

Increasing Employee Engagement at the City of Pitt Meadows

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Employee engagement has become a high interest issue for organizations worldwide as a result of increased competition. Organizations are searching for ways to increase productivity, results, and profits as a result of increased global competition. Employee engagement is seen as a way to increase productivity in order to achieve better results and higher profits. However, the level of engagement remains low in many organizations and around the world despite these organizations having made considerable investments to increase employee engagement (Gallup, 2013, p. 7).

The City of Pitt Meadows, a small but growing city in the Metro Vancouver region in the province of British Columbia, has growing interest in the engagement of its employees like many other organizations across the globe. The researcher and the City agreed to perform a study on the engagement of the City's employees to better understand employee engagement in the organization. The researcher and the City also wanted to determine ways to increase staff engagement so that the organization would be able to better tackle the challenges of a growing city. With these objectives in mind, the central research question for the study was:

How can the City of Pitt Meadows increase the engagement of its employees in their jobs to meet the organization's objectives?

Methodology and Methods

The research employed a multiple methods approach that consisted of:

- A review of the academic and human resource practitioner literature on the subject of employee engagement;
- A jurisdictional scan of seven Canadian public sector organizations and a review of their most recent studies into the engagement of their employees; and,
- A series of semi-structured interviews with employees and managers at the City of Pitt Meadows.

The questions that were used in the semi-structured interviews were developed from a conceptual framework for employee engagement that was adapted from a framework contained in the academic literature. This conceptual framework was an integration of previous research and theory on employee engagement.

Literature Review

The study of employee engagement is a relatively young discipline. The development of employee engagement theories began in 1990 with William Kahn's theory of personal engagement. Since 1990, the study of employee engagement has been rooted in three major theories about engagement:

- Kahn's (1990) theory of personal engagement rooted in three psychological conditions – *meaningfulness, safety, and reliability*;
- Maslach and Leiter's theory of engagement as the antithesis of burnout at work (Maslach et al., 2001); and,
- Demerouti et al's *job-demands and resources* (JD-R) model in which employee engagement is a function of one's job demands and resources (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004)

The majority of research on employee engagement has used the *job-demands resources* theory. However, the research in engagement has continued to evolve. While no consensus on a definition of engagement exists, academic and human resource practitioner researchers now consider engagement to be a multi-faceted concept that involves cognitive, emotional and behavioural aspects. In parallel to this evolving conceptualization of employee engagement, the theory has evolved to include the consideration of engagement antecedents, or drivers of engagement in the work environment. Engagement drivers include those that are associated with the organization such as leadership, recognition, communication, and clarity of vision and those that are associated with the individual employee such as job fit/suitability, optimism, and personal motivation. Consequently, researchers in both the academic and human resource practitioner communities have recently developed conceptual frameworks to study employee engagement that are centered on engagement drivers.

Like the private sector, the public sector has experienced pressure to trim budgets and 'do more with less'. Thus, the literature suggested that the same theories and tools could be used to study employee engagement in the public sector as the private sector. However, the literature revealed key differences between the two sectors in the study of employee engagement. One difference relates to engagement drivers. The handling of change management, the quality of leadership, recognition, sufficient resources, and valuing client service tend to be engagement drivers that are important to public sector workers, while pay and benefits may not be as significant as they are in the private sector. The literature on public sector engagement also suggests that the notion of *public service motivation*, or having an inherent motivation to serve the public, is an important driver of engagement. Furthermore, the outcomes of increased employee engagement in the public sector are different. Whereas in the private sector, increased productivity and profits are desirable outcomes of increased engagement, increased trust in public institutions and client satisfaction are seen as desired outcomes of increased employee engagement in the public sector.

Jurisdictional Scan

A review of seven Canadian public sector organization employee engagement studies was conducted as part of the literature review. Based on the review of the most recent employee engagement surveys of these organizations, there were several common positive and negative engagement drivers that were identified. With respect to the positive engagement drivers, job fit and suitability, supervisor management, and teamwork were among the most frequently cited engagement drivers by employees in these seven organizations. With respect to negative engagement drivers, career growth and development, recognition, and information flows were among the most frequently cited in the seven organizations. The review of these seven Canadian public sector organizations highlights the importance of public sector motivation in engagement and that, as a whole, public sector organizations largely face the same impediments to engagement.

Interview Findings and Analysis

The interviews with staff and employees revealed that, overall, engagement levels among staff were high. The high level of engagement overall among employees was attributed to several engagement drivers including challenge on the job, positive relationships among supervisors and coworkers, a supportive work environment, and an environment that encourages learning and development opportunities. However, employees' engagement was tempered by several issues such as concerns about pay and benefits, poor information flows and communication, a lack of trust or belief in senior leadership, a lack of career growth opportunities within the organization, and a lack of appreciation and recognition. The positive and negative engagement drivers at the City of Pitt Meadows largely reflected the employee engagement context of the

other 7 Canadian public sector organizations, with the exception of pay and benefits as employees at the City expressed both positive and negative views on this issue.

The interviews also revealed several moderating factors on employee engagement in the organization. The first moderating factor was the significant workload of employees caused by a lack of resources, demands from city council, and the amount of organizational change. The second moderating factor was the physical separation of work units in the organization. The third moderating factor was the organization's unionized environment. Following the identification of these moderators, a revised conceptual framework was created to reflect the influence of these moderating factors on employee engagement in the organization.

In comparison to the previous human resource strategic plan the organization performed between 2010 and 2012, the interviews in the fall of 2016 revealed the same risks with respect to disengagement and burnout in terms of an over-reliance on key individuals (i.e. not enough resources) and changing staff and priorities. However, the interviews also showed that the quality of information flows between staff and management declined over the last 5 years.

Recommendations

Following the literature review, the jurisdictional scan and the analysis of the employee and manager interviews, the researcher made the following eight recommendations to increase employee engagement at the City of Pitt Meadows:

- Improve the flow of communication between staff and senior leadership through increased participation at all-staff meetings, increased discussion on how employee input was considered in decision-making and continued open-door policies.
- Increase opportunities for cross-team collaboration and interaction by encouraging employee participation in organization-wide teams, by establishing information sessions that are hosted by individual teams, and by resurrecting the organization's intranet site.
- Provide recognition to employees.
- Create opportunities for cross-training or job shadowing to increase skills and experience in different areas and make the organization more nimble and adaptable to change.
- Establish a regular employee survey to identify trends and challenges in the organization over time.
- Examine the benefits package in the context of the current collective agreement to provide more flexible work arrangements for staff. Long-term, improvements in benefits will have to be negotiated in future collective agreements.
- Start strategic planning around the long-term management of work load through the establishment of a special employee committee to work on the strategic plan, the creation of a long-term vision for the organization, and a code of ethics that will formalize the relationship between the organization and elected officials.
- Continue to hire motivated, optimistic, and personally involved employees.

Implementation Plan

The researcher also provided a staged plan for implementing the eight recommendations.

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1.0 Introduction

Over the last three decades, the issue of employee engagement has become increasingly discussed and analyzed by organizations around the world. In a globalized world that is subject to constant change and competition, leaders of organizations have been required to do more with less in order to succeed in their marketplaces whether those marketplaces are private industries, not-for-profit activities, or are public activities funded by taxpayers (Masson et al, 2008, p. 56). Employee engagement has been seen as an important component of “doing more with less”; it has been associated with increased levels of productivity, improved client service, less organizational turnover and absenteeism, and higher profits (Wollard & Shuck, 2011, p. 430; Gallup, 2013, p. 7). This interest in employee engagement is reflected in large investments organizations make on engagement research and initiatives. In 2012, a human resources research company estimated that \$720 million was spent by organizations in the United States alone on employee engagement (Associates, 2012, para 2). However, despite the efforts and investments that have been dedicated by organizations to increase the engagement of their employees, employee engagement remains low. Gallup compiled employee survey data from 142 countries and found that only 13% of employees were engaged, while 24% of employees were actively disengaged (Gallup, 2013, p. 7). Thus, increasing the engagement of employees remains elusive for the majority of organizations around the world.

1.1 Project Client

The City of Pitt Meadows, located in the Lower Mainland region of the province of British Columbia, is one of 21 municipalities that form part of the Metro Vancouver Regional District. The city is located approximately 40 kilometres east of the City of Vancouver. To deliver the programs and services for its 17,800 residents, the City employs a combination of full-time, part-time, and casual staff and managers. The majority of employees belong to two unions (the Canadian Union of Public Employees and the International Association of Fire Fighters). There are also exempt staff who do not belong to either of the two unions. The management team consists of a Chief Administrative Officer who liaises between the elected city council and the organization, five directors who oversee one or more functions, and seven managers who manage individual teams.

Like other municipalities in Metro Vancouver, the City’s population is growing. Based on current estimates, the City is expected to grow from its current population of 17,800 residents to 20,000 by the year 2020 (City of Pitt Meadows, 2007, para 1). The City’s population growth has created new economic opportunities, but the growth has also brought concerns about its ability to accommodate economic and population growth. As a result, City staff are increasingly challenged to deliver the programs and services their residents and businesses expect.

Over the last two to three years, there have been concerns among both staff and the management team in the organization that the challenges of a changing and growing city have resulted in employees becoming overloaded and disengaged from their work. While these concerns have been growing, the organization has not had the resources nor the time to conduct an in-depth survey or study of its employees. The organization last conducted a human resources strategic plan using input from the staff between 2010 and 2012. Therefore, a study on employee engagement will help both employees and the management team at the City of Pitt Meadows understand the factors that have influenced employee engagement in the organization. It is also hoped that an understanding of these factors may become the foundation of the organization’s future human resource strategic plan.

The researcher worked primarily with two members of the senior leadership team - the Director of Community Services and the Director of Corporate Services – during the proposal drafting phase and the research phase of the project.

1.2 Project Objectives and Research Questions

The research project had two purposes: to examine and analyze the state of employee engagement in the organization and to recommend ways to increase employee engagement in the organization. To fulfil the objectives of the research, the research project was structured around this primary research question:

How can the City of Pitt Meadows increase the employee engagement to meet the organization's objectives?

In addition to addressing this primary research question, this report explored issues raised by the following sub-questions:

- What is the current level of staff engagement?
- What are the factors that are affecting staff engagement?
- What types of investments does the organization need to make, if any, to increase staff engagement?
- What can City employees do to increase their own engagement in their jobs?

The research report concludes with a series of recommendations and an action plan that will assist the staff and management at the City of Pitt Meadows to implement the recommendations in order to increase employee engagement.

1.3 Background

Organization Background

The City of Pitt Meadows is comprised of 64 full-time and part-time employees, seven managers, five directors, and one chief administrative officer. Most of the 64 employees belong to one of two unions (Canadian Union of Public Employees or the International Association of Fire Fighters), but there are also casual (auxiliary) and excluded employees who are not represented by a union. With respect to the management structure of the organization, the 7 managers are responsible for managing individual teams and the 5 directors are responsible for managing one or more of the 7 teams. The 5 directors report to the Chief Administrative Officer who is responsible for overseeing the organization and liaising with the Library Manager, the City's Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) superintendent, and the elected Mayor and Council of Pitt Meadows.

In October 2015, the City of Maple Ridge announced that it would end its joint agreement with the City of Pitt Meadows in the management of parks and recreation facilities. As a result of the end of the joint agreement, the City of Pitt Meadows was obligated to create two new departments in the organization for the management of parks and recreation facilities. The creation of the two new departments led to the hiring of new full-time and part-time employees, some of whom were previously employed by the City of Maple Ridge. The joint management of parks and recreation facilities between the Cities of Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows formally ended on October 31, 2016. The creation of this new department was the largest of several changes that the organization experienced over the last several years; the extent of change that

the organization experienced is seen as a factor of the level of the organization's employee engagement.

Previous studies and surveys on employees in the organization

The organization's last strategic human resources plan, first prepared in 2010 and later revised in 2012, examined some components of employee engagement in the organization. As part of the plan, the human resources (HR) department interviewed each employee. Following these interviews, the HR department identified some examples of the level of employee engagement:

- Staff valued their connectedness to each other and to their community (many City staff live in the City of Pitt Meadows);
- Staff believed that there was transparency and open communications among staff and the leadership team;
- Staff believed that there was a sense of trust in the efforts of others; and,
- Staff believed that there were opportunities to work on different projects (City of Pitt Meadows, 2012, p. 14).

The strategic plan also identified some opportunities for continued employee engagement:

- Employees' desire for increased collaboration with other groups working for the City;
- Employees' desire for flexible working arrangements; and,
- Employees' desire for more learning opportunities through increased cross-training and skill building, and a focus on succession planning (City of Pitt Meadows, 2012, p. 14)

Furthermore, the strategic plan uncovered some challenges to continued employee engagement:

- Over-reliance on key individuals
- Lack of performance management mechanisms
- Changing workforce and consistent reprioritizing
- Economic and labour market fluctuations (City of Pitt Meadows, 2012, p. 12)

The findings from this research reveal some similarities between the results of the 2012 strategic human resources plan. The strategic human resources plan and the findings will be discussed in further detail in section 8.4 of this report.

1.4 Organization of Report

This report begins with an analysis of the literature on employee engagement. The literature review discusses what employee engagement is, its significance, employee engagement theory, and the components or *drivers* of employee engagement. The second section of the report discusses the findings of a jurisdictional scan of several Canadian public sector organizations that have conducted their own studies on employee engagement. Building on the major themes discussed in the first two sections, the third section explains the conceptual framework for this study that will guide the analysis of the research findings in the report. The fourth section provides a summary of the research findings from 33 interviews with employees and managers at the City of Pitt Meadows. Following the *Findings* section, the report analyzes the findings in the context of the conceptual framework and the literature from the previous sections. Finally, the report concludes with a set of recommendations to increase employee engagement and an implementation plan for those recommendations.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The literature review will explore the body of knowledge of the issue or concept of “employee engagement”. The current body of research, analysis, and discussion on the issue of employee engagement consists of studies and articles written from both a business or human resource practitioner perspective and an academic perspective. The review will first discuss the various definitions and conceptualizations of employee engagement from the practitioner and academic literature. Following the exploration of the importance of employee engagement, the review will then examine how various organizations have measured employee engagement and how researchers and human resource practitioners have theorized and implemented measures in organizations to improve or increase employee engagement. Finally, the literature review will examine the differences between the study and measurement of employee engagement in the public sector vis-à-vis the private sector.

The literature review was initiated by conducting a series of searches using the University of Victoria’s comprehensive search engine, Summon 2.0. Various search strings were inputted into the search engine including, “employee engagement,” “employee engagement and human resource development”, “employee engagement public sector”, and “increasing employee engagement”. A search of the same terms was also conducted using Google. Once an initial set of articles was downloaded, bibliographies from this initial set of articles were consulted to identify primary or leading studies. Also, literature reviews from the searches were consulted to identify primary studies and to obtain further insight into the state of research on the subject of employee engagement. To obtain studies and articles on employee engagement and its relationship to municipal public sector organizations, the search term “employee engagement municipal government” was inputted into both the Summon 2.0 search engine and Google.

2.2 Definitions of Employee Engagement

The concept of employee engagement has been frequently defined and described by human resource practitioners and academics. The concept first appeared in academic literature in 1990 with William Kahn’s study on engagement and disengagement at work (Kahn, 1990). Kahn defined personal engagement as “the harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles” and personal disengagement as “the uncoupling of selves from work roles” (Kahn, 1990, p. 694). His definition of both concepts was rooted in three psychological conditions that determine the extent of one’s engagement in their work: *meaningfulness*, *safety*, and *reliability* (Kahn, 1990, p. 705). *Meaningfulness* refers to feelings of being useful and valuable; meaningful work is seen as challenging, delineated, varied and somewhat autonomous (Kahn, 1990, p. 704). The second condition, *safety*, refers to being able to act and perform one’s job without fear of negative consequences to one’s self image, status or career (Kahn, 1990, p. 705). The third condition, *availability*, refers to one’s physical, emotional, and psychological resources that are available to invest in tasks (Kahn, 1990, p. 705).

Following Kahn’s conceptualization of employee engagement, there were some researchers who came up with their own conceptualizations of work engagement that were more focused on the work environment itself (Simpson, 2009, 1021). Maslach et al. (2001), who performed research on the subject of employee burnout in the late 1980s and 1990s, took their previous conceptualization of the term *burnout* and reframed burnout as an “erosion of engagement with (one’s) job” (Maslach et al., 2001, p. 416). In contrast to the concept of burnout, which is

characterized by exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy, engagement is characterized by energy, involvement and efficacy (Maslach et al., 2001, p. 416). In this way, work engagement is seen as the opposite or antithesis of being burnt out at work (Maslach et al., 2001, p. 416; Saks, 2006, p. 603).

Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) expanded on Maslach et al.'s conception of burnout as the antithesis of engagement and posited that engagement was a concept separate from burnout that is defined as a "a positive, fulfilling work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption" (p. 295). The first of these three dimensions of engagement - *vigor* - is described as having high levels of energy and mental resilience while working (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004, p. 295). The second, *dedication*, is characterized by a significance, enthusiasm, pride, and challenge for one's job (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004, p. 295). The third dimension, *absorption*, is described as one being concentrated and engrossed in one's work to the extent that "one has difficulties detaching oneself from work" (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004, p. 295).

Between Kahn's conceptualization of engagement and Schaufeli and Bakker's three-dimensional approach to engagement, there were those in the practitioner community that sought to understand and define the issue of employee engagement. Harter et al. (2002) conducted a meta-analysis of research on employees undertaken by the Gallup Organization across nearly 8000 business units in multiple industries. This analysis, which defined employee engagement as "the individual's involvement and satisfaction as well as enthusiasm for work" found a connection between levels of employee engagement, and business outcomes (Harter et al., 2002, p. 269). This analysis was conducted on the Gallup Workplace Audit, a 12-question survey given to employees. Another meta-analysis of practitioner studies on employee engagement conducted by the Conference Board of Canada found that practitioner researchers tended to focus on these factors in their definitions of employee engagement: *the cognitive connection to the job or organization and the emotional attachment to the work or organization*, (Gibbons, 2006, p. 5). Based on this analysis of 12 practitioner research reports, the Conference Board of Canada defined employee engagement as a "heightened emotional and intellectual connection that an employee has for his/her job, organization, manager, or co-workers that, in turn, influences him/her to apply additional discretionary effort to his/her work" (Gibbons, 2006, p. 5).

As practitioners became active participants in the definition and conceptualization of employee engagement, some academic researchers responded with attempts to further refine and distinguish the earlier conceptualizations of employee engagement from Kahn (1990), Maslach et al. (2001), and Schaufeli and Bakker (2004). Saks (2006) observed that while employee engagement was previously defined in ways that were similar to other constructs like organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behaviour, it is actually a distinguishable and unique concept that consists of "cognitive, emotional, and behaviour components that are associated with individual role performance" (p. 602). Macey and Schneider (2008) noted that previous definitions of employee engagement lacked precision and argued that the concept required a more structured framework for future study (p. 4). Macey and Schneider (2008) proposed that engagement consists of three separate components – *trait* engagement (positive views of life and work), *state* engagement (feelings of energy and absorption), and *behaviour* engagement (extra-role behaviour) – that follow one another and are shaped by work and organizational conditions (p. 4, p. 25).

