

The majority of municipal employees have not considered running as a candidate in an election for public office. Only 10.4% of those surveyed had considered it, whereas 88.6% said that they had not considered running in an election. While a small fraction of employees considered running, it is still a significant amount and reinforces the importance of processes in place for employees who wish to run. Again, it is the local government level that these individuals considered over any other level; 6.2% of the entire population considered running in municipal elections, followed by 3.6% at the school board level and finally provincial and federal levels with less than ten respondents each. There was no relationship between education and if an individual had considered running as a candidate in an election. However, it was clear that there was a relationship between gender and if an individual would consider running in an election. Males were more likely (17.2%) than females (5.8%) to consider running as a candidate in an election. This is significant at the 95% confidence level. Perhaps women are more likely to favour other methods of participation. The next section will address informal types of political activity.

### **Informal Political Activity**

It is important to examine informal political behaviour to better understand the preferences of these individuals. When asked if they had attended (not as a government worker) any open houses or community meetings held by the municipal government, 38.7% said they had and 61.3% said that they had not. While this is not the majority, it does indicate that a significant number of individuals are participating in informal venues of governance. We are 95% confident that men are more likely than women to attend community meetings, outside work; 44.7% of men and 32.4% of women responded saying that they attended a community meeting held by the municipal government. However, there did not appear to be a relationship between education and whether or not an employee would turn out to a community meeting. There was however a relationship between being a supervisor of other workers and turning out to community meetings. Supervisors were more likely (48.4%) than non-supervisors (33.2%) to attend community meetings. This is true at the 95% confidence level. This indicates that these individuals have more interest or confidence in attending these meetings.

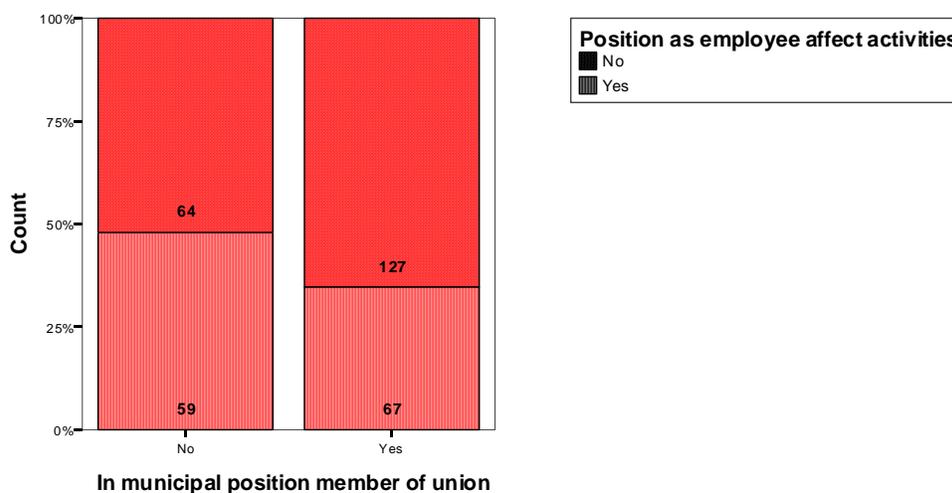
A very small percentage of the workforce recently participated in a strike or picket line. Only 1.8% of employees participated in a picket or strike in the last twelve months. Neither gender, education, nor status as a supervisor was a factor in whether or not someone participated in a strike. Of the respondents, 39.5% reported signing a petition in the last twelve months. Neither gender, education, nor status as a supervisor was a factor in whether or not someone signed a petition. Twenty three percent had contacted a councilor/politician outside of their duties as a municipal employee in the last twelve months. Neither gender, education, nor status as a supervisor was a factor in

whether or not someone contacted a councillor. However, 67% of municipal employees have encouraged others to contact a councillor/politician about an issue in the last twelve months. Neither gender, education nor status as a supervisor was a factor in whether or not someone encouraged others to contact a councillor/politician. While it is difficult to assess what this means without comparison data to the general City of London population, there are some important implications here. Overall, it appears that this group prefers less overt forms of participation but they have an important role in facilitating the participation of others.

