

The N.E.W. Plan for restructuring Prince Edward County Council [August 26, 2015]

The N.E.W. Plan proposal achieves four key objectives: (1) Preserves the County's ten Historic Wards with NO boundary changes; (2) Improves Councillor representation; (3) Highlights three development areas and (4) Allows flexibility in Council size.

Three Electoral Wards. The N.E.W. plan creates 3 Electoral Wards which overlay the County's 10 Historic Wards and which have almost equal populations, (see map on page 2 and population data on page 3):

- a. North Electoral Ward covers Ameliasburgh and Sophiasburgh.
- b. East Electoral Ward covers Picton, North Marysburgh, South Marysburgh and Athol.
- c. West Electoral Ward covers Hallowell, Bloomfield, Wellington and Hillier.

With equal numbers of Councillors. The three Electoral Wards, with almost equal populations, are allocated equal numbers of Councillors. Under the N.E.W. Plan, there can be as many as 5 Councillors for each Electoral Ward, or as few as 2 each. Each Councillor represents all electors and residents of his/her Electoral Ward.

Four Councillors per Electoral Ward. The current Council has expressed a preference for 4 Councillors per Electoral Ward, for a total of 12 Councillors, if the N.E.W. Plan is chosen over the others being proposed.

Achieves four key objectives. Each is important for the future:

1. **Preserves the County's ten Historic Wards.** Three Electoral Wards overlay the County's ten Historic Wards for purposes of Councillor representation. The ten Historic Wards, which have their origins in United Empire Loyalist times, are preserved unchanged -- the same names, boundaries, town halls, libraries and road signage.
2. **Improves Councillor representation.** Here are benefits from having Electoral Wards with multiple Councillors:
 - a. **Excellent rep. by pop.** With Electoral Wards having almost equal populations and equal numbers of Councillors, excellent representation by population is achieved. Currently, one vote in Bloomfield is worth almost four votes in Wellington and one vote in South Marysburgh is worth more than 1.5 votes in Hillier.
 - b. **Choice of Councillor.** With more than one Councillor representing each Electoral Ward, citizens have a choice of Councillors to contact, which can be important for contentious issues or special needs. At present, four Wards have 2 or 3 Councillors each, while six Wards have only one Councillor each.
 - c. **Team of Councillors.** Each Electoral Ward has a team of Councillors representing the geographical area, allowing collaboration on area issues, sharing of the workload, and backup during absences. Currently, only four of the ten Wards have more than one Councillor.
 - d. **Mix of rural and urban.** Each Electoral Ward is mostly rural, but with an urban centre for access to facilities and services. North is near Belleville and Trenton (see #3 below re the future); East includes Picton; West includes Wellington and Bloomfield. Councillors have direct responsibility for both rural and urban issues whereas, currently, 11 Councillors represent all-rural areas and 4 Councillors represent all-urban areas.
 - e. **Manageable number per Councillor.** Assuming 12 Councillors, and splitting the workload, each Councillor is responsible for about 2,000 residents / 2,200 electors. For comparison, each Councillor in Belleville is responsible for about 6,000 residents.
3. **Highlights three development areas.** The N.E.W. Plan, with three Electoral Wards based on geography, highlights north County for future community and commercial development, with Rossmore as an urban centre (as in the Official Plan update), along with east County / Picton and west County / Wellington.
4. **Allows flexibility in Council size.** The number of Councillors per Electoral Ward may be 5, 4, 3 or 2 each, resulting in as many as 15 Councillors (= 5 x 3) or as few as 6 (= 2 x 3). Although the current Council's preference is 4 Councillors per Electoral Ward, this number could be changed in the future without affecting the ten Historic Wards.

Population growth. If the population of one Electoral Ward grows much larger than the others (likely to take ten years), one Councillor can be added to that Electoral Ward only, to rebalance rep. by pop. and Councillor workload.

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Consideration of Council size. Proponents of a smaller Council cite cost savings and time efficiencies, while those who favour the status quo emphasize the value of a broad range of views. By unlinking Historic Wards, Councillor representation and Council size, the N.E.W. Plan allows consideration of Council size free of complicating factors.

Decision by Council. The Plan works equally well for a small or large Council. The decision on the number of Councillors is made by Council, with advice from the Citizen's Assembly, and input from the general public.