Despite refinement of the conceptualization and meaning of employee engagement over the last three decades, some researchers note that there is still no consensus on a definition or meaning (Vigoda-Gadot et al., 2012, p. 521; Saks & Gruman, 2014, p. 156). However, there

appear to be some common elements across the majority of conceptualizations. Fundamentally, engagement is regarded as a desirable condition that facilitates the achievement or exceedance of organizational outcomes (Robertson-Smith & Markwick, 2009, p. 15; Wollard & Shuck, 2010, p. 103). Also, the literature seems to indicate that employee engagement is something that is attributed to the individual employee in response to the work environment and other moderating factors in one's life.

Based on the common elements in the literature, Wollard and Shuck (2010) created the following definition of engagement: "***an individual employee's cognitive, emotional, and behavioural state directed toward desired organizational outcomes***" (p. 103). Wollard and Shuck's definition of engagement seems to incorporate Kahn's psychological foundation for engagement and also reflects the multi-faceted approach of the concept advanced by both practitioner and academic researchers over the last decade. Hence, in the absence of consensus on the meaning and definition of employee engagement, Wollard and Shuck's definition of employee engagement is appropriate to apply to this study.

2.3 Significance of Employee Engagement

Various human resource consulting firms, such as the Gallup Organization, Hewitt Associates, and Towers Perrin, have conducted studies into the possible linkages between employee engagement and overall organizational performance (Macey & Schneider, 2008, p. 3; Bates, 2004, para 6). The prominence of the subject of employee engagement has occurred as a result of an increasingly competitive business environment and changing dynamics in the employer-employee relationship (Bates, 2004, para 18; Lee & Ok, 2014, p. 84). Bates (2004) notes that employees do not expect long-term relationships with their employers as they did in the past and are looking for different forms of loyalty based on shared values and goals and respect as opposed to loyalty based on notions of long-term commitment to an organization (para 20). As a result of the modern working environment, keeping employees engaged in their jobs has become a primary concern among organizations across all sectors and industries.

Retention

Some evidence from both the human resource practitioner community and the academic community points to higher levels of employee retention from increased levels of employee engagement. Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) conducted a survey of employees from various service organizations in the Netherlands and found that job burnout, which under their proposition of job burnout being the antipode to job engagement, was strongly associated with turnover intention (p. 307). Towers Perrin observed that in a survey of nearly 90,000 employees from 18 countries, 51% of participants who considered themselves to be engaged had no immediate plans to leave their organizations (Towers Perrin, 2008, p. 7). However, Towers Perrin (2008) also stated that a significant minority of these participants (39%) were passive job seekers or employees who would consider leaving their organizations if a better offer came along (p. 7).

Increased productivity

The Gallup Organization has found that higher levels of engagement are associated with higher levels of employee productivity. The Gallup Organization has developed a survey to measure employee engagement, called the Q12, which comprises twelve questions that purportedly measure the extent of employee engagement. In 2009, the Gallup Organization compared the performance of organizations that scored in the top quartile of Q12 survey scores with those organizations that scored in the bottom quartile. As a result of this comparison, Gallup found that the top quartile organizations had 18% higher productivity, 49% fewer safety incidents, and

37% lower absenteeism (Ray, 2011, p. 12). In a meta-analysis of Q12 survey data from over 1.3 million employees from 192 organizations across the globe, Harter et al. (2013) observed that there is a strong association between high employee engagement levels and high levels of productivity (productivity was measured in various ways such as financials, quantity produced, enrollments in programs, cross sells, or performance ratings) (p. 18).

Organizational outcomes and performance

Much of the literature on employee engagement and organizational performance flows from studies on private sector organizations. In one of the earliest and more frequently cited reports on employee engagement and organizational performance, Harter et al. (2001) observed in a meta-analysis of the Gallup Organization's Q12 surveys that there was a strong correlation between employee engagement and profitability (p. 279). In a later study, Towers Perrin (2008) quantified the relationship between high levels of employee engagement and productivity in a study involving 50 international companies. In its study, Towers Perrin (2008) found that companies that had "high employee engagement" experienced a 19% increase in operating income and a 28% growth in earnings per share (p. 6). A review of several other practitioner studies from firms such as Watson Wyatt, Aon Hewitt, and Towers Watson by Ray (2011) on behalf of the Conference Board of Canada (2011) mirrored earlier work by the Gallup Organization in that organizations with high levels of engagement tend to outperform the stock market index, post higher returns than average, have higher earnings per share, and experience increases in revenue per employee (p. 13).

Improved Employee Health

There is some evidence that higher levels of employee engagement are associated with higher levels of employee health. In 2012, Harter and Stone conducted a random survey of 175 employed individuals and measured their cortisol (stress hormone levels) using a series of prompted questions at various times during the work week. Based on the results of this survey, Harter and Stone (2012) observed that when employees work in engaging conditions (e.g. understanding their roles and responsibilities, having the tools to do their jobs, and feeling appreciated), they tend to have lower levels of cortisol and experience greater happiness and interest in their jobs (p. 111). However, Harter and Stone (2012) also noted that the findings for those surveyed who had higher levels of cortisol were less obvious and more complex (p. 111). Harter and Adkins (2015), on behalf of the Gallup Organization, found that employees who are actively disengaged at work are more likely to experience health conditions such as physical pain, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and depression than engaged employees (para 2). However, like Harter and Stone (2012), Harter and Adkins (2015) temper their findings and note that poor physical health may precede poor engagement at work and that the conclusions do not prove causation of disengagement and poor health (para 12).

Other researchers have argued that the relationship between higher levels of employee engagement and improved health is somewhat tenuous and requires further research and exploration. In a study on the relationship between engagement scores in the Government of British Columbia's Public Service and the use of short term leave for illness and injury, Hoxsey (2010) observed that there was only a 4.7% variation in the use of short term leave for illness and injury between employees with higher engagement scores and lower engagement scores after controlling for gender, age, and years of service (p. 567). Bakker et al. (2011) also stated that based on a review of previous research into the physiological indicators of health and levels of engagement, there has been little evidence to support the hypothesis that engaged employees experience better physiological indicators of health (p. 20).

Customer Loyalty and Satisfaction

Some evidence reveals that higher levels of engagement are associated with increased customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. In a survey of over 500 executives from some of the world's largest companies, the Harvard Business Review (2013) observed that higher levels of employee engagement have a quantifiable impact on customer satisfaction in terms of increased revenue and market share (p. 10-11). The Conference Board of Canada (2012) cited several other studies from the business community that identified linkages between employee engagement and higher customer satisfaction, customer loyalty and higher revenues through increased customer sales (p. 13).

There is also evidence from the public sector that higher employee engagement is associated with higher levels of customer satisfaction. In collaboration with the British Columbia Public Service and the Region of Peel, Ontario, BC Stats conducted a study on the relationship between employee engagement and customer satisfaction. Based on surveys of 41 work units and customers, BC Stats found that as employee engagement increases, customer satisfaction increases based on an approximate ratio of 2 points to 1 point (BC Stats, 2008b, p. 4). However, there were some weaknesses in the study – most notably, the limited definition of employee engagement in terms of job satisfaction, organization satisfaction, and commitment and the inconsistency in engagement measures between the BC Public Service and the Region of Peel (BC Stats, 2008b, p. 5)

2.4 Theories of Employee Engagement

There are three main theories around the study of employee engagement – Kahn's (1990) theory of personal engagement, Maslach and Leiter's theory of burnout (Maslach et al., 2001) and Demerouti et al.'s theory of job demands and resources (JD-R model of burnout) (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). These theories form the foundation of the majority of the research, framework development, and empirical studies on employee engagement.

As briefly explained in the previous section on the definition of employee engagement, Kahn's theory of personal engagement is based on three psychological conditions – *meaningfulness*, *safety*, and *availability* (Kahn, 1990, p. 705). Building on his definitions of the three conditions, Kahn provided some hypothetical examples of how these conditions might manifest themselves in the workplace. With respect to *meaningfulness*, Kahn (1990) posited that jobs offering challenge, autonomy, clear procedures and objectives, and importance and status within the organization or company would fulfill this condition (p. 705). In terms of *safety*, Kahn stated that interpersonal relationships that offer support and trust and leaders or managers in the organization who exemplify support, competence, trust and consistency would facilitate feelings of safety for employees (p. 705). Finally, with respect to *availability*, Kahn suggested that physical and emotional well-being, the existence of a feeling of security or insecurity in one's own abilities and status, as well as issues outside of one's life at work would determine the extent of one's availability to engage at work (p. 705).

With respect to the second predominant theory on employee engagement, Maslach and Leiter postulated that burnout and engagement – the former that is described by the three dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy and the latter that is described as the opposite of those dimensions - is influenced by six domains in the work environment (Maslach et al., 2001, p. 413). Employee engagement occurs when there is a match between the employee and his work environment in terms of some or all of the areas, while employee burnout occurs when there is a mismatch between the employee and his work environment in the same areas (Maslach et al.,

2001, p. 414). The six areas are workload, control, reward, community, fairness and values. In terms of *workload*, burnout may occur if there is too much work or the wrong kind of work (Maslach et al., 2001, p. 414). With respect to *control*, an employee may experience burnout if they do not have sufficient control over their resources to perform their jobs (Maslach et al., 2001, p. 414). A lack of *rewards*, whether they are financial, recognition-based, or intrinsic may cause burnout. With respect to *community*, an employee may become disengaged when they do not experience a sense of positive connection with others in the work place (Maslach et al., 2001, p. 415). The fifth domain, *fairness*, may have an effect on burnout if there is perceived unfairness and respect in the work place (Maslach et al., 2001, p. 415). Finally, burnout may occur if there is a conflict between the employee's *values* and the values of the organization (Maslach et al., 2001, p. 415).

The third predominant theory on employee engagement, the *job demands-resources* model of burnout (JDR), was developed from Maslach and Leiter's earlier conception of employee burnout. Demerouti et al. suggested that engagement could be measured and analyzed separately from employee burnout (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004, p. 296). Demerouti et al. (2001) devised a model consisting of two broad categories that influence one's working environment – job demands and job resources. *Job demands* are "those physical, social, or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical or mental effort and are associated with certain physiological and psychological costs" (Demerouti et al., 2001, p. 501). Some examples of job demands provided by Demerouti and Bakker (2007) include high work pressures, an unfavourable physical environment at work, or emotionally demanding relationships with clients (p. 312). If job demands are too high, they can exhaust the physical and mental resources of an employee, which can lead to disengagement and burnout. With respect to the other category, *job resources* are "those physical, psychological, social, or organization aspects of the job" that may help an employee achieve work goals, reduce job demands, and stimulate personal growth and development (Demerouti et al., 2001, p. 501). Some examples of job resources include pay, career opportunities, relationships between co-workers and supervisors, job autonomy, and how defined job responsibilities are (Demerouti & Bakker, 2007, p. 312). If job resources are provided or increased, they can mitigate the effect of job demands and they can also satisfy basic psychological needs, which can lead to further growth, learning and development and ultimately, increased engagement at work (Saks, 2014, p. 162).

2.5 Drivers of Engagement

Although Kahn's conceptualization of employee engagement continues to be referenced and cited in contemporary studies on employee engagement and human resource development, much of the research on engagement over the last decade has used the JD-R model (Saks & Gruman, 2014, p. 163; Allen & Rogelberg, 2013, p. 545; Lee & Ok, 2014, p. 86; Kernaghan, 2011, p. 9; Shuck et al., 2011, p. 302; Welch, 2011, p. 336). However, Kahn's model and the JD-R model remain somewhat vague on the aspects of the work environment that actually 'drive' or facilitate employee engagement. In particular, Saks and Gruman (2014) state that the JD-R model is somewhat inadequate as a theory for employee engagement because it does not describe the resources that will facilitate engagement (p. 163). Some researchers in the academic community and in the practitioner community have identified possible drivers or antecedents to employee engagement in the work environment. Saks (2006) was one of the earliest researchers to hypothesize a set of antecedents to employee engagement that included:

- Perceived organizational and supervisor support (these aspects were related to Kahn's dimension of psychological safety) (Saks, 2006, p. 605)

- Distributive and procedural justice that was defined as consistency and predictability in the distribution of organizational resources and rewards (Saks, 2006, p. 606).
- Job characteristics that include challenging work, variety in work, and the opportunity to make significant contributions through a job (Saks, 2006, p. 604).
- Rewards and recognition whether that is financial or otherwise so long as the employee feels a sense of return on their investments on the job (Saks, 2006, p. 605).

In expanding Saks' earlier postulation of drivers of engagement, Wollard and Shuck (2010) conducted a literature review of employee engagement and out of 256 articles in various journals, they identified a set of individual antecedents and organizational antecedents to employee engagement (p. 433). The following table below contains both set of antecedents they identified:

Table 1 – Individual and organizational antecedents to employee engagement

Individual Antecedents to Employee Engagement	Organizational Antecedents to Employee Engagement
Absorption	Authentic corporate culture
Available to engage	Clear expectations
Coping style	Corporate social responsibility
Core self evaluation	Encouragement
Curiosity	Feedback
Dedication	Hygiene factors
Emotional fit	Job characteristics
Employee motivation	Job control
Employee/work/family status	Job fit
Feelings of choice and control	Leadership
Higher levels of corporate citizenship	Level of task challenge
Involvement in meaningful work	Manager expectations
Link individual and organization goals	Manager self-efficacy
Optimism	Mission and vision
Perceived organizational support	Opportunities for learning
Self-esteem, self-efficacy	Perception of workplace safety
Value congruence	Positive workplace climate
Vigour	Rewards
Willingness to direct personal energies	Supportive organizational culture
Work-life balance	Talent management
	Use of strengths

From the practitioner perspective, Ray (2012) identified a set of largely organizational drivers of engagement that partially resembles some of the organizational antecedents that were identified by Wollard and Shuck (2010) and Saks (2006) (p. 6-7):

- Trust and integrity
- Nature of the job
- Line of sight between individual performance and company performance
- Career growth opportunities
- Pride about the company

- Employee development
- Personal relationship with one's manager
- Pay fairness
- Personal influence
- Well-being

More recently, Armstrong & Wright, on behalf of the Conference Board of Canada, have distilled the various factors that have been cited in both academic and practitioner literature as having a clear influence on work engagement. Armstrong and Wright (2016) have come up with the following seven factors:

- Confidence in senior leadership;
- Relationship with manager;
- Interesting and challenging work;
- Professional and personal growth;
- Acknowledgement and recognition;
- Relationships with coworkers; and,
- Autonomy (p. 14)

Not all of the potential antecedents that have been noted in the literature have been empirically proven. However, Saks and Gruman (2014) highlighted that many drivers that flow from job resources have been found to be positively related to engagement (p. 168). These antecedents include job autonomy, feedback, a positive workplace climate, rewards and recognition, supportive coworkers, coaching, feedback, and opportunities for development (Saks & Gruman, 2014, p. 167-168). Saks also noted that leadership was an important driver of engagement, in particular transforming and empowering leadership (Saks & Gruman, 2014, p. 168). Finally, although the evidence is somewhat incomplete, Saks and Gruman (2014) remarked that some individual drivers, such as a proactive personality and higher self-esteem have been associated with higher levels of employee engagement (p. 168).

2.6 Measuring Employee Engagement

No one authoritative method has been accepted by the academic or human resource practitioner community to measure employee engagement. Most measurements of employee engagement have been based on surveys consisting of questions in areas relating to both the psychological factors and the organizational aspects that influence one's feelings about one's employment. These surveys typically feature 10 to 25 questions consisting of statements that ask respondents to provide their response based on a numbered scale of how accurately the statement reflects their opinion, perspective, or experience.

One of the most frequently used measurements of engagement among the academic community has been the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Saks & Gruman, 2014, p. 163). The UWES was developed by Schaufeli et al. as a corollary to the job demand-resources theory of employee engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2003, p. 714). The UWES consists of 17 statement questions that measure the degree of vigor, absorption, and dedication of an individual employee (see Appendix D). Respondents are asked to provide a response on their feeling to each statement based on a 7-point scale ranging "never" to "always/every day". Although the UWES is claimed by Schaufeli et al. to be an academically valid means to measure engagement, its validity has been questioned by several researchers (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004, p. 8). Saks and Gruman (2014) noted that dissenting researchers have called into

question the independence of the survey from burnout theory and other constructs such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment as opposed to employee engagement (p. 165-166).

As previously referred to in the previous section, the Gallup Organization has developed its own survey to measure employee engagement called the Q12. The Q12 consists of 12 questions that relate to the categories of basic needs, management, teamwork, and growth opportunities. These questions were developed over 30 years and their wording was finalized in the 1990s. The Gallup Organization claims that the survey, in its current form, has been administered to more than 25 million employees in 189 countries (Gallup, 2013, p. 19). Like the UWES, participants are asked to answer the questions using a 5-point scale answer system (see Appendix E for the Q12 questions). However unlike the UWES, the questions do not address how employee engagement may be influenced by psychological factors attributed to the individual employee – the questions reflect aspects of the work environment, managerial practices, and the organization where the individual is employed (Saks & Gruman, 2014, p. 163). Based on the numbered responses, employees are then classified into three categories – engaged, not engaged, or actively disengaged.

Various governments in Canada have administered employee engagement surveys of both employees in their jurisdictions at large and within their own organizations. In 2008, the BC Government administered an employee engagement survey to over 2000 randomly-selected employed individuals in the province. The survey consisted of 14 questions that measured the extent of job satisfaction, commitment to the organization, and satisfaction with the organization of each respondent. These three dimensions of engagement were based on the BC Government's understanding of employee engagement as being comprised of job satisfaction, commitment to an organization, and satisfaction with the organization (BC Stats, 2008a p. 3).

Prior to the BC Government's survey of a random sample of all employed individuals in the province, the federal government and four provincial governments formed the Employee Engagement Interjurisdictional Team (EEIT) in 2006 to create a shared model of employee engagement (Hicks, 2011, p. 5). Since the formation of the EEIT, all provincial and territorial governments, with the exception of Quebec, have become members of the EEIT. The EEIT came up with a set of 19 common statement questions that would be included in all public service employee surveys, six of which would form part of the Employee Engagement Index (PEI, 2008, p. 1) (see Appendix F for the 19 statement questions and the six questions forming the Employee Engagement Index). Like other employee engagement surveys, the EEIT has provided respondents with a 5-point scale to answer the questions. The majority of the 19 statement questions address an employee's satisfaction with his job and aspects of the individual employee's organization; the EEIT survey reflects a similar understanding of employee engagement when compared to the employee engagement surveys from the Gallup Organization and the BC Government. On the Canadian government employee engagement surveys, Hicks (2011) observed that some provinces, such as Ontario and PEI, have added additional questions to the 19 common questions, while others (such as the Government of BC) reduced the number of questions included in the Employment Engagement Index (p. 6). These divergent actions by some of the provincial governments has made it more difficult to compare survey results across jurisdictions (Hicks, 2011, p. 6).