Since the public service has high unionization rates, it is important to consider the connection between trade unions and community and political behaviour. Members of unions were more likely to participate in informal political behaviour than their non-union counterparts. Forty five percent of those employees in a union had signed a petition over the last twelve months, compared to 30.1% of those who were not in a union. This is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. Union members were also more likely to contact a councillor/politician in their personal time. Twenty eight percent of those in a union had contacted a political official in the last twelve months compared to 13.1% of non-union employees. However, union status had no impact on whether or not an individual encouraged someone else to contact a councillor. Surprisingly, union members were no more likely than non union employees to attend a community meeting or to volunteer in the community. This is significant at the 99% confidence level. Figure 3.6.8 shows that union employees were less likely to say their job affects the political and community choices they make. Thirty five percent of union employees felt their job affected their behaviour compared to 48% of non-union

employees. This is significant at the 95% confidence level. Members of unions were no more likely to vote in any election than any other non-union employees. Perhaps being a member of a union made someone less concerned about the perceptions of others regarding overt political behaviour.

**Figure 3.6.8 Union status and whether or not someone feels their position as a municipal employee affects the type(s) political/community activity they participate in.**



### Restrictions on Activities

This section addresses the second research question which asks if restrictions on political activities in the workplace affect the types of activities undertaken. It primarily examines the knowledge of the policy and the perception of their position as a municipal employee having an affect on the choices they make.

Employees were asked to the best of their knowledge if there is any provincial legislation that regulates the political participation of municipal employees. The majority (57.6%) said they didn't know, 23.7% said "no", and 18.4% said "yes" with 0.3% who

did not respond. This question refers to the Municipal Act and the Municipal Elections Act that outlines the conditions for municipal employees who would like to run for a municipal election. However, less than a fifth of these employees demonstrated that they knew the origins of the restrictions on running for office. This is significant because it suggests that not only is there confusion, there are a significant number of employees believing there is no provincial legislation regulating their activities. It is important to note that this does not necessarily suggest that employees are unaware of a policy requiring them to take a leave of absence without pay while running for elections. It does suggest that they are unaware of the provincial origins of this regulation. It is interesting to examine if the number of years employed by the municipality has something to do with the response to this question. This study showed that the number of years in service with the City did not necessarily translate into increased knowledge about this legislation.

When asked if there is a municipal policy that governs the community or political activities of its employees, the majority (52.5%) said that they did not know, with 27% saying “no” and 20.5% saying “yes”. The actual answer to this question is somewhat complicated. It is important to note that there may have been different responses if the question was worded in another way. The city of London policy manual does not discuss the political activities of municipal employees; however, it does contain the code of ethics for personnel. Furthermore, the provincial legislation prohibiting a current employee from being a councillor does apply. This being said, there is still value in further dissecting responses to this question. Of those who said “no” or “I don’t know” to their being a municipal policy, respondents were asked if there should be a policy governing the activities and 69.2% said there should not be one whereas 20.8% said that

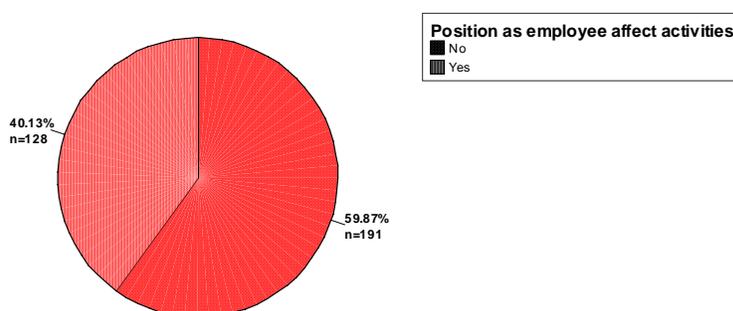
there should be a policy. Of those who said “yes” to the need for a municipal policy, 58.1% of them said that it was necessary and 41.9% said “no”, that it was not necessary to have a policy. In summation, those who thought there was a policy said it was needed and those who did not think that there was a policy said it was not needed. These findings suggest that both sides support maintaining the status quo. There was no relationship between length of time with the City and response to this question. Knowledge of a municipal policy and provincial legislation were not related to whether or not someone considered running in an election or actually ran as a candidate in an election. Furthermore, there were no notable differences in the behaviour of those who thought that there was a policy versus those who thought there was none.

