

Presentation to City Council  
on  
City Council Composition and Ward Boundary Review

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## WHAT SIZE OF COUNCIL IS BEST – A “WICKED” PROBLEM

“No political problem is less susceptible to a precise solution than that which relates to the number convenient for a representative assembly”

*James Madison Federalist Papers 54 February 12 1788*

“For two centuries, the problem of an appropriate size of a legislative body has remained unsolved. The difficulty, as Madison described it, is to find a mean on both sides of which inconveniences will be found.”

*Douglass Muzzio and Tim Tompkins Proc. Academy Pol. Sc 7(3): 83-96 1989*

# CHARACTERISTICS OF A “WICKED” PROBLEM

- A “wicked” problem has no clear problem statement but instead involves many stakeholders who all have different ideas of what the problem really is.
- A “wicked” problem is intertwined with other problems with many different root causes.
- A “wicked” problem has no right or wrong answers - the choice of a solution is a matter of judgement and is hard to justify.
- A “wicked” problem is never fully resolved; the search for solution never stops.

# SIZE OF CITY COUNCIL OVER THE YEARS

Data from Leo A Johnson History of Guelph 1827-1927

Years	# of Wards	#/Ward	# Councillors
1878	4	3	12
1879	6	2	12
1880-1902	6	3	18
1903-1906	-	-	11
1907-1909	6	3	18
1910-1918	-	-	11
1919-1928	-	-	18
1929-1990	-	-	11
1991-2018	6	2	12

# WHO SHOULD DECIDE THE SIZE OF COUNCIL

- It is the role of Councillors to represent the public and to consider the well being and interests of the municipality.
- The appropriate size of a City Council is a matter of judgement with no right or wrong answer based on objective criteria.
- City Council made a decision in 1988 that since Councillors are elected to represent the public the composition of City Council should be decided by the public in a referendum.
- This role for the public was confirmed by City Council in 2008 with a second referendum on City Council composition.

# Conclusion

- The well being of a municipality is best served by having a City Council whose size and method of election is selected and supported by the electorate.
- In the past Guelph City Council has recognized the rightful role of the electorate in making decisions on City Council composition.
- In the absence of strong dissatisfaction of the electorate with the present composition of City Council there is no obvious justification for change in composition.
- If City Council identifies compelling reasons for change the proposed change should be subject to a referendum.