2.7 Differences Between Public Sector and Private Sector

As noted in the previous section, public organizations have taken a heightened interest in the engagement of their employees like their private sector counterparts over the last 15 years. This interest in employee engagement is rooted in the New Public Management (NPM) paradigm

that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s in response to a general decrease of trust in public institutions, along with macroeconomic factors that put pressure on governments to trim budgets and programs. At its core, NPM involves adopting private-sector practices in public organizations. Some examples of the NPM approach include focusing on customer or client service, introducing performance measurement systems, applying a greater degree of financial control over organizations and programs, and seeking efficiencies. Based on the perceived and observed benefits to employee engagement in terms of increased productivity and performance and customer loyalty and retention, there is a linkage between the practices of NPM and employee engagement (Vigoda-Gadot et al., 2012, p. 519). A linkage also exists between the two in terms of disengagement as the NPM paradigm has increased demands on performance with diminished budgets and resources in the public sector (Conway et al., 2016, p. 906)

One of the more comprehensive studies to date on the differences between employee engagement in the public sector and employee engagement in the private sector was conducted by the Scottish Government. The literature review conducted by the Scottish Government (formerly the Scottish Executive) found that there were no discernable differences between the two sectors in how employee engagement works (Scottish Executive, 2007, p. 15). Also, the literature review found that models developed for the study of employee engagement in the private sector could be applied to the public sector (Scottish Executive, 2007, p. 15). However, where the Scottish Government did find difference between the two sectors was the importance of particular drivers or antecedents of engagement. Based on a review of an Ipsos-MORI study of public sector works in the UK, the Scottish Government noted that public sector workers tend to be critical of change management, leadership, recognition for good performance, having sufficient resources, value in client service, and confidence that their organizations are successful (Scottish Executive, 2007, p. 18). As a result, the review contended that those in the public sector responsible for increasing engagement should focus on communication, clarity of direction, and leadership capacity (Scottish Executive, 2007, p. 18).

One potential driver or antecedent of employee engagement that is not within the purview of the employee's organization is the individual employee's disposition to work in the public sector. The concept of public sector motivation, or PSM, has been developed to describe people who are drawn to work in the public sector as a result of their commitment to the public interest, compassion, and self-sacrifice (Kernaghan, 2011, p. 8). Some researchers have suggested that public service motivation is an inherently motivating force that fosters greater commitment to organizations and an affective attachment to public service (Vigoda-Gadot et al., 2012, p. 531). Kernaghan (2011) noted that a limited number of engagement surveys conducted by public sector organizations in Canada, such as the Ontario Public Service, suggest that individuals with a high level of PSM will have greater organization satisfaction and commitment and will therefore perform at higher levels (p. 15). However, the extent of the relationship between employee engagement and public service motivation remains somewhat unclear and is a relationship that requires further inquiry (Vigoda-Gadot et al., 2012, p. 531).

In addition to the differences in particular drivers of engagement, an area where the research of employee engagement in the public sector differs to that of the private sector is in the nature of the outcomes. As discussed in the preceding section on the consequences of employee engagement, the private sector has taken an interest in employee engagement because it has been associated with increased productivity, revenue, and customer loyalty and satisfaction. This relationship between engagement and the outcomes in the private sector is a derivative of the *service profit chain*. The service profit chain describes a causal chain between improvements in employee attitudes and behaviours and improvements in customer attitudes,

behaviours and ultimately improvements in growth and profits (Heintzman & Marson, 2005, p. 551).

In contrast to the private sector, the objective of the public sector is to fulfill commitments with respect to the public good. Measuring the public good, unlike profits or revenue, is difficult because there are competing interests, contradictions, and trade-offs (Heintzman & Marson, 2005, p. 552). Instead, building citizenship and increasing trust and confidence of the public are seen as tangible goals for public organizations (Heintzman & Marson, 2005, p. 553). Heintzman and Marson (2005) examined the private sector service profit chain and developed a similar sector service profit chain for the public sector. The central idea behind the public sector service value chain in Heintzman and Marson's (2005) model is that if employee satisfaction and commitment are present (both aspects of employee engagement), client satisfaction (e.g. members of the public) and trust and confidence increase in public institutions (p. 553).

There has been some evidence of the applicability of Heintzman and Marson's public sector service value chain model in public sector organizations in Canada. BC Stats (2008b) conducted surveys in customer satisfaction for the BC Public Service and the Region of Peel in Ontario and found that there was a positive relationship between employee engagement (defined by BC Stats as "satisfaction and commitment") and customer satisfaction (p. 3). The BC Stats study found that for every 2-point increase in employee engagement, there was a 1-point increase in customer satisfaction (BC Stats, 2008b, p. 3). Another study conducted by BC Stats involving 21 units of the BC Public Service directly involved in service delivery found a similar association between employee engagement and customer satisfaction (BC Stats, 2009, p. 3)

3.0 Jurisdictional Scan – Review of Public Sector Studies in Engagement

In order to determine if the state of employee engagement and the factors that have influenced employee engagement are exclusive to the City of Pitt Meadows, or if they are shared across other public sector organizations, the researcher performed a jurisdictional scan, or review, of other Canadian public sector organizations' studies on employee engagement. As the provincial, territorial, and federal governments are the most current and easily accessed sources of public sector organization data on employee engagement in Canada, the researcher selected six organizations (two territories, three provinces, and the federal government) to compare the study of employee engagement. These organizations were chosen because they had performed one or more employee engagement studies over the last 10 years and had their engagement studies summarized in formal reports. Employee engagement studies at the municipal level are more challenging to access publicly, but the researcher was able to find a recent study of employee engagement in the neighbouring City of Vancouver. The City of Vancouver's engagement study was added to the jurisdictional scan because the researcher wanted to provide a local city to compare the City of Pitt Meadows to.

The Yukon

The Government of the Yukon and the Government of BC use the same definition and framework, which were developed by BC Stats, to analyze employee engagement (see Appendix G for the engagement framework). Employee engagement in these two jurisdictions is defined as job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Yukon, 2016, p. 2). The definition is premised on the idea that one's commitment to one's job tends to be related to one's satisfaction in that job (Yukon, 2016, p. 13). Following these two aspects of engagement, the BC Stats model consists of 12 engagement drivers:

- Empowerment
- Pay and Benefits
- Vision, Mission, and Goals
- Stress and Workload
- Recognition
- Job Suitability
- Professional Development
- Tools
- Respectful Environment
- Teamwork
- Senior Leadership
- Supervisor-Level Management (p. 7)

The Yukon Government's 2016 survey contained 31 questions, but only four of these questions related to the organization commitment and job satisfaction aspects of employee engagement; the rest of the questions were related to the engagement drivers above. Based on the average score of these four questions, the Yukon Government measured an engagement score of 73 (Yukon, 2016, p. 9). With respect to the other survey question scores, the Yukon Government noted that the senior leadership, vision/mission/goals, and recognition drivers received the lowest average scores while questions relating to teamwork, job suitability, and supervisory-level management received the highest average scores (Yukon, 2016, p. 7).

Alberta

The Government of Alberta also conducted a recent employee engagement survey between February and March 2016. Based on the average score of the seven questions in the engagement index, the Alberta Government measured an engagement score of 60 (Alberta, 2016, p. 3) (see Appendix F for the EEIT engagement index questions). The survey also measures various engagement drivers including:

- Confidence in senior leadership
- Support at work to provide a high level of service
- Innovation
- Respect in the workplace
- Information flows from senior leadership to staff
- Recognition
- Opportunities to provide input in decision-making
- Opportunities for career growth
- Support of work-related learning and development
- Knowledge of how work contributes to organization's goals
- Work-life balance
- Quality of supervision
- Job fit
- Relationships with co-workers (Alberta, 2016, p. 5)

With respect to the survey questions on these engagement drivers, the Alberta Government found that confidence in senior leadership, support to provide a high level of service, growth opportunities, and innovation were the drivers that had a greatest overall impact on engagement, while the drivers of recognition and information flows from senior leadership to staff were the drivers that represented the opportunities for improvement (Alberta, 2016, p. 8).

Nova Scotia

The Government of Nova Scotia last conducted an employee engagement survey in 2015. Like some of other provinces and territories, the Nova Scotia Government has created its own definition of employee engagement and framework for the analysis of employee engagement. Nova Scotia defines employee engagement as “the extent to which individuals feel connected to and involved with their jobs and organization” (Nova Scotia, 2015, p. 1). Flowing from this definition, the Nova Scotia model of employee engagement consists of four pillars (leadership and communication, talent capacity, workplace culture, and job capacity) with several drivers under each pillar (see Appendix H for the engagement survey framework) (Nova Scotia, 2015, p. 4.). The drivers of employee engagement include:

- Flow of essential communication
- Understanding of how employees contribute to the organization’s objectives
- Confidence in senior leadership
- Satisfaction with level of supervision
- Support of learning and development
- Career growth and advancement opportunities
- Confidence in staffing processes
- Effective performance planning
- Positive team relations
- Empowerment
- Contributions are valued
- Quality work life
- Respect and inclusion
- Job fit
- Strong job support and providing quality service
- Fair compensation and benefits

With respect to the employee engagement drivers, Nova Scotia highlighted clear direction and expectations about jobs, respect and inclusion, job fit, and compensation and benefits (Nova Scotia, 2015, p. 17). The engagement drivers that were highlighted as critical based on the survey results included senior leadership and communication flows, career growth and advancement opportunities within the Nova Scotia public service, staffing and performance planning, and recognition (Nova Scotia, 2015, p. 17).

Prince Edward Island

The last employee engagement survey that the Prince Edward Island Government conducted was in 2012. The PEI Government shares the same definition of employee engagement as the Government of Nova Scotia. (PEI, 2008, p. 2). Also, like the other governments in Canada, PEI has developed its own framework for analyzing employee engagement (see Appendix I for the engagement framework). The following engagement drivers, or factors as they are called by PEI, are present in its framework:

- Co-worker relationships
- Quality of service provided
- Job fit
- Work-life balance
- Quality of leadership and supervision

- Career expectations and direction
- Learning and development opportunities
- Opportunities for input
- Recognition
- Opportunities for growth and advancement (PEI, 2008, p. 1)

In its report on the survey results, the PEI Public Service Commission stated that the engagement drivers that showed improvement over the 2010 survey were job fit, workload, direct supervision, recognition and support (PEI, 2013, p. 17). With respect to the questions that scored lower in 2012 than 2010, the Commission's report noted that they were learning and performance reviews, senior leadership and information flows, and career development and pride in the organization (PEI, 2013, p. 17). The Commission's report then stated that the senior leadership within the PEI public service agreed to address the following drivers of engagement:

- Regular feedback and recognition through performance management discussions
- Developing and support career growth of staff within the PEI public service
- Improving communication from leadership and within the organization (PEI, 2013, p. 18)

The Northwest Territories

The Government of the Northwest Territories last conducted an employee engagement survey in 2014. In a manner that is similar to the other provincial and territorial governments, the Government of NWT views the concept of employee engagement as consisting of two components – commitment and satisfaction, both in one's job and in one's organization (GNWT, 2013, p. 2). In place of engagement drivers, the GNWT has based its survey questions around seven themes that are:

- Development
- Capacity
- Excellence and Innovation
- Leadership
- Culture
- Health, Wellness, and Safety
- Diversity and Inclusion (GNWT, 2013, p. 3)

The 2014 report on the survey highlighted the strengths and areas of improvement. The 2014 survey results indicated that working relationships with co-workers, job fit and challenging and interesting work were strengths (GNWT, 2015, p. 1). These areas of strength correspond to the culture, excellence and innovation, and the capacity themes. With respect to the areas of improvement, the survey results indicated that the flow of information from senior leadership to staff, confidence in senior leadership, meaningful recognition, and opportunities for career advancement needed attention (GNWT, 2015, p. 1). These areas of improvement correspond to the leadership, culture, and development themes.

The Federal Government

The federal government conducts employee surveys every three years; the last survey was conducted in 2014. The survey is largely an employee engagement survey, but the federal government has stated that the intent of the survey is to measure aspects of employee engagement, leadership, the workforce and the workplace (TBS, 2015, p. 3). The federal government's survey devotes seven questions specifically to employee engagement that have been adapted from the common questions of the employee engagement index. However, the

questions that are associated with the other areas (leadership, workforce, and the workplace) assess the impact of similar engagement drivers that have been used by other provincial and territorial governments. The federal government survey's specific areas of focus include:

- Immediate supervisor
- Senior management
- Performance management
- Staffing
- Job fit and development
- Empowerment
- Work-life Balance and Workload
- Retention
- Organizational Goals
- Organization performance
- Respectful workplace
- Physical environment and equipment
- Use of official languages
- Duty to accommodate
- Discrimination
- Harassment

The 2014 survey report did not state the employee engagement index, but instead highlighted trends relating to the seven questions. The report stated that while employees were engaged overall, most aspects of employee engagement decreased between 2014 and 2011 (TBS, 2015, p. 6). In particular, employees' satisfaction from their work, their general like of their jobs, and their preference to remain with their organizations decreased multiple percentage points. With respect to the specific focus areas, the survey report observed that there were increases in positive responses compared to 2011 in employees' perceptions about their immediate supervisors, performance management (e.g. feedback and management of unsatisfactory work performance), some aspects of work-life balance such as flexible work arrangements, and a respectful workplace (TBS, 2015, p. 1-2). However, there were several more specific areas that recorded a decrease in positive perceptions from employees including the flow of information from senior management, training opportunities, career development support from their departments, empowerment in the form of input into decision-making, and organizational performance in terms of fewer resources and a lack of stability in their organizations (TBS, 2015, p. 1-2). Furthermore, the survey report noted the relatively high presence of harassment and discrimination in the workplace at 19% and 8% of employees surveyed respectively (TBS, 2015, p. 2).

The City of Vancouver

The City of Vancouver conducted its first employee engagement survey in 2010 and followed up with a second survey in 2013. Like the majority of employee engagement surveys, the City of Vancouver used a closed question format with a 5-point scale. Also, like the majority of employee engagement surveys, the questions were determined based on an engagement model (uncredited) consisting of drivers, two central concepts that influence employee effectiveness (engagement and enablement), and several desired outcomes (see appendix J for the City of Vancouver's engagement model). With respect to the two central concepts of the survey model, *engagement* is characterized by "commitment" and "discretionary effort" while *enablement* is characterized by "optimized roles" and a "supportive environment" (City of

Vancouver, 2013, p. 9). The model includes the following drivers of engagement and enablement:

- Clear and promising direction
- Confidence in leaders
- Quality and customer focus
- Respect and recognition
- Development opportunities
- Pay and benefits
- Performance management
- Authority and empowerment
- Resources
- Stress and workload
- Health and safety
- Training
- Collaboration
- Work, structure and process (City of Vancouver, 2013, p. 9)

The 2013 survey report provided a comparison between the 2010 and 2013 survey results and another set of results called the “public sector norm” as tracked by the company that conducted the survey, the HayGroup (Lee, 2014, para 13). Between 2010 and 2013, there were some areas (i.e. questions pertaining to specific engagement and enablement drivers) that showed improvement including development opportunities, performance management, health and safety, and pay and benefits. However, there were also some notable decreases in the areas of stress and workload and resources (City of Vancouver, 2013, p. 12). Overall, the majority of engagement and enablement drivers in 2013 tracked below the public sector norm as defined by the HayGroup (City of Vancouver, 2013, p. 12).

Summary

Although the organizations that were reviewed conducted their employee engagement studies in different years based on somewhat differing definitions and conceptualizations of employee engagement, there were still some relevant themes for the study of employee engagement at the City of Pitt Meadows. One relevant theme was that the organizations shared several engagement drivers.

The following list of engagement drivers appeared in engagement surveys of two or more Canadian government organizations:

- Development and career growth
- Leadership
- Job fit/suitability
- Team relations/relationships
- Empowerment
- Recognition
- Quality service
- Workload/stress
- Respectful workplace
- Work-life balance
- Pay

- Innovation
- Opportunities for input
- Performance management
- Health and safety
- Staffing processes
- Supervisor relationship

When comparing this list of drivers to the list of drivers developed by Wollard and Shuck (2011), the majority of these are organizational drivers, or factors that are within the influence of the employing organizations. The single driver in this list that appears in Wollard and Shuck’s list of individual antecedents is work-life balance. However, it does not appear to be regarded as a significant driver of engagement by the sample organizations when measured against other drivers such as leadership and development and career growth.

The set of surveys also shared various strengths and weaknesses with respect to drivers of employee engagement. The following table depicts the strengths and weaknesses that were present in more than one survey:

Table 2 – Strong and weak engagement drivers among public sector organizations in Canada

Strengths	Weaknesses
Job fit/suitability	Career growth/development
Supervisory management	Recognition
Teamwork	Information flows
Respect	Leadership
Performance management/feedback	Resources
Pay and benefits	
Growth/development	

In the *strengths* category, job fit and suitability was a strength that was identified in the majority of the Canadian public sector employee engagement surveys that were reviewed. The specific question that was asked to measure job fit and suitability was whether an employee’s job was a good fit with the employee’s skills and interests (Yukon, 2015, p. 10; Alberta, 2016, p. 5; Treasury Board, 2014, p. 10; Nova Scotia, 2015, p. 10; GNWT, 2014, p. 2). The surveys in which job fit and suitability was identified as a strength had scores of 78% employees agreeing with the statement or higher. Although none of the surveys asked further questions to employees about their specific skills and interests, the positive response rates to this question may provide some support to the theory of public sector motivation (PSM). Employees in these public organizations may be more inclined or naturally attracted to the types of jobs offered by those public organizations, some of which are not readily available in the private or not-for-profit sectors.

With respect to the *weaknesses* in engagement drivers, the list from the surveys reviewed resembles the list of criticisms from employees in public sector organizations that was cited in the Scottish Government’s literature view of the issue. To reiterate the Scottish Government’s literature review of engagement in the public sector, public sector employees tend to be critical of leadership, the lack of resources, and the lack of recognition for jobs that are performed well

(Scottish Executive, 2007, p. 15). Although the Scottish Government's review of the literature was conducted nearly a decade ago, it appears that the same impediments to increased employee engagement in some public sector organizations persist today.

The definitions of employee engagement in the organizations' surveys that were reviewed contain the elements of *job satisfaction*, *organizational commitment*, *effort* and *feelings of connection*. These elements reflect some of the elements in the practitioner definitions of engagement such as satisfaction (Gallup-Harter) and connection to the job or organization (Gibbons-Conference Board). However, these definitions from the organizations reviewed do not seem to capture the academic community's psychological grounding in the concept of engagement. While the employee engagement models themselves feature drivers of engagement that moderate an individual employee's response to his work environment and organization, the definitions of the public sector organizations reviewed do not reflect an understanding that the individual's cognitive and emotional state influence the extent of one's engagement at work.

4.0 Summary of the State of Engagement Research

The concept of employee engagement is relatively young, at approximately 30 years of age, but there is a substantial amount of research about the concept in both the academic and practitioner communities. There are several theories to explain how and why employee engagement happens in the workplace. These theories have been complemented by research on engagement antecedents, or drivers, which facilitate engagement in the work environment. Furthermore, a body of research exists, particularly from human resource consulting firms such as the Gallop Organization, Towers Perrin, and the Conference Board of Canada, that has provided some evidence of the outcomes of employee engagement including improvements in retention, productivity and performance, client loyalty and satisfaction, and employee health.

However, despite the extensive research on the issue of employee engagement, there are some significant questions. Many researchers, both in the practitioner and academic community, have provided definitions of employee engagement, but no real consensus exists on what the concept actually means. What has emerged over the last several years is a multi-faceted conception of engagement that involves cognitive, emotional, and behavioural aspects. In terms of measuring employee engagement, the preferred method has been the survey, but like the definition of engagement, there is no one accepted survey standard among organizations who wish to measure employee engagement. Some researchers have suggested that the study of engagement in the workplace should go beyond quantitative methods and into more qualitative methods (Robertson-Smith & Markwick, 2009, p. 55).