Knowledge of the policy has already been discussed and before the discussion focuses on perception of the impact of the employer on choices, one should combine the two variables. Most employees (55.2%) who stated that there was a municipal policy governing activities also stated that their position affects their choices, whereas, the majority (67.9%) of those who said there was no policy said that their job did not affect their choices. This is significant at the 95% confidence level. This is paradoxical because those who feel there is a policy feel it affects their choices, compared to those who feel there is no policy, their choices are left uninhibited. Perhaps this says less about the impact of a policy on behaviour and more about the perceptions of a policy.

It is important to get more perspective about whether the individual thinks that their professional role affects their personal participation. Respondents were asked if their position as a municipal employee affects the type(s) of political/community activities in which they choose to participate. The majority (56.7%) of people said “no”,

38% felt that it did affect their participation, with 5% who said that they did not know and 0.3% who left the question unanswered. Figure 3.6.9 shows a breakdown of the valid percentage of responses. Therefore, the majority of individuals feel that their participation is unaltered but many felt that it did affect their choices. Therefore, it is important to explore this further. Interestingly, gender and years of employment with the City did not have an affect on the response to this question.

**Figure 3.6.9 Breakdown of number of individuals that think their position as a municipal employee affects the type(s) of political/community participation they participate in.**



Those who participated in community service were just as skeptical that their job affects their choices as those who did not complete community service. Furthermore, there was no relationship between their membership in an organization and perception of their job affecting their personal participation. Also, there was no relationship between campaign participation and belief about their job affecting their political and community choices.

Paradoxically, the majority (61%) who contributed money to a campaign said that their position affects their choices, whereas only 37.8% who did not contribute said that

their position affects their choices. This is significant at the 95% confidence level.

Perhaps in this case, it was their knowledge of the candidates and the process that led them to know to which group to donate funds. This could also show a preference toward more covert modes of political participation.

There is a 95% statistical significance that there is a relationship between education and whether or not an employee feels that their job affects the types of political/community activities in which they choose to participate. The higher the education, the more likely that they feel their job affects their personal community and political activities. Sixty six percent with a graduate degree felt that their job affected their choices, whereas 36.9% with undergraduate degrees, 36.1% with college diplomas and 37.1% with high school diplomas felt their job affected their choices. This is interesting because it suggests that there is variation between opinions about their job affecting their choices across different demographics within the public service. This may be further explained by their position within the organization. However, this was not examined in this study.

Municipal employees who voted are more likely to suggest that their job affects their political and community choices than those who did not vote. Forty four percent of those who voted say their position affects participation compared to 19.6% who did not vote. This is true with 95% statistical significance. Perhaps it is their positions as municipal employees that are creating the high voter turn-out rates. Of those who voted in the provincial election, 43.9% said that their job affects their participation whereas 10.8% of those who did not vote said the same thing. This is 99.9% statistically significant. This is also true for the federal election where 43.2% who voted said their

jobs affected their behaviour, compared to 12.9% who did not vote who said that their job affected their behaviour. This is significant at the 99% confidence level. The response to the question about municipal position affecting political and community choices had no relationship to responses in running in an election, considering running in an election, attending meetings, signing petitions, participating in strikes, contacting councilors. However, those that encouraged others to contact councillors were more likely (46.5%) to say their position affects their participation than those who did not encourage others (27.2%). This is significant at the 99% confidence level. While this shows that both rejected the notion that their job affected their choices, it shows that the behaviour of one group is different than the other.

