

General Correspondence City Council Composition and Ward Boundary Review, Phase Two – Final Report

Two member wards are essential for a representative council. This is true whether we are forced to use the antiquated first-past-the-post system of election or if we can at some point in the future adopt something like single transferable vote. Suppose, for sake of argument, that 55% of Guelph residents were "left leaning" and 45% were "right leaning" and suppose these people are mixed evenly through the city.

With a single councilor per ward system it is likely that "left-leaning" candidates would win in all wards. Hence 45% of the electorate would not have their views represented at all. This is totally unacceptable. With at least two councilors per ward, it is much more likely that a representative council will be elected. We need to move toward proportional representation at the local level so that people will come to realize its benefits and demand it on the provincial and federal levels.

I do not have a strong opinion on whether councilors are full time or part time, nor on the precise number of wards there are. The only thing that is essential is that there is more than one councilor per ward.

So I am writing to urge you to reject the consultant's recommendations for single member wards in Guelph, which do not line up with what residents of Guelph clearly expressed.

Allan Willms

Please respect the wishes of the people of Guelph and reject the consultant's recommendation to adopt 8 single member wards.

Thank you for your time,

Manon Germain

I am very upset to hear that the city is thinking of shrinking the number of councillors per ward. As Guelph grows, we need good representation of the people who reside in our beautiful city. If you reduce the number of spots, this will reduce the number of voices at the table and thus reduce the representation of the variety of needs of our residents. As tends to happen when voices are squeezed out, it's likely that those voices which have the hardest time being heard - those of our marginalized people - will be disregarded more and more.

I urge you to stand up for the voices of Guelph, to make the statement that we value the rich diversity that our City contains, and to not reduce the number of city councillors.

Jessica Martin

I am writing in support of retaining our current 12 councillor model. Reducing the number of elected leaders representing the public is also reducing the number of people accountable to the public when the population is growing.

Thank you,
Michele Richardson

Being born and raised in Guelph I have seen numerous changes to the city, unfortunately not all have I agreed with, but at the same time never complained, until now.

Have to admit that with the city growing as much as it has and will, that this is probably one of the most backward suggestions I have heard. Whomever thinks they can convince / justify this change, should definitely be in politics, but not in MY city.

Terrible idea and don't consider.

Thank you
Shawn Richardson

Please respect the stated wishes of citizens who responded to the survey by retaining two councillors for each ward regardless of number of wards. This will provide a more democratic structure, better accountability to residents, and share the significant workload for wards, especially as our city's population continues to grow. Two councillors will also provide some diversity of perspective.

According to Mercury Tribune reporting, the advisor to the consulting firm seems to be convinced that his recommendation is best and that survey responses favouring two-councillor wards were skewed by the voting method and should therefore be ignored. Please listen instead to the majority opinion of those of us living in Guelph.

Thanks for your response; I appreciate the invitation to share more of my reasoning in this matter.

I agree with the principals that consultants used -- that ward boundaries should be adjusted to get more equal population at present and with future growth and to rationalize representation of groups of interest and divisions by geographic features. In response to the survey, I read it thoroughly and chose Option 6-2, if I remember correctly. Please note that if there had been an option offered of 7 or 8 wards with two councillors each, I would have chosen that one. Smaller wards are an advantage for residents' access to councillors and councillors' familiarity with ward people and issues.

The question of full- or part-time councillors is complicated, as many have pointed out. I am not convinced that full-time positions would attract more people or more folks of more diverse backgrounds to the role; the report's assertion is appropriately speculative. Perhaps some full-time councillors would leave other

work aside to devote all of their time; for others, life circumstances could mean that they would still have other responsibilities to meet. Many can serve part-time only, so that if full time is required, they would not step forward. I think that among residents with lower incomes, young parents, seniors, and others as you mention, many would be attracted to the councillor role at the present salary if it appeared to be viable option for them. Diversity of representatives should be promoted by other means – active recruitment, leadership training opportunities and community development, efforts to increase citizen engagement as much as possible. (I am aware and appreciative of City staff efforts to consult and engage; we could use more of this.)

I don't agree that one full-time position would necessarily meet the needs of the workload. To my knowledge, currently our part-time councillors put more than half of their working time toward City business, and the needs of each ward will likely be greater than one full-timer can manage effectively. In the report and in the analysis of costs produced by Democracy Guelph, it's clear that costs of additional staff support, office space, benefits and so on for full-time councillors will be significant. I favour increasing the council budget similarly, but instead of full-time positions, using funds to increase councillor remuneration to reflect present workloads, provide additional staff support for administrative tasks and other duties so that councillors can use more time for policy study and interaction with ward residents, and add two-councillor wards as population continues to increase. Probably a minority opinion, to say the least!

Thank you, Councillors, for your attention to this and for all of your good work.

Sincerely,
Sally Ludwig

I wish to urge City Council to oppose the proposition to reduce the number of councillors. With so many issues that are of importance to the citizens of Guelph, it is imperative that the council reflect the diversity of the community and allow a substantive debate. This proposal threatens the democratic process by concentrating power in the few. We have seen the result of this around the world. This is not only an assault on democracy, but hits at the heart of Canadian values.

Melissa Dean

Please include this written submission to the agenda June 21 regarding the issue of reducing the number of Councillors.

As a resident of Guelph I object to the findings of the Consultant's report which suggests reducing representation on Council to 8 Councillors. I object for these reasons:

- 1) When you make a position within government a permanent full-time (with attendant salary, benefits and potentially pension) **you will necessarily attract professionals to the position.** This will lead to a situation which is common in

other levels of government which is that is our representatives will no longer reflect a wide range of backgrounds, experiences and careers (ie. reflect the people of the City), but will instead attract a limited range of professionals which will highly skew Council. In 2020, the most common types of work done by MPs prior to election was business (27%), politics and government (22%) and law (11%). People should aim to serve on Council because they have experience in their own careers and community engagement and a desire to be of service. This should **not** be a Civil Service career opportunity.