The public sector, like the private sector, has become interested in the subject of employee engagement over the last two decades. The context for an increasing interest from the public sector in employee engagement is an environment of declining budgets, measurable objectives, and increasing demands from the public for services. It is thought that by increasing engagement among employees in public sector organizations, employees can not only be more productive and efficient, but organizations can also increase trust among their clients, the public. While the research on employee engagement in the public sector suggests that models and theories of engagement can be applied as they are to the study of private sector organizations, the research also suggests that there are notable differences in the drivers of engagement between the two sectors. As a result, traditional drivers of engagement in private sector organizations, such as pay and benefits, may not be as effective in increasing employee

engagement as addressing other organizational issues such as leadership, communication, and resources.

5.0 Conceptual Framework

As described in the literature review, the public sector organizations that conduct regular employee engagement surveys have developed conceptual frameworks to explain their understanding of the issue and to guide the design of the surveys themselves (e.g. the BC Stats Employee Engagement House Model). However, based on the public sector employee surveys reviewed, these surveys seem to be primarily focused on organizational drivers and do not take into account the emotional and cognitive aspects of employee engagement as raised in the academic literature. Furthermore, the public sector employee engagement frameworks reviewed tend to reflect a simple understanding of the expected outcomes of employee engagement – namely, satisfaction and commitment to one’s job and organization.

Based on a review of the academic literature, sample comprehensive conceptual frameworks that reflect the current understanding about the employee engagement have only recently emerged. As discussed in the previous section, the Conference Board of Canada (2016) recently devised a list of seven engagement drivers as part of its model of employee engagement. In the Conference Board’s model, each factor is given a relatively equal weight in terms of influence on employee engagement (Armstrong & Wright, 2016, p. 14):



Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

Figure 1 – Conference Board of Canada employee engagement model

However, this model, like other models that have been applied to measure employee engagement in public sector organizations, does not seem to take much account of individual characteristics or the demands of one’s job beyond the workplace. The following conceptual framework, adapted from Rana, Ardichvili, and Tkachenko’s (2014) integrative conceptual framework on employee engagement, was chosen by the researcher to operationalize the current research on the subject, and to facilitate the design of the interview questions, the recommendations and action plan.

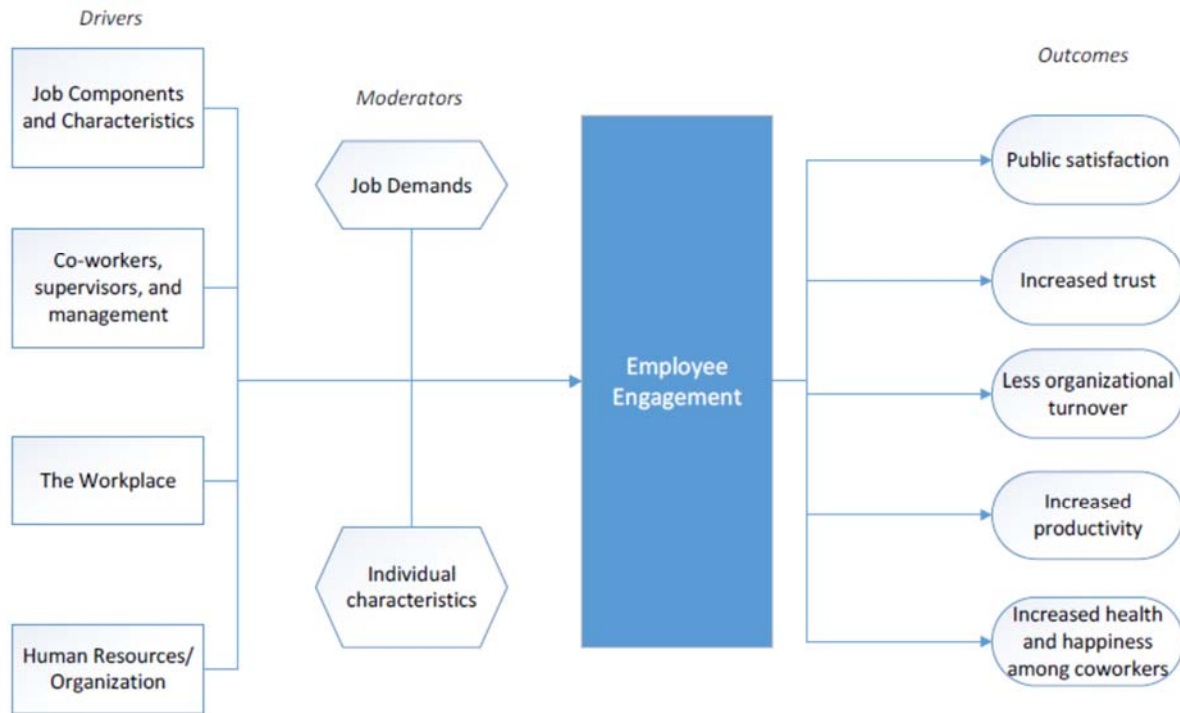


Figure 2 – Employee engagement conceptual framework at the City of Pitt Meadows

The first set of boxes on the left of the diagram denote four primary categories of engagement antecedents, or engagement drivers. The following table provides some examples of specific engagement drivers in each of the primary categories:

Table 3 – Specific engagement drivers for the study of employee engagement at the City of Pitt Meadows

Job Components and Characteristics	Co-workers, Supervisors, and Management	The Workplace	Human Resources/Organization
Job fit/suitability	Relationships with co-workers	Safe working environment	Career growth within the organization
Challenging responsibilities and duties	Relationship with direct supervisor	Supportive/collaborative work environment	Learning and development opportunities
Importance, significance or meaning of the job	Trust/belief in senior leaders	Innovation is encouraged	Fairness in administration of policies

Pay and benefits	Feedback and performance management	Opportunities to provide input	
Autonomy	Information flows within organization	Empowering environment	
		Recognition and appreciation	

The boxes in the second column from the left are considered to be *moderators* of employee engagement (Rana, Ardichvili & Tkachenko, 2014, p. 258). The relationship that the specific drivers have with employee engagement is moderated by each of these factors. The following table lists examples of specific moderators under each of these categories:

Table 4 – Specific employee engagement moderators at the City of Pitt Meadows

Job Demands	Individual Characteristics
Work load	Self-esteem
	Proactive personality/takes initiative
	Optimism

For example, an employee with a greater sense of optimism may have greater trust in senior leadership than an employee with an average to lower-than-average sense of optimism, which in turn would result in an increase in employee engagement in the employee with higher optimism.

6.0 Methodology and Methods

6.1 Methodology

This research project employed a qualitative research approach consisting of an analysis of both primary and secondary sources. The primary approach in this project was a case study as staff and managers employed by the City of Pitt Meadows were the primary sources of data and analysis for the project. The secondary research approach consisted of a literature review of the issue of employee engagement and a jurisdictional scan of seven Canadian public sector organizations. The purpose of the secondary research was to provide both a foundation for understanding the issue of employee engagement and a framework for guiding the research questions, the recommendations, and the implementation plan for the client.

6.2 Methods

The primary sources of data for this project consisted of 23 semi-structured interviews with employees and 10 semi-structured interviews with managers at the City of Pitt Meadows. Two sets of questions were prepared following the selection and adaptation of the conceptual framework – one set for the employees and the other for the managers. The two sets of questions were comprised of similar questions that explored the same themes identified in the conceptual framework, but were worded differently to reflect the different perspectives of the two subject groups (see Appendices B and C for each set of interview questions). Each set of questions was asked in the same order for each interview, but respondents were allowed to answer questions with as much detail as they wished to provide.

Prior to conducting the interviews, the researcher made three separate presentations to staff and management about the proposed research, its purpose, and the methodology. The researcher emphasized that anonymity and confidentiality would be protected. Staff and managers who wished to participate then coordinated interview times with the researcher and the Director of Human Resources at the City of Pitt Meadows. The interviews were conducted over the course of three weeks in September 2016 on the client's premises. Each interview was conducted in a private meeting room reserved for the purposes of the research. All of the interviews were recorded by audio, but no notes were taken by the researcher during the interview so that he could devote his full attention to each person interviewed. The researcher initially projected that each interview would take approximately 30 to 45 minutes, but the amount of time each interview actually took varied greatly between 15 minutes to over 60 minutes. The researcher informed each respondent that there was no time constraint on the length of the interview to ensure that each respondent had the opportunity to answer each question fully and honestly. After all of the interviews were conducted, the researcher transcribed them.

The secondary sources of data for this research project consisted of the academic, human resource practitioner, and organizational literature on employee engagement. The secondary sources were identified using the University of Victoria's online library catalogue, searches on Google and Google Scholar, and direct searches on organizational websites. The researcher also consulted the bibliographies of various journal articles and reports for relevant reports, documents, and studies on the topic of employee engagement. The researcher reviewed some of these secondary sources prior to the interviews, but the researcher conducted a more detailed review of these sources after the interviews to better understand the findings and to support the recommendations and implementation plan.

6.3 Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using content analysis, which is a systematic method of analyzing text (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008, p. 151). The analysis of text using content analysis involves reviewing texts and applying codes to specific words, phrases, or statements in order to identify certain themes in the text (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008, p. 151). There are several different types of content analysis and the type that the researcher used was *directed content analysis*. Directed content analysis involves coding the data using pre-determined codes based on existing research or theory about the subject (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1281). The researcher applied directed content analysis, as opposed to *conventional content analysis*, which involves creating codes after the review of the text, because of the employee engagement framework with specific categories that was selected from the literature.

Each interview transcript was analyzed and coded with the assistance of a coding software program, MAXQDA12. The coding records were kept on local storage and were not shared with remote servers or other computer workstations that did not belong to the researcher. The engagement drivers and moderators identified as part of the engagement conceptual framework (see Tables 2 and 3) formed the initial codes. The researcher created new codes if a particular passage of text could not be categorized under one of the initial codes. Once all of the transcripts were coded, the interview data in each of the codes was analyzed to identify emerging themes. As permitted under directed content analysis, codes that contained only one piece of data were re-examined and merged with other codes.

As part of the analysis of each engagement driver, the researcher analyzed the overall nature and tone of the comments in each of the engagement sub-drivers and moderators. If the

comments from both staff and managers were mostly positive with respect to a specific engagement sub-driver or moderator, then the researcher considered that engagement sub-driver or moderator a strength. On the other hand, if the comments from managers and employees were negative with respect to a specific engagement sub-driver or moderator, then the researcher considered that engagement sub-driver or moderator a weakness.

6.4 Project Limitations and Delimitations

The researcher chose semi-structured interviews as the primary method of data collection in an effort to capture the complexities and nuances surrounding employee engagement at the City of Pitt Meadows. Despite the potential richness of the data from the interviews, the chosen research methodology still posed several limitations.

One limitation posed by the research was that the researcher was not able to solicit participation from a higher number of employees. While the researcher was able to interview 23 employees, the number of employees interviewed represents approximately one-third of the total permanent employees at the City of Pitt Meadows. Other data collection methods, such as an employee survey, could have been developed to obtain data from employees who did not participate in the interviews. However, supplementing the interviews with other data collection methods would have required more time from the researcher and the organization.

Another limitation of the research was that the researcher was not able to interview an equal proportion of employees from each unit in the organization. This may have resulted in the perspectives of certain teams, whose employees participated in the interviews in higher numbers than other teams, being over-represented in the data compared to the perspectives of employees from other teams.

A third limitation of the research related to the fact that the data and the analysis of that data reflected a snapshot of the organization's position and needs with respect to employee engagement at a particular point in time (e.g. September 2016). Prior to the data collection period, the City of Pitt Meadows experienced a series of staff and management departures and re-assignments. The organization was also in the process of building a new department, the Parks and Recreation department. As a whole, these changes may have had a disproportionate influence on the respondents' perspectives on employee engagement. To moderate the potential influence of these organizational changes, the researcher suggests that a second data collection phase be performed by another researcher at a future date.

A fourth and final limitation of the research related to the subjectivity involved in weighing the individual responses to determine the strong and weak engagement drivers in the organization. There may have been some responses that were seen as more significant than others depending on the length of the response, the content of the response or example provided, or the researcher's own perspective with respect to the specific issues that were discussed by the respondents.

7.0 Interview Findings

7.1 Introduction

The findings from the semi-structured employee and manager interviews are summarized according to each of the drivers and moderators identified in the conceptual framework. Each of the interview questions was created with a linkage to at least one of the drivers or moderators in the conceptual framework. However, as the interviews were semi-structured, the respondents did not always provide answers to the questions that reflected the intended specific engagement driver or moderator. Thus, the researcher analyzed each answer for linkages to any of the drivers and moderators that were identified in the conceptual framework.

During the research proposal phase, the client requested that the researcher examine and analyze the state of employee engagement in the organization during the study to supplement the analysis. There was one question in the both interviews that was dedicated to obtaining feedback from employees and managers on the state of employee engagement in the organization. As the state of engagement was not included in the conceptual framework, the issue will be examined separately in the following section.

7.2 State of Employee Engagement in the Organization

Employee interview question: How would you describe the level of engagement from your colleagues in their jobs and in their organization?

Manager interview question: How would you describe the level of engagement from your staff in their jobs and in their organization?

A majority of employees who were interviewed (15 out of 23 interviewed) expressed that the level of employee engagement was high. Some of the comments included references to the employees' level of dedication to the organization and the positive attitude that employees have to their city and their jobs. However, there were some employees within this group who provided less than positive comments about the state of employee engagement. One employee stated that 90% of staff were engaged, while the other 10% were not so much disengaged as frustrated. Another employee noted that the level of employee engagement in the organization was varied between those who just come into work every day and clock out on time and those who come in early and stay late.

About half of the employees interviewed (12 out of 23 interviewed) had some negative impressions about the state of engagement in the organization (some of these employees also had positive things to state about the level of employee engagement). Some employees stated that engagement among staff was low, or lower than it was in the past. One employee attributed low engagement in his particular unit to the long tenure of some of the staff. Another employee noted that as a result of the organization being under-resourced and overworked, there was no time for employees to be engaged. A couple of other employees attributed the decline in the level of employee engagement to the recent changes and departures in the organization.

Nearly all of the managers interviewed (9 out of 10) expressed that employee engagement was high among their teams. One manager noted that engagement at the organization seemed to be higher than at other organizations the manager has worked for. However, some of these impressions about staff engagement had caveats. One manager noted that engagement levels

tended to drop when unrealistic timelines and deadlines were put on employees. The same manager also stated that employees tended to be engaged more with their immediate work units and that the level of employee engagement was previously higher with a long-time manager.

On the other side of employee engagement, there were some managers who discussed various challenges with employee engagement. One manager noted that while employees tended to be engaged in their day-to-day work and within their teams, they did not feel motivated or engaged in the larger organization or in their own career path. This was attributed to some damage that was done in the past to employee morale. Another manager remarked that certain decisions with respect to hiring were made without employee input or were not fully explained, which may explain why engagement decreased. With respect to specific units, a couple of managers expressed that engagement was down in the Works Yard and in certain units working at City Hall.

7.3 Organizational Size

Although this was not an engagement driver or moderator that was identified in the conceptual framework, the issue of organization's size came up repeatedly in interviews with both employees and managers.

There were several employees who provided some feedback with respect to the organization's small size. One employee noted that as a result of the organization's small size, many of the employees performed jobs that someone in a larger organization would specialize in. Other employees discussed that as a result of the organization's small size, workload was a persistent concern, along with a limited budget and long-time employees who have become disengaged over time.

There were five managers who provided statements with respect to this issue. Like the employees who commented on this issue, the managers highlighted the organization's small size relative to other municipalities. One manager noted that employees had the opportunities to pursue different opportunities they would not have had in a larger city, which resulted in increased intellectual stimulation and learning opportunities. On the other hand, other managers remarked that the organization's small size impacted the recruitment and retention of staff, and succession planning.

7.4 Job Components and Characteristics

Employee interview questions

- *How do you feel about the work that you are doing? Describe your impressions in the areas of workload, results, intellectual stimulation and learning.*
- *In your opinion, is your compensation package fair given your work load and responsibilities? If not, why?*

Manager interview questions:

- *How does your staff feel about the work that they are doing? Describe your impressions in the areas of their workload, results, intellectual stimulation, and learning.*
- *In your opinion, is the compensation package fair for your staff given their workload and responsibilities?*

Based on the responses to the interview questions relating to the job components and characteristics primary engagement driver, the following eight engagement sub-drivers were found to be relevant to employees and staff in the organization:

Table 5 – Frequency of engagement drivers under Job Components and Characteristics

Driver	Cited by Number of Employees	Cited by Number of Managers
Pay and benefits	23	10
Challenging responsibilities and duties	19	5
Affinity for the job	9	4
Autonomy	8	4
Importance or significance of the job	7	4
Job fit	4	4
Quality of work and outputs	4	5
Defined responsibilities	4	1

Since pay and benefits was the primary subject of one of the interview questions, both employees and managers made several observations. Overall, most employees believed that their pay is fair, but there were a few dissenters who believed that they were under compensated because of their workload or their particular skills and experience in relation to their colleagues at the same pay grade. However, with respect to the benefits package, many employees stated that their benefits package was poor to other municipalities. Some employees offered various suggestions to improve the benefits package including free gym memberships for staff and better extended health benefits. There were also some exempt staff who expressed concerns about the issue of wage compression.

On the management side, most managers stated that the total compensation package was fair. Several managers noted that the security offered by the public sector was an attraction. One manager observed that pay tended to be higher in the public sector than the private sector for lower skilled work (e.g. clerical), but that the difference in more specialized and highly-skilled work was smaller between the two sectors. Some managers commented on their own compensation and expressed that managers were lower paid in the City of Pitt Meadows than in other Metro Vancouver municipalities. The lower pay of managers was exemplified in the wage compression in certain sectors like the Fire Department and certain exempt staff.

The second most discussed engagement sub-driver by employees was being *challenged by the job* or having challenging responsibilities and duties on the job. The majority of employees who commented in this area felt that their jobs provided them with a sufficient amount of challenge and variety. Many employees also commented on the regular, sometimes daily, opportunities to learn something new on the job or to solve problems. However, one employee remarked that the opportunities to do and learn different things were the result of having only a few staff in certain areas. Another employee stated that there should be more opportunities for variety in their work.

Managers shared a few thoughts on challenging responsibilities and duties. A couple of managers stated that as a result of the organization's small size, staff were asked to take on different types of roles, which facilitated intellectual stimulation. However, variety on the job was

not shared by all teams as some other managers had challenges keeping staff motivated because of the monotony of their jobs. Another manager commented that the workload caused staff to put their own aspirations in career growth on standby.

The third most discussed engagement sub-driver by employees was having an *affinity for their jobs* – in other words, employees who expressed “liking” or “loving” their jobs. When asked about their motivations for working at the City of Pitt Meadows, several employees stated that they liked their jobs. However, one employee noted that while they liked their job, the job itself has been getting harder for them over the last couple of years. On the management side, a handful of managers commented about the importance of having employees who like or have an affinity for their jobs. A couple of these managers also noted that in addition to the importance of having employees who like their jobs, they had employees on their teams who enjoyed and were excited by their jobs.