### **Open-ended Comments**

It is essential to examine the qualitative component of this survey. The questionnaire asked “do you have any additional comments about municipal employees and their participation in the community and in politics?” Fifty five individuals took the time to respond to this question. Responses were thoughtful and rich in data and touched on a variety of areas.

Many employees expressed their political awareness when they articulated concern for the appearance of political neutrality at work. Many had demonstrated that they had concern to not appear in a “conflict of interest” situation. One comment suggested that “politics and municipal employees do not make for good un-biased decision making.” Respondents were quite varied in their comments about how their job

affects their choices in their personal lives. Several cited the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and stated that they should or do have the rights of other citizens. Others indicated that their job in the public service had impacted the way they behave in their personal interactions with the community for better or for worse. One individual indicated that their negative experience in working with citizens in their professional position led them to remove themselves from community based participation. While important to consider, this reaction was not typical, as many indicated that their personal interactions with their community had positive effects on their families and their professional lives. An individual commented that “community participation can be highly rewarding from a social and psychological perspective and useful from a job relationship perspective in making contact with other members of the community.” Another person stated that “civil servants have a responsibility to participate on some level in the community; without that experience you cannot truly understand the community’s needs and cannot truly serve them accordingly.” Several indicated that their participation strengthened their role as municipal employees. Many identified that they were cautious to participate in activities that would not place them in a conflict of interest. “When participating in any community-based or political activity municipal employees must be concerned with the appearance of impropriety.” One person stated that they “believe some community participation may be limited by municipal employees as they do not want to get in conflict of interest scenarios.” However, it may affect various levels of employees in different ways and this was evident when one person suggested that “middle or senior management at the City should be openly involved in politics.” One individual indicated that they feel “it would be appropriate to discuss any

potential conflicts with our supervisors or managers.” Open communication with supervisors about these matters would alleviate some of the confusion or tension.

The examination of this qualitative data indicated themes on a larger scale as well. A significant number of respondents discussed that municipal employees had superior knowledge of government processes. One individual explained that “being a municipal employee provides an opportunity to really understand the complexities of the political process and to respect the diverse roles of the various levels of government.” However, most of those individuals indicated that they were hesitant to make changes and identify where changes could be made because they were fearful of being placed in a conflict of interest situation. Another individual described a situation where “some people might not complain as they would be afraid of the repercussions [of complaining about the service in a department.]” One individual stated that “municipal employees in London are encouraged not to talk to politicians.” This is a very interesting statement because insulating the administrative side from the political side has been a key pillar in Canadian public administration. However, this appears to challenge the effectiveness of the public administration model that is widely used in this country. Several employees expressed their desire to share opinions with the newspaper but withheld this because of their role in the city. This struggle to make change without being perceived as political may be at the heart of many issues in Canadian public administration. This is interesting to consider because The Ontario Public Service Act outlines the political activity rights of provincial employees in Part III of the legislation. Part IV outlines whistleblower protection for employees. Perhaps improved conditions for employee feedback in addressing problems within government are needed.

Many respondents indicated the need to bring government closer to citizens-at-large. One person explained “the community should be educated to understand this [municipal decision-making] process and the reason(s) for this process.” Another individual stated that “because of our experience in dealing with the public and seeing the way some things are done, some civic employees would make good municipal councillors.” Some indicated that they felt citizens scrutinized the municipal public service. One individual explained that “we are not allowed too many perks due to the public [scrutiny].” They suggested creating conditions where citizens could be more informed of the processes at city hall. Furthermore, it appeared that a significant portion of the respondents felt that there should be more recognition from the general public and from the organization for the service that these individuals provide. Multiple comments such as “municipal workers in the City of London are not acknowledged for the [volunteer] work they do” were made. It should be recognized that many of these individuals must be cautious that their professional and even personal actions be perceived as unbiased. A significant portion of the respondents indicated a passion for public service both at work and at home. One person indicated that “we constantly are thinking in the best interest of the communities” and that it is often forgotten in the community that this person reinforced that they are also residents in addition to being employees. It has been clear that this is an exceptional group of citizens and that participation may have to do with both the position and “the type of person that chooses to work for a municipality.” Many individuals felt that they had a duty to work for the government and volunteer in the community. One individual commented that it was their

