

Hello Councillor Goller,

Having now read the full report, I can better understand some of the consulting teams' rationale (though not all), and better articulate my own reasons as to why I do not support the recommendation. I am concerned first and foremost with the reduction in the number of individual councillors, then with the subtext of expediency, then finally with the reduction to single member wards as a barrier against proportionality in representation.

First of all, I acknowledge the challenge with the balancing of keeping two member wards, increasing representation, and creating a system where councillors are both accountable and accessible to their constituents, values clearly held across those supporting increases, decreases, or retaining the same number.

My first concern is with the reduction in number. Democratic representation is not related to the function of "full-time vs. part-time"(1), but the simple fact that one person is now accountable to, and expected to represent the views of, a much larger number of people. According to the numbers available to me from the 1996 and 2016 censuses, the representativeness of council has shrunk by around 3000 constituents per councillor across the past 20+ years. The proposed reduction to 8 councillors corresponds to an even larger loss of representation (holding the 2016 population static, so not even accounting for further population increases) of 8489 constituents. In fact, the threshold number of proposed seats at which we see an increase in representation is 17. Rather than addressing this democratic deficit, the recommendation of 8 is making it worse, literally doubling down on the loss. Furthermore, no matter how one slices the numbers, the community consultation data is clear: 49.1 (Figure 6, p. 13), a FPTP-style majority(1), favours 12 councillors. If one removes the non-answers of "Don't know", the proportions adjust accordingly, but the threshold of respondents preferring 12 advances to 53.8%. How the consultants inferred a reduction mandate from this data is 100% unclear from the report as it is written.

The sole reason I can find in the report for decreasing is expediency. The report pulls from both internal interviews and public input that the current number of councillors "prolongs debate" and a smaller number "makes for easier decisions". However, as the data from informant interviews is not provided, it is almost impossible to understand the consultants' analysis on how the number 8 was arrived at. In fact, there is no analysis on the number, and the choice of the number directly contradicts the consultants' own stated principles and recommendations:

"Councils need to be large enough to ensure that all the community's interests are represented on council." (p. 12) (see my first paragraph)

"A council should be large enough to address the diversity of the community in terms of its neighbourhoods, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic interests, and history." (p. 12) (also see above)

"...provides a reassurance that the City currently falls in the middle of the range, and if it increases or decreases the number of Councillors or wards slightly it would remain within that range." (p. 12)

A reduction to 8 takes us well outside of the "reassuring" comparable range.

"The City of Guelph should have no more than 12 Councillors" (p. 34)

This principle clearly specifies a maximum, but does not mandate a reduction. The possibility of remaining the same should have equal prospect as any other number (between the regulated minimum of 5) based on this principle. Based on the public consultation data, 12 should be the preferred number. As there is no other data available to the readers of the report, it is impossible to see where the rationale for a reduction, let alone as drastic a reduction as from 12 to 8, comes from, especially when costs will actually go up compared to the status quo, due to the accompanying recommendation to move to full-time positions.

"Respondents to the survey indicated that they were comfortable with the current number of Councillors and there was little appetite for an increase. Interviews with Councillors indicated some concern that 12 Councillors slowed down and complicated the decision-making process. Comparison with other municipalities indicated 12 Councillors was within the norm. There seems to be no compelling argument to increase the current number of Councillors, but some have suggested that the system would work better with fewer Councillors." (p. 34)

-- There was also "little appetite" within the public consultation to decrease the number, with only 25.2% favouring a decrease (versus 17% favouring an increase). The consultants seem willing to ascribe the desire to remain at 12 to a "mere familiarity" effect, but made no effort to measure actual satisfaction with the number, as they instead asked for preferences "What number of Councillors do you prefer for the City of Guelph?"(2) However, the precision of this question gives the consultants a clear, public, mandate: keep it at 12. What is perfectly unclear to any reader is the source, weight and credibility of the statement "some have suggested". I assume the consultants are referring to these non-available interviews as the genesis of the statement "seems to be no compelling argument to increase",

because as someone who has begun reading through all of the qualitative answers from the public survey, there seem to be several "compelling argument[s] to increase" therein.

Finally, I come to the issue of single-member versus two-member wards. Here the consulting team again relies on the familiarity argument to dismiss the public's clear majority preference for two-member representation. Although the current First Past the Post (plurality) voting system does not seem to offer any clear benefits with two-member wards, under a ranked ballot voting system, two member wards would allow for greater fairness in voting. I was disappointed that neither of the political science experts on the consulting team made any effort to report on any literature review they may have conducted, since they could have found ample evidence of the impact of multi-member electoral systems, as I just spent less than 5 minutes on google scholar and found the following: Electoral Systems and Women's Representation in Australia (<https://doi.org/10.1080/14662040701317519>) Ballot structure, district magnitude and constituency-orientation of mps in proportional representation and majority electoral systems (<https://doi.org/10.1080/00344893.2012.720880>)

I thank you for your time in reading through my response. To answer your questions directly, what I myself would like to see for my city, from my own understanding of and training in political psychology, is yes, at least 8 two-member wards, making for 16 full time councillors, but with ranked ballots. Were I on the consulting team and trying to balance the conflicting views presented with the (available) data, I would say since the majority want two-member wards, and the majority want 12 councillors, and the majority want full time councillors, I would go with our current system of 6 two-member wards with 12 full-time councillors.

I hope my rationale for my position of opposition is abundantly clear now. Thank you for taking the time to ask me for a more detailed description of my opposition to the recommendation.

Sincerely,
Gillian Maurice

(1) Although "slightly less than a majority" was deemed an appropriate public-consultation derived threshold to recommend that councillors be moved to full time: "Slightly less than a majority of respondents felt that the position of Councillor should be considered full-time." (p. 27)

(2) - The export of the survey tool shows a total of 656 respondents to the "What number..." question, yet the report consistently cites 670 as the total, without explaining the discrepancy. Thus, the percent preferring 12 varies between 48.5 and 49.1 in the report.

Calculation of Democratic Deficit going into the Council Composition Review process and Consultation

year	popn	councillors	popn per councillor	loss of representation
1996	95,821	12	7985.08	
2016	131,794	12	10982.83	
				2997.75