The fourth engagement sub-driver that emerged in this category was *autonomy*. About half of the employees who referred to autonomy were positive about it in that they stated that their supervisors or managers provided them with a sufficient amount of it to do their jobs effectively. The other half of employees commented that their supervisors were prone to micromanaging - whether it was their jobs in general, or specific aspects of their jobs. The four managers who spoke about the subject of autonomy understood the importance of it and provided autonomy to their staff in their day to day responsibilities.

The fifth engagement sub-driver raised by employees was the *importance or significance of one's job*. Several employees talked about having a sense of pride in their jobs as a result of making a difference in the community. However, a couple of employees expressed wanting to make a difference in the community, but not having had an opportunity to do that in their specific jobs. A few managers also discussed their teams' attachment to the importance and significance of working at the City of Pitt Meadows in terms of having an impact in the community. One manager noted that the importance of building a new department, Parks and Recreation, was a motivator.

The remaining three engagement sub-drivers – *job fit, quality of work and results, and defined responsibilities* – were raised by an equal number of employees. In describing job fit, employees expressed having a job that fit their personality and fitting in with the overall corporate culture. With respect to the quality of work, three out of four of the employees who discussed this driver stated that their quality of work suffered as a result of increased demands and a lack of resources. With respect to defined responsibilities, two employees noted that their workload exceeded their official responsibilities and that as a result, their regular work suffered and they were feeling burnt out. Moreover, these increased responsibilities were not reflected in their role (i.e. job title) and compensation.

Several managers provided insights into the *job fit and quality of work and results drivers*. With respect to job fit, managers referred to the willingness of the organization to hire employees who are the "right fit". Fit was described as identifying employees “who want to be there with ideas and commitment” and employees who radiate a “warm and fuzzy feeling.” In regards to the quality of work and results, managers were mostly satisfied with the results from their teams in the face of increasing demands. However, one manager noted that despite the quality of the work, strategic thinking was sacrificed. Finally, with respect to defined responsibilities, the single manager who discussed this driver stated that employees under their supervision had defined responsibilities and roles that worked well.

7.5 Co-workers, Supervisors, and Management

Employee interview questions

- Describe the relationship that you have with your supervisor or manager. What is working well? What could use improvement?
- Describe your impression of the relationships between your colleagues in the organization. What is working well? What could use improvement?

Manager interview questions:

- Describe the relationship that you have with your employees. What is working well? What could use improvement?
- Describe your impression of the relationship between staff in the organization. What is working well? What could use improvement?

Based on the responses to the interview questions relating to the relationships with *co-workers and management* primary engagement driver, the following seven engagement sub-drivers were found to be relevant to employees and staff in the organization:

Table 6 – Frequency of engagement drivers under Co-workers, Supervisors, and Management

Driver	Cited by Number of Employees	Cited by Number of Managers
Relationship with direct supervisor	22	8
Relationship with co-workers	21	6
Information flows and communication	18	9
Trust or belief in senior leaders	15	7
Staff turnover	12	5
Feedback	9	4
Direction or vision	3	2

In response to one of the interview questions, almost all of the employees and the managers provided remarks about the *relationship with their direct supervisors* or the relationships with their employees. Overall, the employees reported having positive relationships with their direct supervisors. Some of the ways in which employees described their relationships with supervisors included "friend-like relationships", "good lines of communication", "professional, but casual at the same time", "inclusive", and "open-minded". However, a couple of employees did note challenges with previous supervisors and the lack of time that their supervisor had to address their issues. The managers who responded to the interview question tended to state that they had good working relationships with their direct reports in terms of having provided autonomy and openness to their employees. One manager commented that there was not enough time to establish sufficient relationships with employees. Another manager commented that there needed to be more time dedicated to team-building opportunities.

The other interview question relating to *relationships between co-workers* elicited the second most responses from employees. Overall, employees stated that their relationships with their coworkers were positive. There were many comments that indicated that staff got along with

their coworkers and had lots of fun while working. Some comments attributed the cohesiveness to the long tenure of some of the employees and the "family" aspect of the workforce. However, there were comments from a few employees that noted that some individuals were difficult to work with. The managers also offered that employees tended to get along with one another. However, there were some concerns expressed with respect to the strength of relationships within individual teams vis-a-vis the organization at large. Also, one manager stated that there were individuals who tended to have a large influence on their teams.

The third most discussed engagement driver by employees in this area was *information flows and communication*. Many employees expressed that communication within teams was good and supported by weekly meetings and open-door policies between supervisors and their employees. However, there were several critical comments from employees about the lack of communication and information from the senior leadership team. Specifically, there were several comments that indicated that the senior leadership team tended to be closed off from the rest of the staff. As this driver was the most discussed by the managers, there was much awareness from managers about the importance of communication and how it relates to employee engagement. Some managers noted that there needed to be improvement in this area. Also, one manager expressed that in the absence of good communication, employees would make decisions on their own, which may lead to poor outcomes.

Trust or belief in senior leaders in the organization was a sub-driver that emerged among a high number of employees. The majority of the comments from employees indicated concerns with the senior leadership team. There were several employees who discussed a mistrust of previous senior leaders. On the other hand, there were other comments that indicated some optimism about the tone and approach of the current leadership team. Other employees noted that while supervisors were willing to hear and pass on the concerns and ideas of their employees, these concerns and ideas were not considered or discussed by the senior leadership team. One employee observed that senior leaders were not making decisions because they were afraid of facing criticism for their decisions. Some of the managers also expressed similar comments as the employees on the challenges around leadership and the lack of trust among employees in the organization's leadership. Furthermore, there was some awareness shown from management that the lack of leadership and trust caused declining morale, job satisfaction, and led to departures.

Another engagement sub-driver discussed by about half of the employees interviewed that emerged in this category was *staff turnover*. Several employees expressed uncertainty in their work and work environment as a result of staff turnover. Other employees stated that the reasons behind some recent departures were not communicated to staff and that the departures were sudden and 'out of the blue'. One employee suggested that if employees were established in their community, they would not leave unless they felt underappreciated or undercompensated. The managers who discussed staff turnover recognized that there was some fear, a decrease in staff morale, and increased workload. One manager expressed that the loss of staff, which represented years of lost corporate knowledge, was a loss that posed a barrier to increased employee engagement.

There were several employees who discussed *feedback* in their responses. Some employees reported receiving feedback, which they expressed was a positive thing. However, there were two employees who expressed a desire to receive more feedback. There was also some acknowledgement from managers about the importance of feedback to employees. One manager noted that honest feedback both up and down the organization would help the team

work more effectively. However, one manager noted that they had particular difficulties when providing accurate feedback in a performance evaluation.

Finally, there were a few employees and managers who commented about the *direction or vision from senior leadership*. Employees tended to state that while there seemed to be a lack of vision or direction communicated across the organization, there were some recent strides made by senior leadership to correct this. Managers who commented on this emphasized that senior leadership needed to continue to articulate the vision of the organization to the employees.

7.6 The Workplace

Employee interview questions:

- Describe the relationship that you have with your supervisor or manager. What is working well? What could use improvement?
- Describe your impression of the relationships between your colleagues in the organization. What is working well? What could use improvement?

Manager interview questions:

- Describe the relationship that you have with your employees. What is working well? What could use improvement?
- Describe your impression of the relationship between staff in the organization. What is working well? What could use improvement?

Based on the responses to the interview questions relating to *the workplace* primary engagement driver, the following eight engagement sub-drivers were found to be relevant to employees and staff in the organization:

Table 7 – Frequency of engagement drivers under The Workplace

Driver	Cited by Number of Employees	Cited by Number of Managers
Supportive/collaborative environment	13	6
Workplace culture	13	5
Siloed environment	9	6
Opportunities to provide input	8	3
Recognition and appreciation	7	1
Respectful environment	7	1
Empowerment	3	6
Safe work environment	3	1

The engagement sub-driver that was discussed by the most employees was a *supportive or collaborative work environment*. Most of the employees who provided comments in this area expressed their belief that their workplace is supportive and collaborative. Some of the notable statements that employees provided to describe the work environment included:

- "We get by by helping one another out, keeping one another emotionally buoyed up."
- "Everyone's been patient with us. I think that shows a level of engagement and dedication towards seeing the greater team succeed."
- "We have a collaborative approach."

- "As a team, we all seem to work well."
- "What's so great about new people coming is that they can expose where your weaknesses are."

However, one employee noted that there was a mentality of pointing out failures among their work unit instead of providing feedback and input before decisions were made.

Most of the managers recognized the importance of having a supportive and collaborative work environment. Two managers specifically stated that collaboration, support, and teamwork was high within their units. Another manager expressed that employees needed to feel stability in the organization so when they put in extra effort, their team members would put in the same effort. Another manager suggested that the organization needed to see its leaders break down barriers so staff members would follow and collaborate across units.

The second most discussed engagement sub-driver among employees in this category was *workplace culture*. In contrast to some of the other engagement drivers, there were mixed thoughts about the state of the workplace culture in the organization. Some employees, particularly those who worked for other municipalities, expressed that the workplace made them feel comfortable and welcomed. Some staff from the Works Yard and the Fire Hall observed that there was a separation between themselves and the rest of the staff. A couple of employees noted that workplace culture and the notion of corporate wellness in the organization were not discussed in a long time. Furthermore, when discussing workplace culture, many employees raised the declining enthusiasm for social events such as the Christmas Party. Several employees lamented the loss of social forums such as recess and the social committee.

A couple of the managers did recognize the presence of a workplace culture in the organization, but were not able to specify what that culture was. One manager stated that the culture of the organization was like a family. Like several of the employees, most of the managers provided support to more extracurricular and team-building events. One manager noted that barriers, such as budget constraints and time, prevented more team-building events from happening. Another manager added that people were not feeling the desire to dedicate their time to planning events. Another manager stated that representation from key teams was sometimes missing when events were planned.

These interview questions also solicited responses from several employees and managers about the presence of *silos* within the organization. Impressions of silo behaviour among employees were mixed. A couple of employees stated that they did not perceive the existence of silos as part of their jobs, but several other employees openly acknowledged silo behaviour and attributed it to the separation of the work units (e.g. Fire Hall, Works Yard, City Hall, and the Annex). One employee stated that silo behaviour was not the norm in the past, but rather was more common in recent years. Another employee observed that there was not much cross-pollination across different units. Several managers also stated their awareness of silo behaviour, not only among teams that were physically separated from each other, but with units at City Hall and the Annex also. Some managers stated that separation has always existed and that it has been a persistent challenge to overcome. One manager offered that separation built up as a result of misunderstanding about resourcing between teams. Another manager expressed that the replacement of slower and strategic decision-making with fast decision-making led to the emergence of silo behaviour among staff.

The fourth engagement sub-driver in this category was *opportunities for providing input*. All of the employees who discussed this driver expressed that it was important for staff to have input

into decision-making processes. The majority of the employees who commented about this engagement driver stated that they were given opportunities to provide input on a regular basis. However, one employee expressed some frustration with some employees who did not provide their input when they were given opportunities to do so. On the management side, several managers observed that with respect to engaging employees, employees needed to feel "part of the process" through contributing ideas and having those ideas heard. A couple of managers added there were not enough opportunities - staff meetings tended to be "too much talking heads" and that employees were not comfortable voicing what they thought.

The fifth engagement sub-driver in this category was *recognition and appreciation*. The majority of employees who discussed this in their answers stated that recognition and appreciation for their work could use improvement. One employee stated that the recognition and appreciation of high performing employees was just as important as the motivation of struggling employees through recognition and appreciation. The lone manager who discussed this engagement driver stated that the best way of getting employees to engage was through positive reinforcement.

Respect was the sixth engagement sub-driver under *the workplace* primary engagement driver. There were a few employees who stated that there were some issues with the behaviour of certain employees. One employee stated that sometimes the workplace could be compared to a "locker room" atmosphere. The one manager who provided extensive comments in this area noted that there were significant issues in the past with his particular team, but that as a result of training sessions on the importance of a respectful workplace, improvements were made.

The final two engagement sub-drivers, *empowerment* and a *safe working environment*, were mentioned by only a few employees. With respect to empowerment, one employee observed that their unit's manager was not empowering them and their colleagues to the extent that is necessary. Another employee stated that managers have instilled trust in their staff by not micro-managing them. With respect to a safe working environment, one employee highlighted concerns about health and safety in the workplace and specifically mentioned that there have been no policies or procedures developed for the health and safety issues the employee faced. On the management side, several managers indicated that they provided their staff with opportunities to take ownership and do the jobs in ways that they see fit. One manager stated that empowerment was a precondition for increased engagement among staff.

7.7 Human Resources/Organization

Employee interview questions:

- *Have you taken any training, seminars, or workshops around motivation and engagement in the workplace? If so, can you describe it briefly and discuss if you have worked in an organization that has implemented strategies to increase motivation and/or engagement?*
- *How do you feel about the work that you are doing? Describe your impressions in the areas of workload, results, intellectual stimulation and learning.*
- *In your view, what are the organization's overall needs?*

Manager interview questions:

- *Have you taken any training in motivating or engaging employees? If so, can you describe it briefly and discuss your experience in applying the training in your current job.*
- *How does your staff feel about the work that they are doing? Describe your impressions in the areas of their workload, results, intellectual stimulation, and learning.*
- *In your view, what are the organization's overall needs?*

Based on the responses to the interview questions relating to the human resources/organization primary engagement driver, the following four engagement sub-drivers were found to be relevant to employees and staff in the organization:

Table 8 – Frequency of engagement drivers under Human Resources/Organization

Driver	Cited by Number of Employees	Cited by Number of Managers
Learning and Development	19	7
Career Growth	6	3
Labour Relations	5	3
Fairness in administration of policies	4	1

As one of the interview questions directly asked employees and managers about training opportunities, the majority of employees and employees discussed this area. Employees and managers both discussed learning and development opportunities sponsored by the City and training taken in previous organizations.

Many employees, but not all, had *learning and development* opportunities sponsored by the City. Some employees had formal education sponsored by the organization, while others had personal development courses. Some employees also discussed previous training offered by the organization in areas such as harassment in the workplace and team building. However, it was noted that these organization-sponsored programs did not have the intended effect on improving employee morale and engagement. A couple of employees mentioned that their learning happened on the job as a result of the variety in their roles. Other employees expressed a desire for more cross-training to break the monotony of their own jobs. Most employees did not have training in engagement or other aspects related to increasing employee engagement in the workplace sponsored by the City. However, some employees took programs and training related to engagement in the workplace, such as conflict resolution and organizational behaviour, and applied their knowledge to their roles with the City.

Some managers stated that they encouraged their employees to take courses that would stimulate their career and personal development. With respect to courses that managers took to increase employee engagement in the workplace, two managers identified courses in specific areas such as motivation, respectful workplace, and leadership. One manager noted that it was sometimes difficult to get people to learn new skills on the job because it was sometimes seen by employees as taking away someone else's responsibilities.

The second-most discussed engagement sub-driver by employees in this category was *career growth*. Two employees expressed that they felt supported in their career and personal development. However, several other employees expressed disappointment in their growth in the organization. One employee expressed uncertainty about whether the City could accommodate their career aspirations. Another employee stated that more choice and cross-training would be beneficial to their job and their development. A third employee stated that there was no full-time position growth in the organization, which stalled their development in the organization.

One manager discussed the idea of job shadowing in significant detail. This manager explained that job shadowing would increase the awareness among staff and managers of what other

units do. This manager also discussed the changing perspective of younger employees who wish to progress more quickly in their careers with the hope of getting better jobs. Another manager discussed some challenges in terms of the growth of employees. Some of the challenges included fear around reclassifications and the collective agreement. These challenges created a feeling among employees that their career growth in the organization was not supported.

The third-most discussed engagement driver among employees was *labour relations*. One employee referred to the collective agreement as a “millstone”. Another employee stated that the unionized environment posed a barrier in terms of getting work done; this was described in the employee’s own words, “There are employees who leave at 4:30 no matter what”. A third employee discussed the previous collective agreement negotiations at length and intimated that they were particularly bitter. The managers who commented in this area also suggested that the unionized environment acted as a barrier. A couple of managers discussed that the union-management culture of the organization made it challenging for employees to step outside of their roles. Another manager suggested that the culture needed to change in order to have everyone feel like they are part of the same team and to allow people to fulfill their career and personal development aspirations.

With respect to the fourth engagement driver, *fair policies*, there were several employees who brought up that certain individuals were given preferential treatment over others. One employee noted that some employees were given flex time, while others who requested the same thing were denied. Another employee noted that certain staff were not held accountable for their work. The one manager who discussed fairness with employees noted that one needed to balance providing opportunities to people who want them with providing opportunities when people were given the best chance of success.

7.8 Individual Characteristics

Employee interview questions:

- *Can you describe some of your character or personality traits and how they are reflected in your job and relationships with your colleagues?*

Manager interview questions:

- *What are some of the character or personality traits that the organization looks for in its employees?*

Based on the responses to the interview question relating to the individual traits primary engagement moderator, the following eleven engagement sub-moderators were found to be relevant to employees and staff in the organization:

Table 9 – Frequency of engagement drivers under Individual Characteristics

Driver	Cited by Number of Employees	Cited by Number of Managers
Personal/vested interest	17	9
Optimism	10	4
Likeability	8	5
Hard working	7	2

Flexibility	7	2
Honesty	5	2
Professionalism	5	0
Detail-oriented	4	0
Proactive/takes initiative	3	5
Understands bigger picture	2	3

With respect to individual characteristics, the engagement moderator that was cited by employees most frequently was having a *personal or vested interest* in the organization. Many of the employees interviewed live in Pitt Meadows, or in other municipalities that are close to it. As a result of living and working in the same community, many employees expressed their pleasure in having seen their work have an impact in their own community. One employee added that a small municipal organization like the City of Pitt Meadows offered the opportunity to have members of the public get to know you. However, one employee did state that some of his coworkers in their unit did not take ownership in their jobs. Another employee noted some uncertainty with respect to getting long-term employees to be motivated and engaged about their jobs. Several of the managers offered the same comments as employees and noted that many of their employees had a vested interest in the success of the organization as they lived and worked in the same community, enjoyed the small-town feel, and enjoyed serving their neighbours. However, one manager noted that some employees did not seem to have the same interest in the organization as other employees and suggested various reasons for this such as dissatisfaction with their personal lives

The second-most discussed individual characteristic of employees was a *sense of optimism*. The descriptors that employees used to describe their optimism included “positive person”, “fairly upbeat”, “caring person”, “encourage the positive and... ignore the negative”, “outgoing”, and “easy-going”. However, a couple of employees did speak about rumour mills and a few negative individuals on their teams. One person in particular stated that they tried to remind their colleagues about the relatively good working environment they had compared to other organizations he worked for in the past. Several managers who commented in this area stated that the organization favoured employees who were positive and wanted to be at work. One manager stated that despite challenges in the workplace, employees stayed positive.

The third most discussed individual characteristic was one’s *likeability*. There were several employees who described their ability to relate with others, their calmness, and their easy or outgoing personalities whether it was in the dealings with colleagues or members of the public. Several managers discussed the importance of having a “personable” personality in the organization. Some of the phrases used by managers to describe this personality included:

- “People that want to be team players.”
- “Good personality fit for the organization.”
- “Personable people... motivated people willing to work in a team environment.”