duty to set a good example for their family and those who interact with them and they stated “I will not do anything to jeopardize the reputation of the City or its employees.”

## **Conclusion**

The aim of this study has been to broaden the knowledge about this unique segment of the Canadian population and to better understand their role as both government employees and citizens. This study brought forth a significant amount of descriptive data about the municipal public service in London. The municipal organization is highly educated and many employees have been working in government for a significant period of time. They consider themselves to have a high amount of discretion in their duties and many spend time each time each day interacting with the broad citizen population.

Many in this exceptional group feel a sense of duty to serve the public. Individuals consistently indicated that their personal service to the community strengthens their role as public administrators. Most employees took the time to do community service volunteering. However; they are humble about how active they are in the community. In spite of their community service volunteering, few have joined community based organizations. It is important to compare this to Mark Moore’s thoughts on political management. Moore’s theory appears to be substantiated in that many individuals seek involvement in the community because it supports their ability to accomplish their professional duties, for example through making community connections. However, it appears that this involvement is complicated by a consciousness of how this participation is perceived by others. Municipal workers are

turning out to the polls in extraordinary numbers. Interestingly, they are showing up to vote at all levels of elections not just at the municipal level. Actually, like the broad public there is higher turn-out at federal, then provincial, with lower turn-out at local elections. This shows a genuine interest or perhaps faith in the process, not simply because they are professionally affected by the electoral process. When it comes to being involved in campaigns, individuals are more hesitant to participate. However, when they are involved, it is usually at the local level. Furthermore, a small but considerable portion of employees have been candidates in or have considered running in elections. Again, the preferred level was in local government. The local level has been considered the gateway to politics, which is what makes this an interesting situation for those who are residents and government employees. Many participate in informal forms of politics. Many have attended community meetings and many have signed petitions. This suggests that they are involved at many levels of the process. A significant number had contact with councillors/politicians as a citizen. However; many more had encouraged others to contact politicians. This suggests that they have a significant role as the facilitators of participation of others in the community. This is especially interesting to consider as municipal employees are increasingly asked to engage the public in the process. It would be beneficial to the entire community if the enthusiasm that employees have for the process was shared by all citizens. It appears that political neutrality as Kenneth Kernaghan explained it will face some increasing challenges as traditional public administration practices evolve.

The role of this research was not to determine what a good political activity policy looks like. However, some interesting data about the affect of policies came forth. A

broad policy like one regarding ethics and dealing with conflict of interest is going to have varying interpretations by the individuals that it governs. Employees displayed varying responses to knowledge about which policies governing political activity are in place. However, it appeared that some clarification about procedures which are in place, for example employees running in elections, is needed. Employees are greatly aware of the delicate nature of working in a political atmosphere and that they must maintain a neutral composure. They are acutely aware of the importance to maintain unbiased perceptions and many carry these conditions into their actions and their personal behaviour. For some, this appeared to translate into a situation where they were reluctant to raise concerns about specific issues in government, although most employees stated that their position did not affect their involvement in the community or politics. However, this still left a significant portion who felt that their role changed their behaviour. This study also demonstrated that participation and perceived restrictions on behaviour affected different demographics of workers in different ways. As discussed above, many had an acute awareness of the perceptions of others which led to carefully selected participatory choices. This includes being cautious not to criticize the government when asked to comment in public. Furthermore, it is important to consider that their role may have both a negative and positive effect on their behaviour. There may be constraints for some on which types of participation they choose but this survey highlights that overall participation rates were high. Unfortunately, the cause of this exceptional participation is still unknown. It could be explained by the nature of their employment or perhaps, the extraordinary type of person who chooses to work in local government.

