

Review of Size of Council

Proposal - that the size of Council and the designation of Ward Boundaries remain as is, unchanged.

The issue of Council size has taken up a lot of our Councillor's time since amalgamation. Every time it has come before Council, any motion for change has been defeated.

Recently (May 2015) the Fraser Institute published a study on the benefits of the municipal amalgamations instituted by Mr. Harris in the late 1990's to Ontario counties. The study suggests that there were no benefits, and in some cases even disadvantages to these new "smaller, leaner" administrative structures. (<http://www.fraserinstitute.org/research-news/display.aspx?id=22657>)

Both Mayor Quaiff and Councillor Gale have stated that there is no financial gain in any proposed change. This leaves the non-financial, intrinsic factors to consider.

The above study strongly doubts whether there would be any improvements in efficiency with loss of representation. Certainly there has been no data presented to Council or the electors that this would be the case.

The other non-financial factors that need to be considered are representation, participation, workload and historical issues. These are all very closely linked.

Representation is a major factor. The more Councillors we have, spread over all parts of the County, the more every resident will feel that a voice exists at the council table representing his/her point of view. Yes, debates take longer, but opinions are heard from Bloomfield, to Long Point to Carrying Place, Rossmore and Picton and all points in between. It is irrelevant that we have "more Councillors" than some other municipalities. We must have what works for us ... and this Council structure **is** working for the County!

There are two sides to participation. Firstly, participation by residents. Councillor Harrison reminded us that prior to amalgamation, many residents attended every township council meeting and held councillors to account. This was certainly the case in Sophiasburgh, where I was elected to Council for three terms. Councils were accessible and directly accountable. This was democracy in action. As the size of Council decreases, it distances itself from the residents.

The second aspect of participation is that, as wards increase in size, campaigning for Council, and attending meetings, becomes impossible for anyone except those retired. We are limiting the composition of Council, and thus the relevance of the input to any decision is diminished.

As the size of Council decreases, the workload for each Councillor will increase. How much more can any of you read, how many more meetings can you attend, and how many more residents concerns can you address, without making this a full-time position?

Many, many residents have made it quite clear (in the 2013 petition to leave the County as is) that they do not wish any changes made. The County is becoming known as the "go to"

place in southern Ontario. Much of this is based on the attractions of our historical roots and our continued use of the original wards/townships augments this.

I was a representative on the Citizens' Assembly. This process did suggest a reduction in size. Unfortunately, maintaining the status quo was not was encouraged or seriously considered as an option. Also, quite a few of the members of the Assembly had absolutely no understanding of municipal government nor had they been in the County for any length of time. This lead to some very uninformed decisions.

If this process continues, it will continue to divide the County, taking up an inordinate amount of Council time, resources (of Council and staff) and may eventually even lead to a battle at OMB.

As a Council you have very difficult decisions to make over the next four years ... infrastructure, development and the care of your residents. Please do not devote any more time on this issue. Leave the County as it is.

Sincerely,

Kathy Vowinckel