The fourth trait that emerged from the interviews was *hard-working*. Several employees expressed that they were hard-working and reliable individuals when they answered the personality traits question. Some of the statements used to describe their hard-working personalities included:

- "I'm a roll-up the sleeves, can-do, just get it done kind of guy."

- "All of our staff are hard-working and do anything for the City and do anything for the Council"
- "If I don't get to something, it upsets me."
- "I will see it through, I will make sure the desired outcome is received."

The two managers who discussed this trait stated that the organization looked for people who had a strong work ethic and were able to give "100%."

The fifth trait that emerged from the interviews was *flexibility*. A couple of employees discussed their requirement to adapt and be flexible as a result of the many changes in the organization over the years. Another employee noted that even though most people were busy, he tended to befriend and associate with co-workers who are willing to take on responsibilities outside of their jobs. One manager stated that employees needed to be open-minded and able to adapt to change. Another manager noted that his department needed to be "more flexible in the people we have".

The sixth trait that employees discussed in their interviews was *honesty*. Some of the descriptors raised by employees under honesty included trustworthiness, loyalty, confidentiality, professionalism, striking a balance between people and the organization, and "treating everyone like a customer". Two managers stated that the organization looked for integrity, trustworthiness, and honest in its employees.

The seventh and eighth traits that emerged, *professionalism* and being *detail-oriented*, were discussed by employees, but not by any of the managers. With respect to professionalism, employees discussed the importance of maintaining confidentiality and the ability to be diplomatic in dealing with other people, including mayor and council. With respect to being detail-oriented, employees noted being organized, diligent, being able to multitask, and being thorough.

The ninth and tenth personality traits that surfaced, being *proactive* and *understanding the larger picture*, were discussed by more managers than employees. With respect to being proactive, one employee stated that they took the initiative to learn something on their own if her boss asked them to do something in an unknown area. Another employee stated that among the team, employees were willing to "jump in" when and where it was necessary. The managers who discussed examples of their employees being proactive did not actually discuss its importance to the work. One manager talked about some challenges with getting a particular employee to take the initiative and to look for improvements in their job. Another manager noted that in the absence of sufficient resources and staff, their team came through as a result of the staff who took ownership of the City and the organization through their work.

With respect to understanding the larger picture, a couple of managers discussed the importance of seeing "the bigger picture". One manager expressed that while employees were attached to their particular units, they may not have necessarily felt connected to the larger organization as a result.

7.9 Other Influences

Employee interview questions:

- *How do you feel about the work that you are doing? Describe your impressions in the areas of workload, results, intellectual stimulation and learning.*

- Describe your impression of the relationships between your colleagues in the organization. What is working well? What could use improvement?
- Have you discussed challenges around workload and work environment induced pressures with your manager or supervisor? If so, can you describe them?

Manager interview questions:

- How does your staff feel about the work that they are doing? Describe your impressions in the areas of their workload, results, intellectual stimulation, and learning.
- Describe your impression of the relationship between staff in the organization. What is working well? What could use improvement?
- Have employees discussed challenges around workload and work environment induced pressures with you? If so, what are some prevailing themes around these challenges?

Based on the responses to the interview questions relating to other moderators, the following five engagement moderators were found to be relevant to employees and staff in the organization:

Table 10 – Frequency of engagement moderators under Other Influences

Driver	Cited by Number of Employees	Cited by Number of Managers
Workload	19	10
Resources	16	4
City Council/Public	12	10
Changes in policies and procedures	4	3
Work-life balance	4	1

As one of the interview questions asked employees and managers directly about their views of the workload, nearly all employees and managers discussed the extent of their *workload* in their interviews. The majority of employees expressed that workload was an issue for them and expressed their perspective on the issue in several ways. Some employees stated that they discussed their workload issues with their supervisors, but stated that nothing was done to alleviate their workload. Also, some employees acknowledged that there were simply not enough resources to meet the demands of their teams. For some employees, their heavy workload resulted in putting off time for other activities or coming into work each day stressed.

Nearly all of the managers, echoing their employees, stated that workload was an issue with their teams. Some managers expressed that their teams were at risk of burnout. Other managers stated that they while their staff were able to get work done, they did not have time to plan to balance the work or to get ahead of the workload. Some managers also stated that they were so busy with their own work that they were unable to engage with their employees as much or as often as they would like. However, one manager noted that workload was not as great of a concern as employees have made it out to be.

The second engagement moderator that emerged from the interviews in this category was *resources*. Many staff commented that they desired to see more staff in their units to help with the workload. Specifically, a couple of employees stated that teams were running lean and that a couple of departures would put their ability to perform their responsibilities in jeopardy. There were also some comments with respect to the need for new or for the refurbishment of other

resources such as systems and software programs, and physical assets such as facilities and office space. Some managers also expressed some concerns about resources. One manager stated that their team was short-staffed for a considerable amount of time and that more staff was needed to manage the workload. Another manager noted that good ideas were not being used because of a lack of resources.

The third engagement moderator that emerged from the interviews was *city council and members of the public*. Many employees had comments about the impact of council on their jobs. One employee stated that council had a more active role in the day-to-day operations of the organization, such as in staffing or taking increasing scrutiny in extra-curricular activities of employees even if they were conducted on unpaid time. Another employee noted that there was an increasing discomfort with respect to implementing decisions from council. There was a sense from staff that senior leadership in the organization did not balance the demands of council and the concerns of staff. Another employee expressed that there were some inappropriate comments from members of council toward certain staff members.

All of the managers interviewed discussed the effect that city council had on their work and on their staff. One manager noted that council demands were higher recently than they were in the past which resulted in unrealistic deadlines. Also, mirroring the comments from employees, another manager stated that the involvement of council in day-to-day decisions was higher recently than in the past which resulted in discomfort with the council among staff. Furthermore, another manager expressed that some recent comments were not taken well by staff. Finally, another manager stated the need to have better relationships with the political side as well as the staff side of the organization.

The fourth engagement moderator in this category that surfaced was *challenges around change* in the organization. A couple of employees noted that some employees in the organization were resistant to change because they were used to doing things a certain way, or did not understand the changing context of the organization and of the City. One employee suggested that getting people on board with change would require some sensitivity around this. Another employee suggested that getting concrete policies and procedures would help staff manage the changes and increase efficiency and engagement. One manager expressed that some employees had a difficult time coping with the fact that aspects of their job were no longer necessary because of new equipment. Another manager suggested that having employees who were open-minded about change would be able to better adapt to change. Another manager expressed the need for more time so that they could come up with a structure to mitigate the impact of change.

Finally, the fifth engagement moderator that emerged was *work-life balance*. The employees provided a mixed impression of work-life balance at the City of Pitt Meadows. One employee observed that the work-life balance at this organization seems to have been better than at other municipalities. Another employee stated that the organization accommodated family demands in various ways such as the exchange of overtime for time off. This employee also suggested that the City should consider implementing flex time. The fourth employee who discussed this issue suggested that the City offer a better benefits package, such as free memberships to the recreation centre, so that people would exercise after work as opposed to going home and drinking. The single manager who discussed the issue of work-life balance expressed that employees who had a strong work-life balance tended to cope with the challenges of dealing with the public better.

7.10 Summary

The findings from the interviews with employees and managers revealed similarities in the perspectives of both managers and employees. With respect to the current state of staff engagement in the organization, the majority of managers and staff expressed that the level of engagement was high. Managers and staff also noted that while engagement levels were high, they were not as high as they were in the past. With respect to the organizational context, both employees and managers recognized that the organization's small size had an impact in certain areas including workload, work variety, and the training and retention of employees.

The findings from the interviews also revealed the extent of the similarities among managers and employees in their views of the engagement drivers and moderators. Some examples of specific engagement drivers and moderators in which the views of both groups converged were:

- Relationships between co-workers
- Information flows and communication
- Staff turnover
- Supportive working environment
- Siloed working environment
- Labour relations
- Work load
- Personal interest
- Resources (lack of)

However, there were some specific engagement drivers and moderators in which the views between the two groups diverged - most notably:

- Workplace culture
- Appreciation and recognition
- Career growth

The following section will analyze the interview data in the context of the primary research objective: increasing employee engagement in the City of Pitt Meadows. The next section will also examine the interview data in the context of the literature review, the jurisdictional scan of other public sector organizations, and the conceptual framework.

8.0 Discussion and Analysis

The interviews with managers and employees revealed several areas in which the organization is doing well with respect to employee engagement, as well as several areas in which the organization could improve in order to increase employee engagement. The interviews also uncovered factors that could temper the ability of both staff and managers to increase engagement in the organization. This section will discuss the organization's strengths in engaging its employees, the organization's areas of improvement to increase employee engagement and challenges that could require some more effort to mitigate or overcome.

8.1 Engagement Drivers – Areas of Strength

As noted in section 7.10, both managers and staff suggested that the state of staff engagement in the organization is positive overall. Their views of the positive state of employee engagement

are supported by several areas of strength for the organization. The researcher determined the areas of strength by analyzing the overall nature and tone of the comments in each of the engagement sub-driver and moderators. If the comments from both staff and managers were mostly positive with respect to a specific engagement sub-driver or moderator, then the researcher considered that engagement sub-driver or moderator a strength. On the other hand, if the comments from managers and employees were negative with respect to a specific engagement sub-driver or moderator, then the researcher considered that engagement sub-driver or moderator a weakness.

The following table depicts the primary engagement drivers and the engagement sub-drivers that were considered to be areas of strength:

Table 11 – Engagement drivers at the City of Pitt Meadows that showed an association with high engagement levels

Primary Engagement Driver or Moderator	Specific Engagement Sub-Driver
Job Components and Characteristics	Challenges on the job
Job Components and Characteristics	Pay and benefits
Co-workers, supervisors, and management	Relationships with supervisors
Co-workers, supervisors, and management	Relationships with co-workers
The Workplace	Supportive and collaborative environment
The Workplace	Opportunities for input
Organization and Human Resources	Learning and Development
Individual Characteristics	Personal or vested interest
Individual Characteristics	Motivation
Individual Characteristics	Optimism

Overall, the areas of strength in the organization are balanced among the primary engagement drivers. The academic and practitioner literature theorized that experiencing challenge on the job, having supportive relationships with managers and co-workers, and having opportunities for learning and development on the job would have a positive influence on engagement at work (Kahn, 1990, p. 705; Saks, 2006, p. 604-605; Wollard and Shuck, 2010, p. 433; Armstrong & Wright, 2016, p. 14). Thus, the high state of employee engagement at the City of Pitt Meadows has been associated with the organization’s efforts in providing an environment where employees:

- Can be challenged at work;
- Enjoy fair pay;
- Have positive relationships with their supervisors and co-workers;
- Enjoy the support of their colleagues in their efforts on the job
- Have opportunities to provide input in their jobs and work environment; and,
- Are encouraged to pursue learning and development opportunities.

The City of Pitt Meadows has been attracting and retaining the right type of employee; or in other words, an employee who is more likely to be engaged at work. The interviews revealed that the organization has staff who want to contribute to the community they live in, are sufficiently motivated, and are optimistic about their work and their organization. The high degree of personal interest and motivation that employees discussed during interviews suggests that public service motivation, or a disposition to public service, has been an influential factor in

the positive state of employee engagement at the City of Pitt Meadows. Also, the optimism exhibited by several employees illustrates the relationship that various academic researchers have theorized between one’s engagement at work and specific individual characteristics (Wollard and Shuck, 2011, p. 435; Saks & Gruman, 2014, p. 168).

8.2 Engagement Drivers – Areas for Improvement

While the overall state of employee engagement is positive, the statements made by employees and managers during the interviews drew attention to several areas that the organization needs to improve upon to increase the engagement of employees. The following table depicts the primary engagement drivers and the specific engagement sub-drivers that were areas for improvement:

Table 12 – Engagement drivers at the City of Pitt Meadows that showed an association with lower engagement levels

Primary Engagement Driver or Moderator	Specific Engagement Driver
Job Components and Characteristics	Pay and benefits
Co-workers, supervisors, and management	Information flows and communication
Co-workers, supervisors, and management	Trust or belief in senior leaders
Co-workers, supervisors, and management	Direction or vision from senior leadership
The Workplace	Culture
The Workplace	Appreciation and recognition
Organization and Human Resources	Career growth
Organization and Human Resources	Fairness in application of policies

Overall, the areas of improvement in the organization are balanced among the primary engagement drivers, which was a similar result to the areas of strength. Both the academic and practitioner literature suggested that *communication and information flows* and the *quality of leadership* are critical drivers in increasing employee engagement (Welch, 2011, p. 338; Attridge, 2009, p. 390; Conference Board of Canada, 2012, p. 13). With respect to specific concerns in communication and leadership, both staff and managers expressed that there needed to be improvements in communication between the senior leadership team and staff and that there needed to be a concrete direction or vision of the organization articulated by the senior leadership team. Also, employees expressed that communication from managers needed to be comprised of how and why certain decisions were taken or why recommendations from staff were not acted upon.

With respect to engagement drives under *the workplace*, both the academic literature and practitioner literature posited that *appreciation and recognition of employees* by managers would lead to higher levels of engagement (Rana, Ardichvili & Tkachenko, 2014, p.254; Attridge, 2009, p. 393, Saks, 2006, p.605). Recognition and appreciation was one of the few engagement drivers in which there was not a convergence of opinion between employees and managers; there was very little mention of the significance of appreciation and recognition by the managers which contrasts with the feedback from several employees who expressed a desire for more appreciation and recognition about their work. However, the number of employees who discussed recognition and appreciation, seven, was relatively small when compared to the overall number of employees interviewed; some follow-up work by the organization to determine if recognition and appreciation is a deficiency in the organization may be required. In regards to

organizational culture, the literature on engagement suggested that organization culture can drive employee engagement (Attridge, 2009, p.388; Shuck & Wollard, 2011, p. 433). There was a sense among employees and managers that while the organization is a pleasant and familiar place to work, there were few definitive descriptions about the culture beyond those. Both employees and managers did note the absence of social events and other ways for employees across teams to connect.

Furthermore, *career growth* and *fairness in the application of policies* were hypothesized in both the academic and practitioner literature as drivers of increased employee engagement (Saks & Gruman, 2014; p. 167-168; Armstrong & Wright, 2016, p. 14). However, there was a negative association between these engagement drivers and the engagement level of employees in the organization as a result of various shortcomings in these areas. Several employees provided feedback with respect to the lack of career growth opportunities in the organization, citing the lack of job shadowing and cross-training. Also, several other employees discussed specific situations in which certain benefits were provided to some and not others, or certain employees were given preferential treatment over others. However the number of employees who discussed these areas in negative ways was relatively small (six and three respectively) with respect to the overall number of employees who were interviewed. Therefore, the small samples of employees who provided negative comments in these two areas may require some follow-up work by the organization to determine wider employee views in these areas.

Finally, *pay and benefits* was an area in which there were many suggestions for improvement from both managers and employees. While employees and managers noted that salaries for most staff are fair, they also discussed two negative aspects relating to total compensation including the benefits package and wage compression among managers and excluded, or non-unionized, employees. While pay fairness was identified in the practitioner literature as an engagement driver, the dissenting comments with respect to pay and benefits in the organization suggest that pay fairness as an engagement driver is not working toward increasing engagement (Conference Board of Canada, 2012, p. 6-7). Furthermore, the remarks about compensation from those interviews contrasted with the general view from employees in other public sector organizations, based on the jurisdictional scan, that pay and benefits is an area of strength in public sector organizations. Thus, the area of pay and benefits has decreased or tempered the level of staff engagement in the organization when the literature and the experience of other public sector organizations predicted or showed otherwise.

8.3 External Challenges – Moderators of Engagement

As discussed in the *Findings* section of the report, both employees and managers discussed several moderators, or influences, that affected the level of engagement in the organization. The most apparent influencing factor, or moderator, on the level of staff engagement reported by employees and managers was *the significant workload of employees*. In discussing their heavy workload, employees cited several factors including the lack of resources (i.e. insufficient staff to manage the workload), the larger demands of city council (e.g. more frequent meetings and increased scrutiny on their day-to-day work), and the amount of change in personnel, which has resulted in gaps in expertise and experience. Some of the managers also stated that their staff were at capacity or at risk of burning out as a result of their significant workload. The current state of early burnout among the staff at the City of Pitt Meadows can be explained by the *job demands-resources* theory of employee engagement (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). The operational and psychological demands (the demands of the organization and the pressure and scrutiny from city council) have overpowered the available organizational (more staff, better

tools) and social resources (socialization among teams, work-life balance) of employees to create the conditions for early burnout among employees (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004, p. 296).

The second moderating factor on employee engagement was the *physical separation of work units in the organization*. A few employees and managers discussed that employees located in different buildings (City Hall, the Annex, Works Yard, and Fire Hall) have their own distinct workplace cultures. The formation of separate unit cultures and the continuing separation of the work units in the organization has resulted in less interdepartmental collaboration (whether through regular work and social activities) at the employee level. Also, the resilience of separate unit cultures (within which staff are working well together) has come at the expense of staff engagement in the overall organization. This suggests that the separation of work units has been a barrier to increased employee engagement in the organization.

The third moderating factor on staff engagement was *the unionized environment* that exists in the organization. Those who did provide comments on the unionized environment suggested or implied that it has posed as a barrier to further employee engagement whether it has been through accentuating divisions between staff and management or creating paralysis with respect to the development of employees. However, considering the overall positive level of engagement in the organization, the moderating effect of the organization's unionized environment is less significant than the other factors such as the heavy workload and the siloed nature of the organization's departments. The unionized environment did not seem to preclude individual employees from remaining engaged in their jobs and their own departments and engaging in personal and career development activities.

8.4 Comparisons of Interview Data

Based on the jurisdictional scan of various public sector organizations in Canada, the researcher observed that development and career growth, leadership, job fit or suitability, teamwork and relationships, empowerment (i.e. autonomy), and recognition would be important engagement drivers for the City of Pitt Meadows. The interviews in this study revealed that development and career growth, leadership and the trust and belief in leadership, relationships with supervisors and co-workers, and recognition were important drivers in determining the level of engagement among the staff in the organization. While job fit or suitability was not as important of an engagement driver among the City of Pitt Meadow's employees as it was in other Canadian public sector studies on engagement, it could be argued that the influence of individual traits in terms of a personal interest in the job and organization are strongly associated with job fit or suitability. Also, the engagement drivers that had a positive and negative influence on employee engagement among employees at the City of Pitt Meadows largely reflected the positive and negative (i.e. strengths and weaknesses) of the public sector organizations that were part of the jurisdictional scan. The main difference between the City of Pitt Meadows and the other Canadian public sector organizations that were examined was that pay and benefits was an issue that was discussed by employees and managers in both a positive and negative manner – at the City of Pitt Meadows, managers and employees offered both negative and positive comments about pay and benefits, while in other public sector organizations in Canada, employees have largely said that pay and benefits in their organizations are a strength.

In comparison to the strategic human resources plan from 2012, the engagement drivers that were significant to the level of employee engagement in 2016 were somewhat similar. In 2012, staff spoke positively about their connectedness to each other and their community, their sense of trust in the efforts of others, and the opportunities to work on different projects. The interviews

from this research revealed that employees in the organization were engaged as a result of having challenges on the job, enjoying a collaborative and supportive environment, and having positive relationships with their co-workers. The interviews also revealed that employees still desired more collaboration across teams, better benefits (e.g. flexible working arrangements), and more learning opportunities through cross-training as they did between 2010 and 2012. Furthermore, the risks that existed in 2012 with respect to disengagement and burnout remained in the organization as of October 2016 in terms of an over-reliance on key individuals (i.e. not enough resources) and changing staff and priorities.