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## 5.0 Appendices

### 5.1 Letter to CAO

Jennifer Harmer  
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Social Science Centre  
The University of Western Ontario  
[jharmer@uwo.ca](mailto:jharmer@uwo.ca)  
(518) 282-7104  
June 5, 2007

Jeff Fielding  
Chief Administrative Officer  
City of London  
Fax : (519) 661-5813

Dear Mr. Fielding,

I am a Master's of Public Administration student in Western's Local Government Program. Currently, I am working on a major research project under the supervision of Dr. Martin Horak. I am examining the community and political involvement of individuals employed in the municipal sector and I would like to conduct a survey of City of London employees. There is little academic data in this area and this study will broaden the knowledge on municipal employees in Ontario. This information may be beneficial for you to better understand how City employees are involved in their community. It may also assist you with corporate policy development relating to this field.

The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. The online survey would be available for employees to access (24 hours a day) between Monday, June 11<sup>th</sup> and Sunday, June 24<sup>th</sup> 2007. I am requesting a memorandum sent from your office on Monday, June 11<sup>th</sup> with a request for all city employees to voluntarily complete the survey and I request that you attach the electronic link to the survey. I would also request a reminder sent to employees on Monday, June 19<sup>th</sup> to complete the survey. Responses will be kept anonymous and confidential. Copies of the final report will be made available to anyone upon request.

I would be deeply appreciative of your participation in this study. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact myself ([jharmer@uwo.ca](mailto:jharmer@uwo.ca)) or my supervisor Dr. Martin Horak ([mhorak@uwo.ca](mailto:mhorak@uwo.ca)).

Sincerely,

Jennifer Harmer

## 5.2 Notice sent to city employees

**From:** Team London, News

**Sent:** Wednesday, July 04, 2007 12:37 PM

**To:** TLSend\_All

**Subject:** Voluntary Survey: Municipal Employees

Memo to all staff:

The City of London has received a request from Jennifer Harmer, a graduate student researcher at the University of Western Ontario who is conducting a research project entitled “the Community and Political Participation of Municipal Employees.” The project will examine how City employees are involved in their community. This is an exciting study because very little research has been done on the unique positions municipal workers have in their city. Jennifer Harmer is working under the supervision of Dr. Martin Horak. This project is a component of her Master’s degree in Public Administration.

As part of this study, all city of London employees are invited to answer an online survey, which will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Participation is entirely **voluntary**. The survey will be available online from Tuesday, July 3<sup>rd</sup> until Saturday, July 14<sup>th</sup>. All responses are **anonymous and confidential** and will be available only to the researcher. The researcher is responsible for the collection, maintenance, protection and use of the data. Copies of the *final report* will be made available to anyone upon request.

More information is available on the online survey page. If you have any questions please contact Ms. Harmer directly at [jharmer@uwo.ca](mailto:jharmer@uwo.ca).

If you choose to participate, this is the link to the online survey:

<http://survey.uwo.ca/municipalemployees>

Thank you.

Jeff Fielding

CAO

### 5.3 Consent Form

#### Welcome

I would like to invite you take part in a study called *Community and Political Participation of Municipal Employees*. It will examine the degree of involvement by municipal employees in their communities. This survey is conducted by Jennifer Harmer, a Master's student in Public Administration at the University of Western Ontario. It will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

**Your Participation is Entirely Voluntary.** You can refuse to participate, refuse to answer any question, or withdraw from the study at any point. Please feel free to contact the survey administrator below to discuss any questions or concerns you have about the study.

**Confidentiality.** If you agree to participate you will not be identified as a participant in the research. All responses are confidential and anonymous.

