



The Evolving Role of City Managers and Chief Administrative Officers

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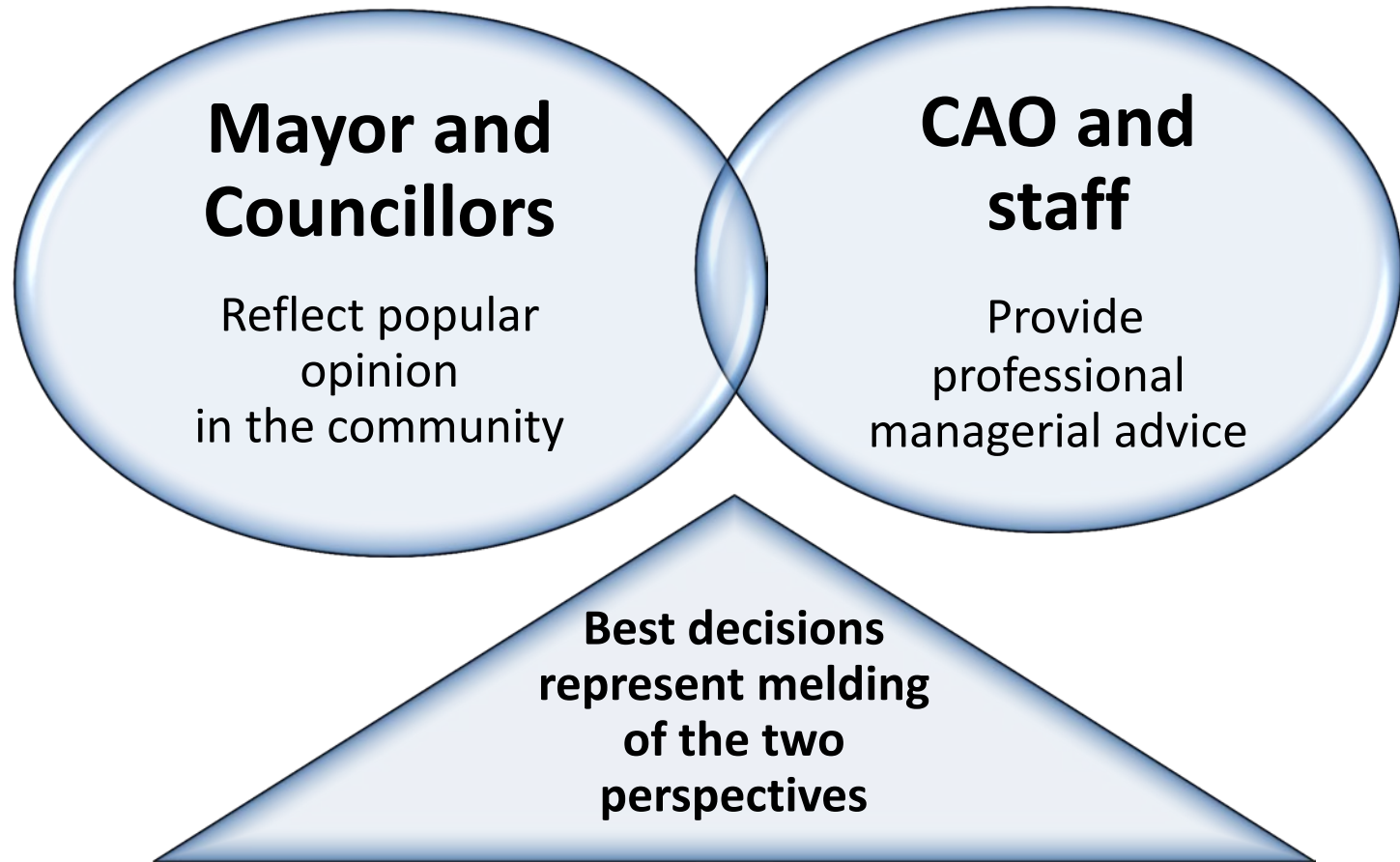


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Role of the CAO

- Council's single employee
- Two-way conduit between council and staff
- Leads in three directions
 - Provides advice to council
 - Supervises staff
 - Guides relationships with external stakeholders

Balancing the political and the professional



Council-CAO relationship – Council's perspective

- Council drives policy
 - but leaves management to the CAO
- Provides clear guidance on policy matters
- Listens carefully and respectfully to staff advice
- Refrains from public, personal criticism of staff

Council-CAO relationship – CAO's perspective

- Defers to council on policy matters
- Provides the best administrative advice to council based on rational analysis
- Leads the public service, under the guidance of policies set by council

Some public service bargains

- Council can hold the CAO responsible for the efficiency and effectiveness of the public service
- Council must allow the CAO reasonable autonomy to manage the public service including hiring, promotion, discipline, firing
- Example
 - Council should ensure that an appropriate merit-based hiring system is in place
 - CAO acts within that system to make all hiring decisions

Some public service bargains (cont.)

- CAO executes loyally all decisions of council, regardless of the CAO's prior advice
- CAO has reasonable security of tenure contingent on proper performance of duties

Strengths of this relationship

- Council does what it is qualified to do – make policy
- CAOs do what they're qualified to do – provide advice and lead staff
- Policy decisions are an amalgam of
 - Political culture of the municipality (council perspective)
 - Administrative rationality (CAO perspective)

“Council should give the City Manager clear and unequivocal responsibility and accountability for the overall management of the administration of the City. Not doing so undermines the City Manager’s effectiveness...”

“Although the Mayor can properly be involved in hiring the City Manager, there should be a clear division of responsibility between the Mayor and the office of the City Manager – a separation of the political from the administrative...”

Madam Justice Denise Bellamy,

Toronto External Contracts Inquiry, 2005, p. 424

How to destroy this relationship

- “Strong mayor” system
- Make the role of mayor unclear – Mayor as CEO
- Unclear role for political staff
- Expect CAO to tell council what it wants to hear

New developments

- Statutory requirement for a Council / Staff relations policy
- Expanded role for Integrity Commissioners and other Accountability Officers
- No statutory action on defining the role of CAO
- Continuing turbulence in the employment environment for CAOs and senior municipal staff

Concluding comments

- CAO system is a relatively new, made-in-Ontario innovation
- CAO system works very well in the Ontario system of local government
- Needs to be supported and strengthened
 - Provincial legislation and support
 - Recognition by council
 - Current generation mentoring the next generation