However, one significant difference between what was noted as a strength in the strategic plan and what was observed as a negative driver of engagement in the research was a sense of transparency and open communications among staff and the leadership team. The interviews revealed that the quality of information flow between the staff and leadership team declined over the last five years.

8.5 Summary and Emerging Engagement Framework

The current state of employee engagement in the organization is positive overall, but it is not without risk of a transition to a state of increased employee disengagement. When the engagement drivers that have had a positive influence on employee engagement are compared to those engagement drivers that have had a negative influence, along with a consideration of the moderating factors, it appears that the supportive and collaborative environment of the organization and the quality of the employees, as a whole, have been responsible for maintaining the positive level of staff engagement in the organization. The original conceptual framework for this research report suggested that the four primary engagement drivers and the two moderating factors would have an equal influence on the overall level of employee engagement in the organization. However, based on the interviews with employees and managers, the following diagram depicts more accurately the relationship between each of the engagement drivers and moderating factors at the City of Pitt Meadows:

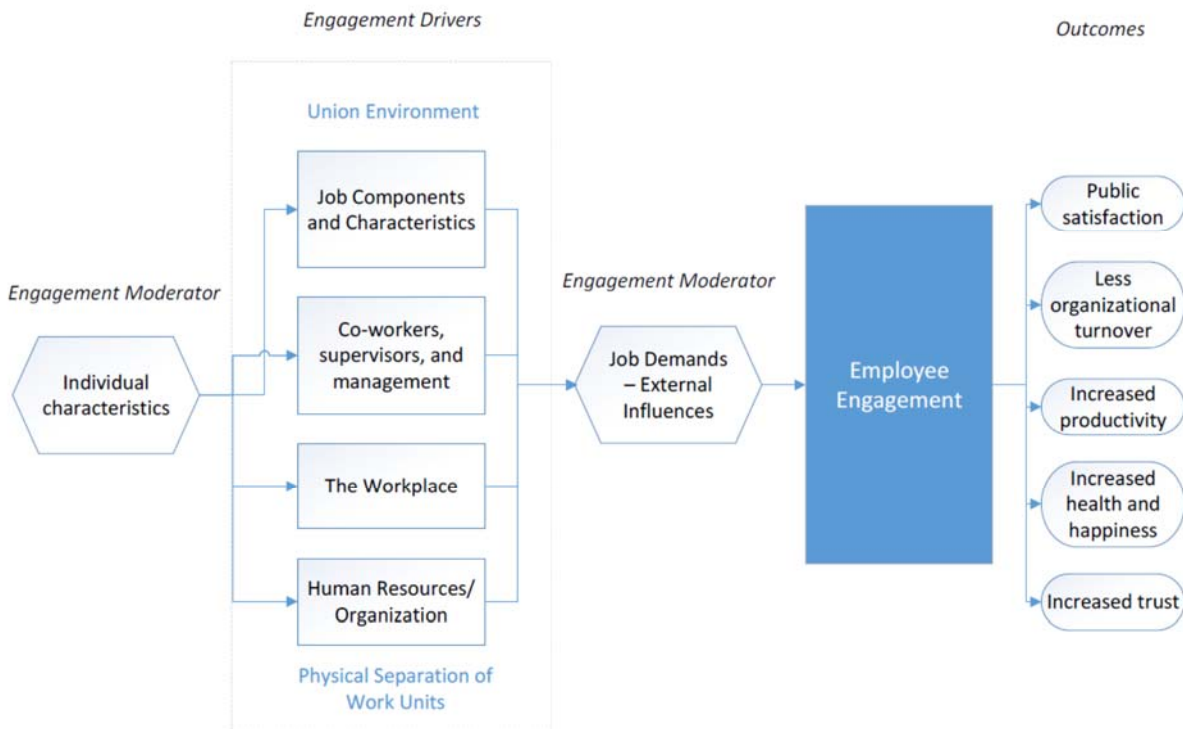


Figure 3 – Emerging conceptual framework for employee engagement at the City of Pitt Meadows

In particular, the influence of individual characteristics as a prerequisite for high levels of employee engagement in the organization reflects the multi-faceted conceptualization of employee engagement that has emerged in the literature; the individual employee’s cognitive and emotional state will shape how that employee engages with the organization and the job. The influence of individual characteristics and traits of public servants at the City of Pitt Meadows also indicates the existence of public service motivation (i.e. having employees who have a disposition to serving the public) and the association its presence has with increased levels of employee engagement.

However, the other primary theory of employee engagement, the *job demand-resources* theory, remains relevant in the study of the issue in this organization. The concerns identified in the 2010-2012 strategic human resources plan about the lack of resources and the changing priorities remain concerns and risks in terms of employee engagement today. The placement of the *job demands-external influences* moderator box to the right of the engagement drivers in the revised conceptual framework reflects the profound effect these external influences have had on the organization; in other words, the positive influence of engagement drivers on employee engagement at the City of Pitt Meadows has been greatly tempered by the negative influence of external factors.

Schaufeli & Bakker (2004) argued that reducing job demands would reduce burnout, increase engagement, and reduce the staff turnover to a more significant degree than increasing resources available to employees (p. 311). The following section turns to recommendations that will help employees and managers manage the demands of the work, encourage increased collaboration across teams, fulfil the career and personal development aspirations, and ensure that the supportive environment in the organization continues going forward so that staff can become further engaged in their jobs and in their organization.

9.0 Recommendations

During the research proposal phase of the project, the client and the researcher agreed that the final report would include a set of recommendations (as opposed to a set of options) to consider and a suggested implementation, or action plan, for the client to follow in order to implement some or all of the recommendations. This section provides a set of eight recommendations for the client to consider following the analysis of the employee and manager interviews, the academic and practitioner literature, and the review of other public sector studies on employee engagement. The recommendations are grouped into short-term and long-term recommendations depending on the amount of time and planning that are required to implement them.

9.1 Short-Term Recommendations

Recommendation #1: Improve the flow of communication between staff and senior leadership

Prior to conducting the interviews, the researcher observed that there were regular all-staff meetings hosted by the Chief Administrative Officer. However, as several employees discussed in their interviews, there needs to be more than regular all-staff meetings to improve the flow of communication among staff and managers in the organization.

The researcher suggests the following ways to improve communication between employees and the senior leadership team in the organization:

- Ensure that all units in the organization are able to participate in all-staff briefings. If staff from the Fire Hall and the Works Yard are not able to come to City Hall, they should be linked into all-staff meetings by video or teleconference. For those who are not able to participate in meetings at all, summaries of all-staff meetings could be emailed to all staff or posted onto an Intranet site or shared network drive.
- Fully discuss how employee input is considered in making strategic and important organizational decisions. If such information cannot be communicated to employees in larger meetings for practical reasons, ensure that managers or supervisors communicate how employee input is considered in individual meetings.
- Encourage senior leaders to discuss developments and issues in their areas with the larger organization when it is feasible and practical to do so.
- Continue open-door policies for management and encourage employees to discuss their concerns.

Recommendation #2: Increase opportunities for cross-team collaboration and interaction

While it was observed that employees have been working well within their teams, there was evidence that cross-team collaboration has been lacking in the organization. Several employees and managers discussed the presence of silos in the organization. Others also spoke about the lack of enthusiasm for organization wide teams and social events. The researcher proposes the following ways to improve collaboration across teams in the organization:

- Encourage employees to participate in organization wide teams such as the Social Committee or Green Team. Ensure that supervisors and managers support employee participation in these teams openly. This participation should be formally recognized in employee reviews.

- Create and establish facility tours or information sessions hosted by individual teams for other employees to attend so they can learn about the work that other teams perform.
- Resurrect any of the organization's intranet pages or create a new intranet site that features content created primarily by employees themselves (e.g. a wiki).

Recommendation #3: Provide recognition to employees

There were several employees who stated that they should be recognized for their work on a regular basis. Considering the potential risk for burnout among many employees in the organization, the researcher suggests that managers and senior leadership make a conscious effort to recognize the efforts of their employees.

9.3 Long-term Recommendations

Recommendation #4: Create opportunities for cross-training or job shadowing

Several employees discussed the desire for more variety in their jobs. Others discussed how the organization may not be able to satisfy or fulfill their career aspirations. The researcher suggests that the senior leadership team create opportunities for cross-training or shadowing to allow employees to experience more variety at work and increase their skills and experience in different areas. Cross-training or job-shadowing will make the organization more nimble and adaptable to change because employees will be able to fill short-term vacancies and take on different responsibilities and jobs in the long-term more easily.

Recommendation #5: Establish regular employee surveys

The preferred measurement of employee engagement is the employee survey. While the survey cannot provide a detailed picture about how employees are doing, it is a useful tool to identify trends and challenges of an organization over time. The researcher recommends that the senior leadership team commit to developing an employee survey that will be administered at a regular interval to help the organization monitor the well-being and engagement of employees and to identify organizational challenges sooner.

Considering that there were divergences of opinion and small samples of respondents who discussed the engagement drivers of recognition and appreciation, career growth, and workplace culture, the organization could develop a smaller and more frequent survey with questions that examine these specific areas. The organization would then develop a wider survey, to be administered at less frequent intervals, to examine the other aspects affecting employee engagement. This is a similar approach to employee surveys that the federal government adopted in 2017: an annual survey based strictly on the workplace is administered to federal employees each year, while a survey that measures other areas is provided to federal employees every three years.

These surveys should be provided to all permanent part-time and full-time employees and managers to ensure the largest sample size possible and to track long-term trends with greater precision (i.e. non-permanent employees may have a different perspective of the organization than permanent employees).

Recommendation #6: Examine the benefits package

While the majority of employees expressed that their salaries were fair, several employees stated that their benefits package could be improved upon. The researcher recommends that the management team explore ways to work within the current collective bargaining agreement to provide the option of flexible work arrangements for the staff. Over the next several years, the

researcher also recommends that the City work with Metro Vancouver and the Canadian Union of Public Employees to address some of the concerns from staff about their benefits package.

Recommendation #7: Commence strategic planning around the long-term management of the workload

Based on the sentiments expressed by the majority of the employees and several managers about challenges associated with the organization’s workload, the researcher recommends that the organization examine the following ways to manage workload:

- Any strategic planning around managing the organization’s workload should include input from employees across the organization. A strategic plan employee committee with representation from all teams could be created so that the leadership team would have a formal channel to obtain employee input.
- The future strategic plan should incorporate a long-term vision for the organization based on the long-term development of both the community and the organization. The staff, through the strategic plan employee committee, should have their input reflected in the construction of the long-term organizational vision.
- The senior leadership team should commit to a regular dialogue with the mayor and members of council about the capacity of the organization.
- The senior leadership team should strongly consider the development of a code of ethics that will formalize the relationship between the mayor and members of council and the employees of the organization.

Recommendation #8: Continue to hire motivated, optimistic, and personally invested employees

The organization’s current positive level of staff engagement is heavily influenced by the high level of motivation, optimism, and vested interest of its employees. The researcher recommends that the organization continue to hire employees who have high levels of personal motivation, have an optimistic disposition, and have a personal or vested interest in the success of the City of Pitt Meadows.

9.4 Implementation Plan

Following the discussion and endorsement of this research report, the researcher suggests that the City of Pitt Meadows implements the eight recommendations according to the following implementation or action plan:

Table 13 – Implementation Plan

Recommendation	Timeline for anticipated actions	Duration or Timeline for follow-up
Improve the flow of communication between staff and senior leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff meetings and email summaries at earliest opportunity • Introduce video-conference or teleconference in first half of 2018 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-going • Obtain feedback on communication in future employee survey

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revive or build new intranet site over 2018 	
Increase opportunities for cross-team collaboration and interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouragement of participation in cross-organization teams at earliest opportunity • Discuss “Team 101” sessions in latter half of 2017 • Revive or build new intranet site over 2018 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-going encouragement of participation in cross-organization teams, with aim to include participation formally in employee reviews in next cycle • Create schedule for “Team 101” sessions in 2018 • Obtain feedback on collaboration initiatives in future employee survey
Provide recognition to employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At earliest opportunity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-going • Integrate larger employee recognition events over time
Create opportunities for cross-training or job shadowing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin discussions on cross training or job-shadowing in latter half of 2017 • Implement cross-training or job-shadowing using a staged approach over 2018 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain feedback about the initiative from employees or managers after first cycle • If successful, commit to and monitor the initiative on an on-going basis
Establish regular employee surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin discussions on employee survey focusing on specific areas in latter half of 2017 • Finalize survey questions for specific survey by end of 2017 • Begin discussions on wider employee survey in early 2018 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administer the first specific survey in early 2018 • Administer the wider employee survey in late 2018 or early 2019 • Commit to administering both types of surveys on a regular basis, such as every year for the specific survey and every 3 years for the wider survey
Examine the benefits package	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review current collective agreement in latter half of 2017 • Implement flexible work arrangements, if possible, in 2018 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the current collective agreement does not allow for an expansion of benefits, such as flexible work arrangements, explain to employees at earliest opportunity • Monitor impact of flexible work arrangements and other benefits on organizational capacity on an on-going basis
Commence strategic planning around the long-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form special employee committee in first half of 2018 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete strategic plan and other associated

term management of the workload	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start joint employee-leadership team discussions on strategic plan in 2nd quarter of 2018 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> policies in first quarter of 2019 Evaluate progress on strategic plan annual with special employee committee
Continue to hire motivated, optimistic, and personally invested employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review job descriptions and job posters at earliest opportunity to ensure these qualities are reflected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-going Review job posters on an annual basis and adjust when appropriate

10.0 Conclusion

The City of Pitt Meadows, like many organizations around the world, is increasingly concerned about its employees – specifically, the engagement of its employees at work. Stemming from this concern, this research project set out to answer the following question: *how can the City of Pitt Meadows increase the engagement of its employees in their jobs and to meet the organization’s objectives?* Following reviews of the literature on the subject of employee engagement and engagement surveys that other Canadian public sector organizations have performed, and an analysis of a series of employee and manager interviews, the researcher suggests that the organization turns its mind to improvements in several areas including *communication, cross-team collaboration, employee recognition, cross-training and career development, and long-term strategic planning.*

This research into employee engagement at the City of Pitt Meadows also reveals that the organization’s challenges with respect to engaging its employees are not unique when compared to the engagement challenges that other Canadian public sector organizations are facing. The researcher advocates two important considerations for further research into employee engagement in public sector organizations. One consideration is that individual qualities, such as motivation and having a personal interest in their work and in their organization, are preconditions for engagement at work in public sector organizations. This research suggests that identifying potential employees whose values and interests align with organizational objectives and values is strongly associated with maintaining high levels of employee engagement over the long-term.

The second consideration is that while organizations can improve key engagement drivers, such as providing fulfilling and challenging work or providing clear leadership, their overall impact on increasing employee engagement can be nullified by demands on the work of employees that exist outside of the organization’s immediate sphere of influence. The findings from this study suggest that public sector organizations may need to prioritize strategic planning in order to mitigate the effects of external demands on employee work.

Finally, this research validates the general direction of employee engagement research towards the analysis of engagement based on a multi-faceted framework. While the conceptual framework that emerged from this study was shaped by the particular organizational context of the City of Pitt Meadows, future case studies on employee engagement would likely benefit from a comprehensive framework to better understand the dynamics of employees working for the organization and the dynamics that exist within and outside of the organization.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Participation Consent Form

How to Increase Employee Engagement at the City of Pitt Meadows?

You are invited to participate in a study entitled **Increasing Employee Engagement at the City of Pitt Meadows** that is being conducted by Darin Wong. The client for this research is Kate Zanon, Director of Operations and Development Services for the City of Pitt Meadows.

Darin Wong is a graduate student in the department of Public Administration at the University of Victoria and you may contact him if you have further questions by telephone at 604-505-2351.

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in Master of Public Administration. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Richard Marcy. You may contact my supervisor at 250-721-8054.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research project is to assess and increase the level of employee engagement at the City of Pitt Meadows.

Importance of this Research

Research of this type is important because it will allow the organization to better manage change and to tackle the challenges and to meet expectations around program and service delivery for a growing population. The research will be used to develop a set of recommendations and an action plan that will help the organization to increase the level of employee engagement.

Participants Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because the research into employee engagement requires input from a cross-section of employees and managers in the organization.

What is involved?

If you consent to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include participating in an interview with me. The discussion will be between 45 minutes to 1 hour in length and will be during normal work hours (approval from your manager or supervisor will be arranged ahead of time). I will ask a set of 10 to 12 prepared questions. Your manager or supervisor will not be present during the interview.

In order to ensure my analysis captures each discussion accurately, I will be recording each discussion by audio-tape.

Disposal of Data

Data from this study will be disposed of following the approval of the research report by the university. All audio recordings and notes from the group discussions and interviews will be destroyed and/or deleted.

Anonymity

Your anonymity will be protected during the research and in the analysis. Your responses during the interview will not be attributed to you specifically. You will also be asked to refrain from using names of other people in your responses and to keep information you provide restricted to roles

and functions. Furthermore, the analysis will not name individuals or attribute opinions or statements to any individuals.

Following your participation in an interview, if you feel uncomfortable about any information that you provided in an interview, you may contact me as soon as possible following your interview to remove or change that information.

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by secure storage of all audio recordings and notes associated with each discussion. The data will not be shared with managers or staff working for the City of Pitt Meadows.

Since the City of Pitt Meadows is a small organization, there may be challenges in protecting the anonymity of participants, specifically particular managers. To protect the anonymity of the participants to the greatest extent possible, the analysis will not use names or specific teams.

Inconvenience

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you as your participation will be required during normal working hours.

Risks

There are some potential risks to you by participating in this research and they include emotional, social, or psychological discomfort. For example, the research may lead to feelings of uneasiness due to discussing work-related issues that may be sensitive in nature.

If the research results in any of these risks coming to fruition, I will discuss the results with the affected individuals and determine if revisions to the analysis need to be made.

Benefits

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include a better understanding of employee engagement at the organization and what is required for you and your colleagues to become more engaged in your organization, career, and personal goals.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will not be used in the research.

Researcher's Relationship with Participants

I have no current or on-going relationships with any of the staff or managers who work for the City of Pitt Meadows.

On-going Consent

To make sure that you continue to consent to participate in this research, I will verify your consent prior to your participation in an interview.

Dissemination of Results

A research report, a set of recommendations, and an action plan on the issue of employee engagement that will be shared with the university and the client, Kate Zanon, Director of Operations and Development Services the City of Pitt Meadows.