**Questions or Problems.** Please feel free to ask the survey administrator about any question you may have at any time.

**Results.** You may request a copy of the final report by contacting the survey administrator. Thank you for your interest in this project.

[Jen Harmer](#)

MPA Candidate

Department of Political Science

The University of Western Ontario

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**Consent to Participate.** By entering the survey and submitting it you are indicating that you consent to take part in this study.

## 5.4 Questionnaire

### Survey

If you do not want to answer a specific question simply leave it blank and move on to the next question. Note that most questions in this survey use radio buttons. In this type of question you click a button to select your answer. This construct allows you to change your answer by clicking another button but does not allow you to return to a blank answer. If this happens to you and you have any concerns about your answers, please take note of the question number(s) and contact the [Researcher](#).

### General Information

1. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

2. What is your highest level of completed education?

- Middle school
- High school
- College/trade school diploma
- Undergraduate university degree
- Graduate university degree
- Doctoral university degree
- Other (*please specify*)

3. Are you a resident in the municipality for which you work?

- Yes
- No

4. How long have you been employed by the municipality?

- 5 years or less
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- 21 years or more

5. In your municipal position, are you a supervisor of other workers?
- Yes
- No
6. In your municipal position, are you a member of a union?
- Yes
- No
7. Does your position involve interacting with citizens on an average day?
- Yes
- No

	none					maximum discretion					
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
8. Please rank the amount of discretion you feel you have in carrying out the daily tasks of your job.	<input type="checkbox"/>										

- Community Service**
1. In the last 12 months have you done any form of community service volunteering?
- Yes
- No
2. Are you a member of any community based organizations?
- Yes
- No

	never					highly active					
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

3. Outside of your job how active would you say you are in the community?

### Voting Habits

1. Did you vote in the last municipal election?

Yes

No

2. Did you vote in the last provincial election?

Yes

No

3. Did you vote in the last federal election?

Yes

No

### Formal Political Activity

1. In the last 5 years have you participated in the campaign of an individual/party running for any public office?

Yes

No

If you answered **Yes** to question 1:

1. a) What level of government was this election? (*Check all that apply*)

Municipal

Provincial

Federal

Other (*please specify*)

1. b) How were you involved in the campaign? (*Check all that apply*)

Canvassed door to door

Telephoned potential voters/donors

Posted signs/advertisements

Other (please specify)

2. In the last 5 years have you contributed money to any election campaign

Yes

No

3. Have you ever run in an election for public office?

Yes

No

If you answered **Yes** to question 3:

3. a) What level did you run at?

Municipal

School board

Provincial

Federal

4. Have you considered running in an election for public office?

Yes

No

If you answered **Yes** to question 4:

4. a) What level did you run at?

Municipal

School board

Provincial

Federal

### Informal Political Activity

1. Have you attended (not as a government worker) any open houses or community meetings held by the municipal government?

Yes

No

2. In the last 12 months have you signed a petition to be sent to a politician/official in government?

Yes

No

3. In the last 12 months have you participated in a picket or strike?

Yes

No

4. In the last 12 months have you contacted a councillor/politician (outside of your duties as a municipal worker) about an issue?

Yes

No

5. In the last 12 months have you encouraged anyone else to contact a councillor/politician about an issue?

Yes

No

### Municipal Policy

1. To the best of your knowledge is there any provincial legislation that regulates the political participation of municipal employees?

Yes

No

I don't know

2. To the best of your knowledge does the municipality you work for have a policy governing the community or political activities of its employees?

Yes

No

I don't know

If you answered **Yes** to question 2:

2. a) Do you think a policy is necessary to govern the political/community participation of municipal employees?

Yes

No

If you answered **No** or **I don't know** to question 2:

2. b) Do you think there should be a policy governing the political/community participation of municipal employees?

Yes

No

3. Does your position as a municipal employee affect the type(s) of political/community activities you choose to participate in?

