

June 18, 2021

Re: Council composition and ward boundary review

Dear Mayor Guthrie and Council:

I am concerned with the recommendation of the consultants to move to an 8 ward, 1 councillor per ward system. I commend staff and council for its efforts to address issues of diversity among staff and council. Recent events in our city and across Canada have amplified the need to address representation of minority and vulnerable populations. It is my belief that reducing the size of council will negatively impact the likelihood of increasing diversity on council as there will simply be fewer positions available.

Reducing the representation to one member per ward also increases the advantage of incumbents who are better known to voters. It results in a 'winner take all' scenario that means a lesser known candidate from a minority population is less likely to be elected.

The majority of citizen respondents favoured keeping a six ward, two members per ward system. The issues of workload and councillor compensation should be seen as a separate issue. Any such study should explore the pros and cons, as well as alternative ways of addressing workload, such as the provision of more assistant support for councillors.

Sincerely,

Teresa McKeeman

Guelph