Contacts

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include:

Darin Wong (researcher) – 604-505-2351; darinw@uvic.ca
Dr. Richard Marcy (academic supervisor) - 250-721-8054

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

Name of Participant *Signature* *Date*

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Appendix B – Manager Interview Questions

City of Pitt Meadows – Increasing Employee Engagement

Manager Interview Questions

1. What does the concept of “employee engagement” mean to you?
2. What do you think motivates your staff to work for the City of Pitt Meadows?
3. What are some of the character or personality traits that the organization looks for in its employees?
4. How would you describe the level of engagement from your staff in their jobs and in their organization?
5. How does your staff feel about the work that they are doing? Describe your impressions in the areas of their workload, results, intellectual stimulation, and learning.
6. Have employees discussed challenges around workload and work environment induced pressures with you? If so, what are some prevailing themes around these challenges?
7. In your opinion, is the compensation package fair your staff given their workload and responsibilities? If not, why?
8. Describe the relationship that you have with your employees. What is working well? What could use improvement?
9. Describe your impression of the relationship between staff in the organization. What is working well? What could use improvement?
10. What are some of the challenges you face as a manager in getting your staff to be motivated or engaged in their jobs?
11. Have you taken any training in motivating or engaging employees? If so, can you describe it briefly and discuss your experience in applying the training in your current job.
12. What do you think that your employees need to achieve higher levels of employee engagement?
13. From an organizational perspective, what are some of the barriers that the organization faces when it comes to achieving increased employee engagement? If barriers exist, what is needed to overcome those barriers or to mitigate their impact?
14. In your view, what are the organization’s overall needs?

Appendix C – Employee Interview Questions

City of Pitt Meadows – Increasing Employee Engagement

Employee Interview Questions

1. What does the concept of “employee engagement” mean to you?
2. What do you think motivates you to work for the City of Pitt Meadows?
3. Can you describe some of your character or personality traits and how they are reflected in your job and relationships with your colleagues?
4. How would you describe the level of engagement from your colleagues in their jobs and in their organization?
5. How do you feel about the work that you are doing? Describe your impressions in the areas of workload, results, intellectual stimulation and learning.
6. Have you discussed challenges around workload and work environment induced pressures with your manager or supervisor? If so, can you describe them?
7. In your opinion, is your compensation package fair given your workload and responsibilities? If not, why?
8. Describe the relationship that you have with your supervisor or manager. What is working well? What could use improvement?
9. Describe your impression of the relationships between your colleagues in the organization. What is working well? What could use improvement?
10. What are some of the challenges you face when it comes to performing your job? Both day-to-day challenges and challenges over months or years.
11. Have you taken any training, seminars, or workshops around motivation and engagement in the workplace? If so, can you describe it briefly and discuss if you have worked in an organization that has implemented strategies to increase motivation and/or engagement?
12. What do you think you need to perform your job better?
13. From an organizational perspective, what are some of the barriers that the organization faces when it comes to increasing engagement in the workplace? If barriers exist, what is needed to overcome those barriers?
14. In your view, what are the organization’s overall needs?

Appendix D – Utrecht Work Engagement Scale
(Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004, p. 5-6)

The concept of *vigor* is assessed by the following six questions:

1. At my work, I feel bursting with energy.
2. At my job, I feel strong and vigorous.
3. When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.
4. I can continue working for very long periods of time.
5. At my job, I am very resilient, mentally.
6. At my work I always persevere, even when things do not go well.

The concept of *dedication* is assessed by the following five questions:

1. I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose.
2. I am enthusiastic about my job.
3. My job inspires me.
4. I am proud of the work that I do.
5. To me, my job is challenging.

The concept of absorption is assessed by the following six questions:

1. Time flies when I'm working.
2. When I am working, I forget everything else around me.
3. I feel happy when I am working intensely.
4. I am immersed in my work.
5. I get carried away when I'm working.
6. It is difficult to detach myself from my job.

Appendix E – Gallup’s Q12

GALLUP’S Q¹²[®]

- | | |
|--|---|
| 01 I know what is expected of me at work. | 07 At work, my opinions seem to count. |
| 02 I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right. | 08 The mission or purpose of my company makes me feel my job is important. |
| 03 At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day. | 09 My associates or fellow employees are committed to doing quality work. |
| 04 In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work. | 10 I have a best friend at work. |
| 05 My supervisor, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person. | 11 In the last six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress. |
| 06 There is someone at work who encourages my development. | 12 This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow. |

(Gallup, 2013, p. 15)

Appendix F – Employee Engagement Interjurisdiction Team Questions

Questions used to determine the Engagement Index

1. I get a sense of satisfaction from my work.
2. I am willing to put in the extra effort to get the job done.
3. I am proud of the work that I do.
4. Overall, I like my job.
5. I would recommend my department or agency as a great place to work.
6. I am satisfied with my department or agency.
7. I would prefer to remain with my department or agency, even if a comparable job was available elsewhere in the federal public service.

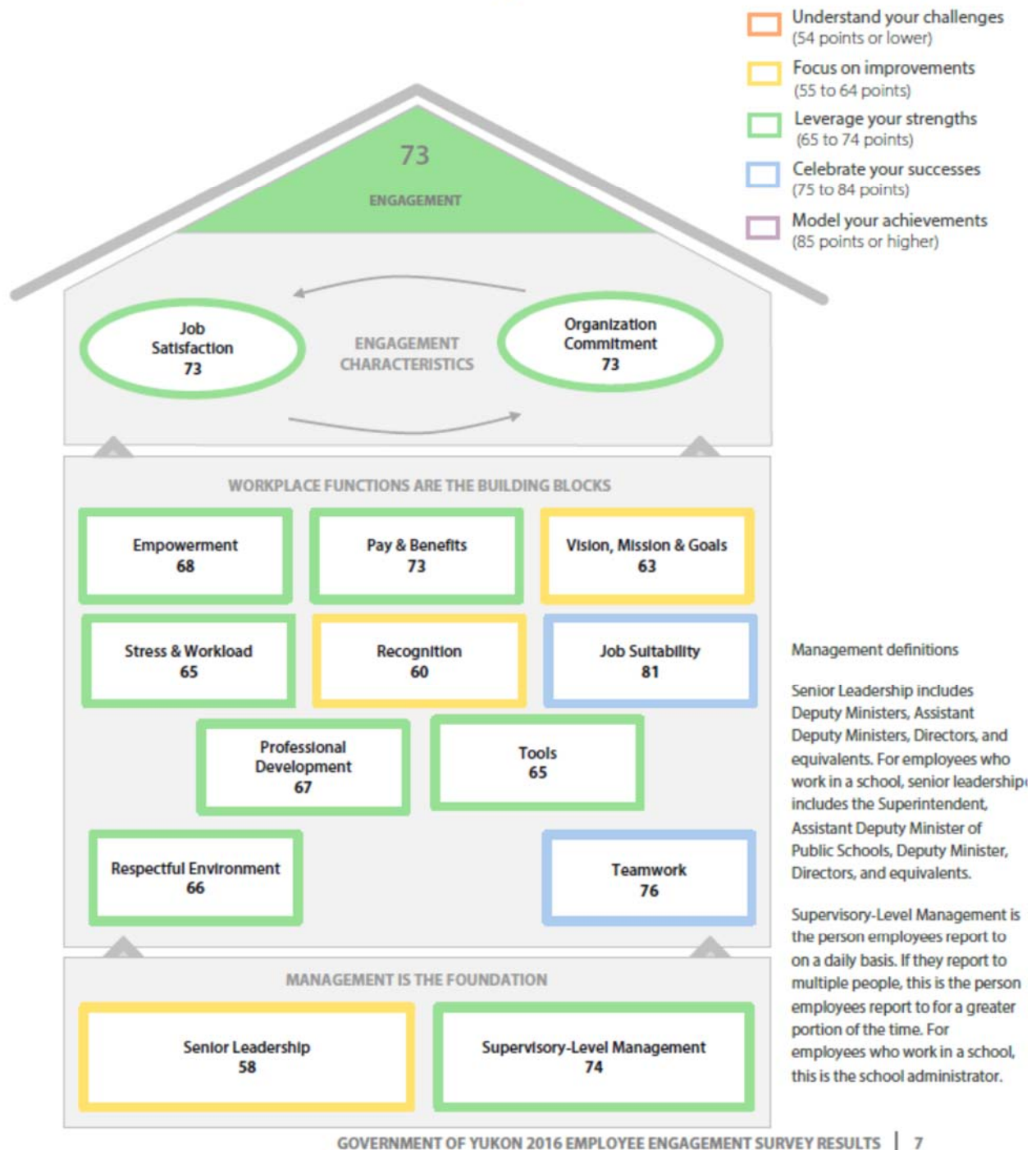
(TBS, 2015, p. 6)

Other common questions among the Canadian organizations

1. I have a positive relationship with my co-workers.
2. I have support at work to provide a high level of service.
3. My job is a good fit with my skills and interests.
4. I have support at work to balance my work and personal life.
5. I am satisfied with the quality of supervision I receive.
6. I have confidence in the senior leadership of my department.
7. Essential information flows effectively from senior leadership to staff.
8. I know how my work contributes to the achievement of my department's goals.
9. My organization supports my work-related learning and development.
10. I have opportunities to provide input into decisions that affect my work.
11. Innovation is valued in my work.
12. I have received meaningful recognition for my work well done.
13. I have opportunities for career growth within the province/territory.

(GNWT, 2011, p. 12-18)

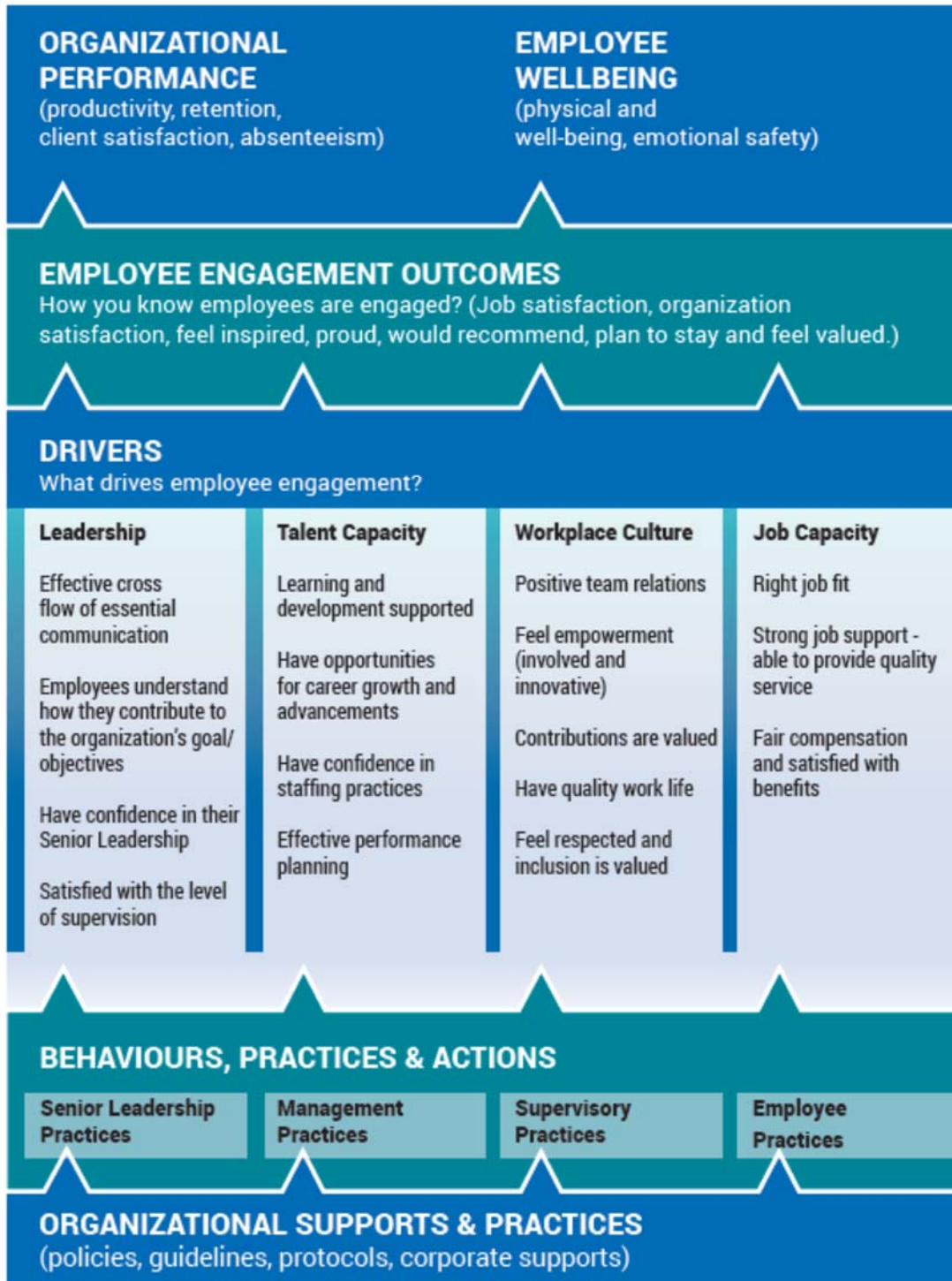
4. YG 2016 Results (new House Model)



(Government of Yukon, 2016, p. 7)

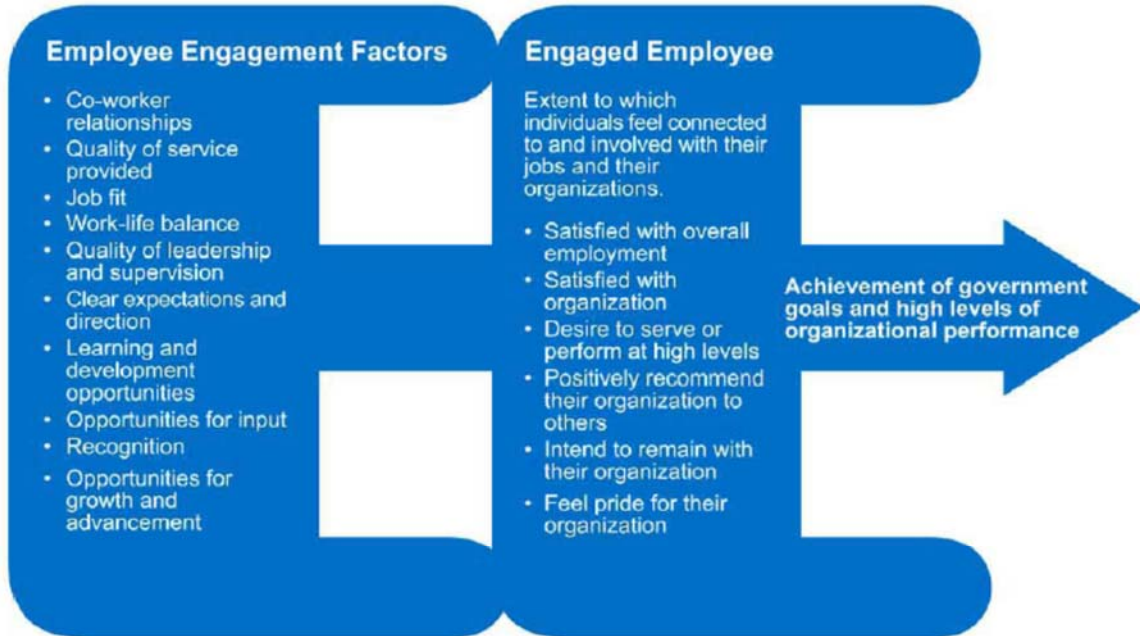
Appendix H – Engagement Framework for the Government of Nova Scotia

Employee Engagement Framework *Figure 2*



(Government of Nova Scotia, 2015, p. 4)

Employee Engagement



Employee Engagement Factors

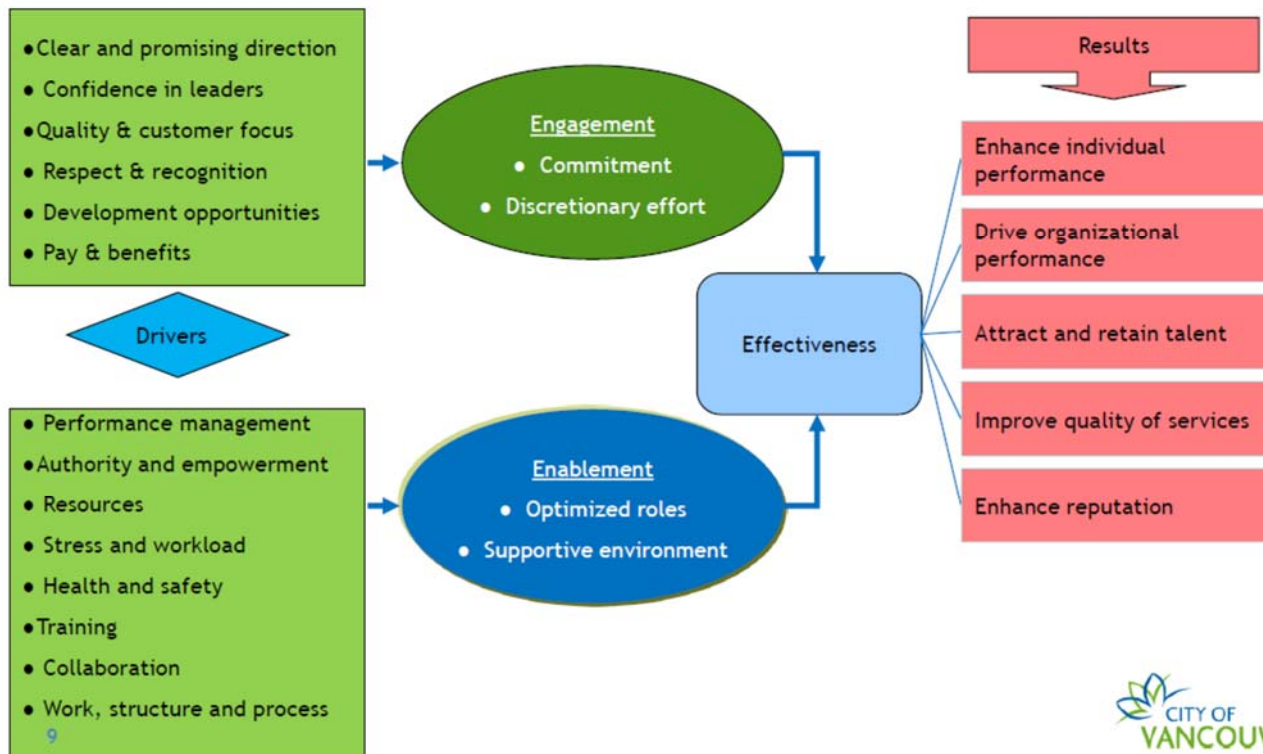
- I have positive working relationships with my coworkers.
- I have support at work to provide a high level of service.
- My job is a good fit with my skills and interests.
- I have support at work to balance my work and personal life.
- I am satisfied with the quality of supervision I receive.
- I have confidence in the senior leadership of my ministry or department.
- Essential information flows effectively from senior leadership to staff.
- I know how my work contributes to the achievement of my ministry's or department's goals.
- My organization supports my work related learning and development.
- I have opportunities to provide input into decisions that affect my work.
- Innovation is valued in my work.
- I receive meaningful recognition for work well done.
- I have opportunities for career growth within the XXX*.

Engaged Employees

- Overall, I am satisfied in my work as a XXX* employee.
- I am satisfied with my ministry/department.
- I am inspired to give my very best.
- I would recommend the XXX* as a great place to work.
- I would prefer to stay with the XXX*, even if offered a similar job elsewhere.
- I am proud to tell people I work for the XXX*.

(Government of Prince Edward Island, 2008, p. 2)

Appendix J – Engagement Framework for the City of Vancouver



(City of Vancouver, 2013, p. 9)