



Question on the Ballot

Questions and Answers

Are you in favour of Council commencing a public consultation process to review the size of Council for the County of Prince Edward?

Why are we asking this Question?

In 2008 Council established a Committee to look at different governance structures including a change in the size of Council. The committee included 5 Councillors and three members of the public.

The Committee identified that, to change the size of council, ward boundary adjustments would likely be necessary.

The committee looked at the following Council sizes and ward boundary configurations:

- **No change** to the existing 10 ward 16 member Council (**15 Councillors** (plus Mayor))
- **'At Large' system** with no wards and either **8, 10 or 12 Councillors** (plus Mayor)
- **2 Ward system** with a north/south boundary **with either 4, 5 or 6 Councillors per ward** (plus Mayor)
- **4 Ward system with either 2 or 4 Councillors per ward** (plus Mayor)
- **5 Ward system with 2 Councillors per ward** (plus Mayor)
- **6 Ward system with 2 Councillors per ward** (plus Mayor)
- **8 Ward system with 1 Councillor per ward** (plus Mayor)

In considering ward boundary configurations the committee used the following criteria:

- Equitable distribution of population between wards
- Preservation of communities' integrity and functions
- Recognition of settlement patterns and community groupings – identifiable communities

- Means of communication and accessibility
- Distinct geographical boundaries recognizing scarcity, density or relative growth or loss of population

Although some members of Council wished to proceed to a full public process to determine the best option, the majority were of the opinion that there was no strong public interest or support for either changing the size of Council or the ward boundaries.

To be able to gauge public opinion, the Council decided to add the following question to the ballot:

Are you in favour of Council commencing a public consultation process to review the size of Council for the County of Prince Edward?

How did the existing size of Council and ward system come about?

Prince Edward County was amalgamated as a single tier government in 1998 with ten wards. The ten wards correspond to and have the same boundaries as the previous ten townships, villages and town.

The amalgamation proposal approved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs, was to retain the historical municipal boundaries as the new ward boundaries. Representation was set by the province at that time as 1 Councillor per ward plus one extra Councillor per 2,500 people. The result was a council of 15 with one mayor.

How is the existing 15 member of Council distributed?

The following chart shows the number of Councillors and the Wards they represent:

Ward	Ward Population (2006 election)	Number of Councillors
1 Picton	3,705	2
2 Bloomfield	575	1
3 Wellington	1,657	1
4 Ameliasburgh	5,493	3
5 Athol	1,215	1
6 Hallowell	3,700	2
7 Hillier	1,744	1
8 North Marysburgh	1,242	1
9 South Marysburgh	868	1
10 Sophiasburgh	2,060	2

What are the different types of electoral systems?

In Ontario, municipal councilors can be elected:

- at large by a general vote,

- by wards, or
- by a combination of general vote and wards.

The minimum size of council is 5 members, one of which is the head of Council (in our case a Mayor) which is always elected at large by a general vote.

Under a ward system, a municipality is divided into a number of geographic areas. Councillor(s) are elected to represent each of those geographic areas. Voters may choose between those candidates running in the ward where they reside, or if non-residents, where they own land. There are no limitations on the number of wards or the number of councilors to be elected for each ward.

Under an at large system, all Councillors are elected by a general vote. Voters may vote for all candidates running within the municipality. There is no maximum on the number of Councillors.

Under a mixed system, some Councillors are elected by ward and some Councillors are elected at large.

Will the results of the vote be binding?

The results of the question will be binding if,

- (a) at least 50 per cent of the eligible electors vote on the question;
- and
- (b) more than 50 per cent of the votes on the question are in favour of the result being to change the size of Council.

In 2006 the County had 23,895 eligible voters. 9,424 voted, that being 39.44%.

What will happen if there is a binding YES vote?

If YES it would indicate that the majority of voters want to review Council size. Council would have to commence a public consultation process to determine the most appropriate size of Council. This review would include an examination of the electoral system (ward boundary configuration).

The review and public consultation process and final decision would need to take place for the 2014 municipal elections. It would require a variety of public input opportunities, supporting background information, mapping and other data.

The process should be conducted by someone who is neutral and unbiased, has a good understanding and knowledge of municipal governance issues and has good research, analytical, presentation, report writing and communication skills.

A report or reports would be provided prior to the final statutory public meeting and passage of a by-law which would include:

- capture and documentation of public input;
- the rationale and objectives of the exercise;
- the process followed;
- the analysis conducted; and
- the conclusions reached.

What will happen if there is a binding NO vote?

If NO the Council could take no further action on reviewing the size of Council issue for at least four years.

What will happen if less than 50% of electors vote and the results are not binding?

Should there be less than 50% voter turnout the results would not be binding, however could still indicate a clear preference. If a clear preference was indicated one way or another, staff would be recommending that Council take the same actions it would take if the results were binding.

What are the costs implications to a review of the size of council?

It is estimated that a consultant to carry out the previously described process would be approximately \$20 to \$25K. Other costs would be estimated at \$5K.

A reduction in the size of Council, could result in some reduced costs on an ongoing basis by the amount of remuneration and expenses per Councillor. There may be some unknown cost increases such as changes to remuneration, and increased expenses related to workload.

Average costs per Councillor, based on 2009 remuneration and expenses, were \$20,568.

Should there be a corresponding change to the electoral system involving a reconfiguration of ward boundaries there would be some costs for signage, and reprinting of documentation. The costs would depend on the extent and number of ward boundary changes made.

Can I campaign for to support either a Yes or No vote?

If any person or group wishes to incur expenses to support either a Yes or No vote they must file a notice of registration with the Clerk.

What are the Municipal Elections Act rules for placing a Question on the Ballot?

Before placing a Question on the Ballot a municipality must:

Give 10 days notice to the public and the Minister of Municipal Affairs,
Hold a public meeting, and
Pass a by-law no later than April 28, 2010.

The Question must be clear, concise and neutral and be capable of being answered by either a Yes or a No.

Please refer to Section 8 of the Municipal Elections Act for complete information.

What if I feel the rules of the Municipal Elections Act are not met?

Within 15 days of passing the by-law the Clerk will give notice to the public and the Minister, setting out an appeal period, which will be 20 days after the date of the notice.

The Minister or any other person or entity may appeal to the Chief Electoral Officer of the Province of Ontario on the grounds the question does not comply with the above criteria (paragraph 3 or 4 of subsection (2) of the MEA) by filing with the clerk a notice of appeal setting out the objections and the reasons in support of the objections.

Need more information?

Contact the Clerk's Department at 613-476-2148 ext.226