

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

## [Expanded description, 3 pages, 1330 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.
  - d. **Mix of rural and urban.** Each Electoral Ward is predominately rural, but with an urban component or connection for access to services. North is near Belleville and Trenton; East includes Picton; West includes Wellington and Bloomfield. At present, 11 Councillors represent all-rural areas and their interests and needs, while 4 Councillors represent all-urban areas, which have somewhat different interests and needs.
  - e. **Manageable number per Councillor.** Even with only 2 Councillors per Electoral Ward, each Councillor (splitting the workload) is responsible for only 4,650 electors, or 5,300 full- and part-time residents. For comparison, each Councillor in Belleville is responsible for 6,200 residents.
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.

**Odd or even number?** With an odd number of Councillors (e.g. 15 or 9) plus the Mayor, there is the potential for a tie vote on a motion when all are present. In this situation, there must be at least two more yes votes than no votes for the motion to pass (e.g. 9-7 or 6-4), rather than just one more -- thereby requiring a greater consensus.

**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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**At-Large system?** Some people favour conversion to an At-Large system, whereby each Councillor represents the entire County. This is essentially the N.E.W. Plan, but with only one Electoral Ward. The N.E.W. Plan, with three Electoral Wards, offers the simplicity of At-Large, while avoiding its major disadvantages:

- a. Each geographical area of the County, with its unique characteristics and challenges, has several Councillors specifically allocated to it. Under At-Large, no Councillor is specifically responsible for a given geographical area, so residents living in outlying areas of the County may not get sufficient attention.
- b. During election campaigns, each candidate's costs and required travel area are one-third those of an At-Large system. At-Large favours candidates with greater financial resources, or ready access to funding.
- c. During the Council term, each Councillor's required travel area is one-third that of an At-Large system.

**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.

**Continuation with 15 Councillors.** If the decision is to continue with the current Council size, there will still be benefits from implementing the N.E.W. Plan in 2014: 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.

**Transition to fewer Councillors.** If it is decided to reduce Council size, this can be implemented fully in 2014, or phased in over time. Some examples of transition plans, assuming a decision to reduce to nine Councillors:

- a. Reduce to 9 in 2014; or
- b. Reduce to 12 in 2014 and 9 in 2018; or
- c. Retain 15 in 2014 and reduce to 9 in 2018.

**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 – 4, 3 or 2 -- in the 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, is clearly workable. The Plan requires only modest additions to internal recordkeeping and minor changes to external communications to support Electoral Wards as well as Historic Wards.

**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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### Appendix 1: Number of electors by Electoral and Historic Wards

		Electors			Councillors	Electors per Councillor
		Residents	Non-res	Total		
North E.W.	Ameliasburgh	5298	1029	6327	3	2109
	Sophiasburgh	2036	745	2781	2	1391
	Sum of North $\Sigma$	7334	1774	<b>9108</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1822</b>
East E.W.	Picton	3555	348	3903	2	1952
	N. Marysburgh	1203	771	1974	1	1974
	S. Marysburgh	875	588	1463	1	1463
	Athol	1183	547	1730	1	1730
	Sum of East $\Sigma$	6816	2254	<b>9070</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1814</b>
West E.W.	Bloomfield	525	59	584	1	584
	Hallowell	3454	766	4220	2	2110
	Wellington	1816	221	2037	1	2037
	Hillier	1677	754	2431	1	2431
	Sum of West $\Sigma$	7472	1800	<b>9272</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1854</b>
Sum of County $\Sigma$		21622	5828	27450	15	1830

“Electors” are those eligible to vote in a municipal election, which includes residents, non-resident property owners or tenants and their spouses, and excludes non-Canadian citizens and everyone under age18.

“Non-residents” includes part-time residents and non-resident property owners and spouses.

“Councillors” are the number of Councillors now allocated to each Historic Ward. Under the N.E.W plan, a number of Councillors between 5 and 2 is allocated to each Electoral Ward.

Source of elector data: PEC document IRFP #2013-CSF-08, pages 2 and 3; see <http://tinyurl.com/kspwzqr> .

### Appendix 2: Map of 3 Electoral Wards and 10 Historic Wards