Yes

No

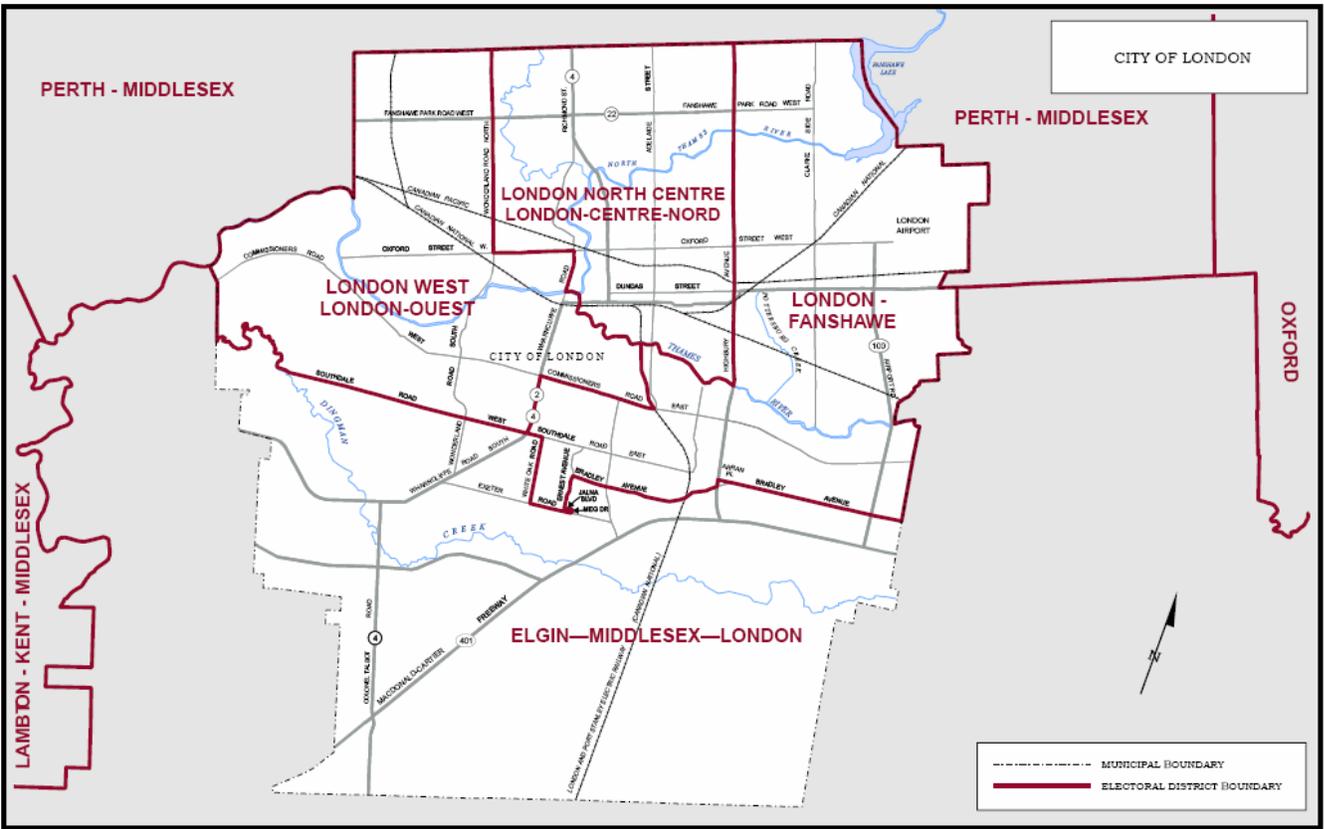
I don't know

4. Do you have any additional comments about municipal employees and their participation in the community and in politics?



5.6 Federal/Provincial electoral ridings

Figure 5.6.1 Provincial/Federal electoral ridings within and surrounding the city of London, Ontario.



Source: Elections Ontario, London Middlesex electoral districts, 2007.