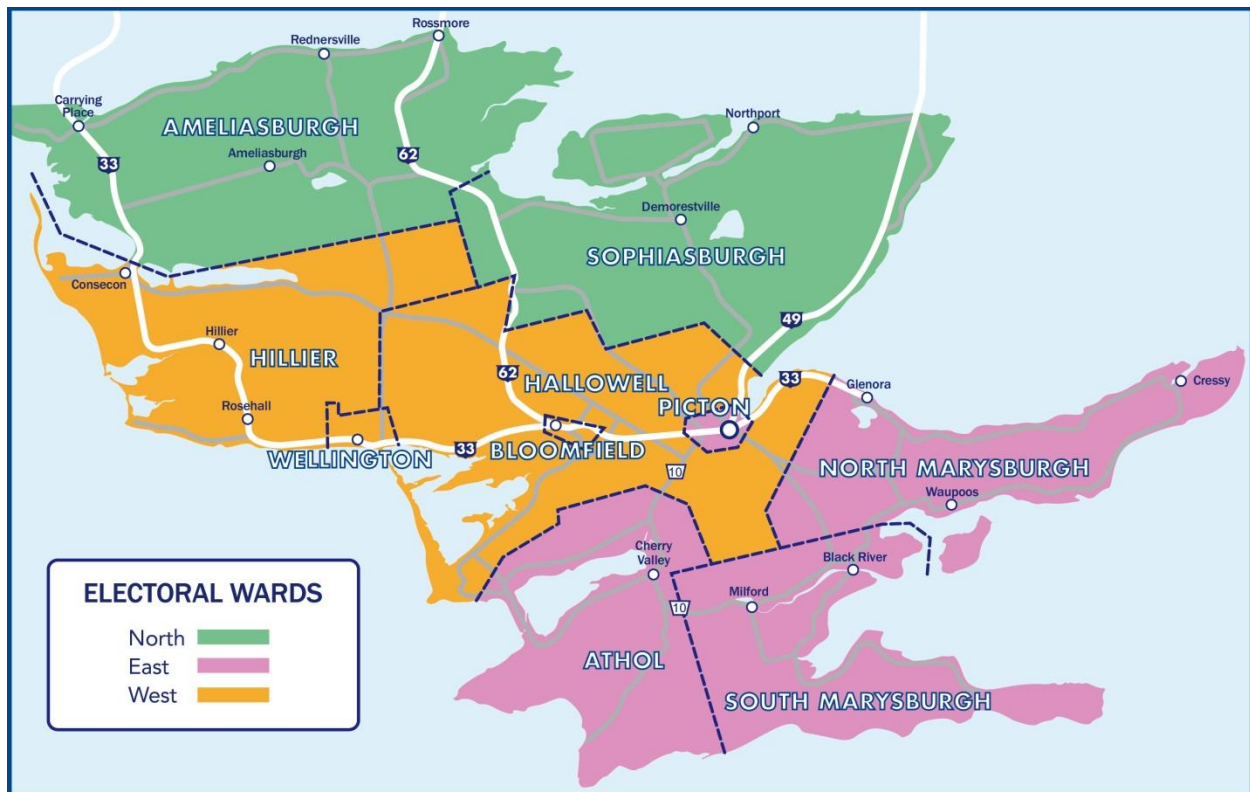
Continuation with 15 Councillors? If the decision is to continue with the current Council size, there are still benefits from implementing the N.E.W. Plan with 5 Councillors per Electoral Ward: improved Councillor representation, and Electoral Wards in place to preserve the County's 10 Historic Wards if a future Council decides to reduce the number of Councillors.

Fair to all. There are now 5 Councillors in each proposed Electoral Ward. Transition to a smaller Council will be fair to current Councillors, as each will have access to an equal number of seats in his/her Electoral Ward.

Feasibility of plan. Any restructuring plan needs to be shown to be workable and, ideally, should not result in significant additional costs to taxpayers. The N.E.W. Plan, involving a simple overlay of Electoral Wards on Historic Wards, with no boundary changes, is clearly workable, with modest transition costs and minimal additional ongoing costs. The Plan requires only a one-time change to the election process, modest additions to internal recordkeeping and minor changes to external communications to support both Electoral and Historic Wards.

It's time to move forward. Seventeen years after municipal amalgamation is an opportune time to resolve the issue of Council size, while preserving the County's Historic Ward structure and improving Councillor representation. The N.E.W. Plan offers a simple, inexpensive and permanent means to achieve these objectives.

Map of 3 Electoral Wards overlaid on 10 Historic Wards



Many thanks to Sacha Warunkiw for the map of Electoral and Historic Wards.

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Permanent resident and electoral populations by Electoral and Historic Wards

		Permanent residents	Electors				Current Councillors	Number per Councillor	
			Resident	Non-Resident	Total	Ratio N-R / T		Perm res	Electors
North E.W.	Ameliasburgh	5651	4815	1049	5864	18	3	1884	1955
	Sophiasburgh	2301	1832	795	2627	30	2	1151	1314
	Total	7952	6647	1844	8491	22	5		
East E.W.	Picton	3622	3397	352	3749	9	2	1811	1875
	N. Marysburgh	1548	1134	780	1914	41	1	1548	1914
	S. Marysburgh	1115	784	627	1411	44	1	1115	1411
	Total	7818	6387	2410	8797	27	5		
West E.W.	Bloomfield	539	464	63	527	12	1	539	527
	Hallowell	3506	3239	803	4042	20	2	1753	2021
	Wellington	1982	1763	238	2001	12	1	1982	2001
	Total	7987	6976	1861	8837	21	5		
All E.W.	Total	23757	20010	6115	26125	23	15	1584	1742
	Average	7919			8708				

Notes:

- Population numbers are taken from the staff report to the Committee of the Whole dated May 6, 2015.
- "Permanent residents" include both adults and children (under age 18).
- "Electors" are adult Canadian citizens, both (a) full-time residents and their spouses, and (b) non-residents (absentee and part-time resident property owners and part-time tenants) and their spouses.

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