2) The greater the breath of experience and number of people on Council the better it represents the Citizens of Guelph. **The more diversity on Council, the more it operates as an effective democracy.** City councils function best when they reflect the community they represent.

3) The City should be **looking for every opportunity to keep costs down** especially considering the run up in the cost of housing and therefore the very serious increase in property taxes residents will face in the coming years. Reducing costs and reducing the mill rate in Guelph should be very much in the mind of Council and the Mayor for the health and well being of City residents.

4) **When residents are polled and continuously return the same the opinions and those opinions are ignored by consultants, the consultants report needs to be seriously questioned.**

5) Guelph is not yet large enough to justify full time Councillors. Most Cities of 100,000 to 250,000 people have **part-time Councillors**.

Sincerely,
Mary Cabena-Peirson

The usual claims about how Guelph would be better served with a smaller number of councillors are now being trotted out with arguments and justifications that make little sense at best and are completely illogical at worst!

Fewer councillors, (whether full-time or part-time), reduces the number of contact points for the citizenry - which inevitably means that each individual councillor has to receive, research, and resolve or at least respond to more constituents. The reduced council becomes a bottleneck to the flow of information and business to each citizen. If you accept the logic that fewer points of contact produces better communication then perhaps Guelph ought to simply subcontract city governance and government to the "Customer Service" organizations of any major telecom! If citizens are satisfied with hearing, "Your call is important to us; please hold" or "Call volumes are currently at high levels; our current wait time is estimated at 3 hours and 25 minutes", I'd be very surprised!

A smaller number of full-time councillors is very attractive to lobbyists and land-developers and large business interests as it presents a smaller number of players to lean on, funnel supports to, work "deals" with and influence. Additionally it

serves lobbyists, developers and major business interests better to have little or no "turnover" on council as then it's easier and cheaper to develop and maintain a cosy relationship with the same old gang from one election cycle to the next and the next after that. Incumbency is one of the best tools for electability - names become familiar and for many voters at the time they mark a ballot, they see a list of multiple choices and mark the one they recognize! For would-be newcomers, (fresh blood/new ideas), a smaller council means they have to find ways to reach out to a greater number of persons than in a larger council with smaller populations in each ward.

The costs and time required to reach and communicate with more voters is a given: reducing the size of our council makes it harder for new persons to present themselves to, and gain the votes of citizens so they can challenge entrenched incumbents on a reduced council!

It's quite clear that a majority of citizens in Guelph recognize that cutting out 1/3 of the points of contact they need to reach to affect decision making is an anti-democratic and retrograde development!

I would ask that council reject the recommendation to go from 6 wards with 2 councillors per ward, to 8 wards with 1 full-time councillor per ward, as a profoundly anti-democratic move which would poorly serve the citizens of this city!

Thank you.
Gerard Stack

You will receive many thoughtful comments and well-prepared delegations on this topic. As a citizen who has participated in this process from day one, I want to simply voice my position one last time. I voted for, and continue to support, 6 wards with modified boundaries to accommodate future growth, and 2 part time councillors for each ward.

Sincerely,
Corrie O'Driscoll

totally agree.

LETTER: City should not switch to eight full-time councillors

Laura Collins

My husband and I are very much in favour of the existing council structure as we feel it serves us well.

Ann Middleton
Sandy Middleton

This email is simple. I would like to formally express my disagreement with the Watson and Associates recommendation to transition to 8 full-time councillors.

The increase in cost per councillor alone is enough to oppose the change. Also, I completed the online survey expressing my view that the council structure should stay as it is.

Please enter this opposition to the recommendation into the official public record.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Kyle Speaker

Democracy at the municipal level is the critical foundation for democracy at the provincial and national level. It is essential we continue to support and expand the democratic process in Guelph by retaining two city councillors per ward. Reducing the number of city councillors per ward from two to one reduces capacity, accountability, responsiveness and limits citizen representation.

This is also consistent with the consultant's report where the majority of responses to the survey stated they did not want to reduce the size of city council. It is imperative city council supports the majority of the survey respondents and democracy at its core, and rejects the consultants recommendations on June 21 for a reduced city council .

Thank you for your hard work and consideration.

Yours truly,
Valerie Anderson

I am writing in regards to the Guelph Council Composition and Ward Boundary Review. I ask that you reject the consultant's recommendation of 8 councillors in 8 wards for the following reasons:

- Council Composition - It should remain 12 councillors in 6 wards but on a full-time basis. In so doing, councillors will be reimbursed in the same way as the full-time Mayor and staff with no need for other part-time jobs to distract them. Although 12 full-time councillors would cost more than the current arrangement, it would not be that much more than having 8 full-time councillors.
- Ward Boundaries – The new 8 ward boundary lines don't make sense both for projected population growth and geography. They should be rejigged to be more responsive. I am especially concerned about proposed Ward 4 and Ward 2 boundaries that are separated by the Speed River. Fiascos like the Emma-Earl Bridge will become even more difficult to resolve when wards are pitted against each other when we already have to deal with manufactured "east/west" support which was never true.

- Public Consultation - During the consultations, citizens said they prefer two member wards: 65% preferred two member wards and only 35% wanted single member wards. Indeed, the consultants wrote that the 8 single member wards was "polarizing". Very few chose it as their second or third choice, and a large share ranked it last. The consultant's report noted that the two member ward designs were the most popular and would be "well supported in the community."

Please vote to keep our two member wards which have worked well for 30 years. Having 12 full-time councillors will improve representation even more and ensure Guelph democracy thrives for the next 30 years.

Sincerely,
Martin Collier
