

The N.E.W. Plan for restructuring Prince Edward County Council [Version 5]

[Condensed description, 1 page, 629 words]

The County has been wrestling with Council size (15 Councillors) for several years. Some citizens and Councillors want fewer Councillors; others favour the status quo. But many people are concerned that reducing Council size would require changes to the County's Historic Ward structure. Others want to improve Councillor representation – e.g. rep. by pop.– which could also affect the ten Historic Wards. Due to these interlinked factors, every discussion on Council size gets complicated quickly, and ends up going nowhere.

Following is a proposal for restructuring County Council that achieves three key objectives: (1) Preserve the County's ten Historic Wards; (2) Improve Councillor representation; and (3) Allow flexibility in Council size.

Three Electoral Wards. The N.E.W. plan creates 3 Electoral Wards, which overlay the County's 10 Historic Wards:

- a. North Electoral Ward covers Ameliasburgh and Sophiasburgh (total of 9108 electors).
- b. East Electoral Ward covers Picton, North Marysburgh, South Marysburgh and Athol (9070 electors).
- c. West Electoral Ward covers Hallowell, Bloomfield, Wellington and Hillier (9272 electors).

With equal numbers of Councillors. The three Electoral Wards, with almost equal numbers of electors, 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.

Achieves three 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 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 numbers of electors and equal numbers of Councillors, excellent representation by population is achieved. By contrast, one vote in Bloomfield Ward (584 electors, 1 Councillor) is currently worth four votes in Hillier Ward (2431 electors, 1 Councillor).
 - b. **Choice of Councillor.** With more than one Councillor representing each Electoral Ward, citizens have a choice of Councillor 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 1 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 1 Councillor.
3. **Allows flexibility in Council size.** The number of Councillors per Electoral Ward may be 5, 4, 3 or 2 each, depending on Council's decision, resulting in as many as 15 Councillors (= 5 x 3) or as few as 6 (= 2 x 3). This number could be changed in the future without affecting the ten Historic Wards.

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 a Citizen's Assembly and input from the general public.

It's time to move forward. Fifteen 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.

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