



Memorandum

TO: Krista Power, City Clerk **FILE:**

FROM: Councillor Greg Johnsen

DATE: 11/05/2025 (mm/dd/yyyy)

SUBJECT: Proposed Change to Ward and Town Hall meetings (By-law 225-1998 as amended)

MEETING & DATE: City Council – 12/02/2025 (mm/dd/yyyy)

My proposal is to update By-law 225-1998 last amended in 2019. This by-law governs Ward and Town Hall meetings to require a minimum of one (1) Ward or Town Hall meeting per year for all members of council. This By-law currently allows up to 4 meetings a year and has restrictions on the summer months and the months prior to a Municipal Election. This change would ensure that there is a defined minimum standard for City Council. Further, citizens from all areas of the city will have a structured, guaranteed opportunity to meet with members of council, express concerns, ask questions, and receive updates directly. Such a mechanism supports transparency by further opening this dialogue rather than relying solely on the Standing Committee or City Council meetings, or other dispersed public-input processes.

The purpose of this motion is to help strengthen the transparency, accountability, and public engagement between members of Council and the residents they represent by amending our current bylaw with respect to number of meetings to include a minimum of one (1) Ward or Town Hall meeting per calendar year.

In particular, the motion aligns with our recent governance changes, the information gained from the Council Composition Review, as well as the concerns expressed about the dissolution of some Boards and Committees. For instance, by adding a minimum standard, the public will recognize our ongoing efforts to not only to change and evolve, but our aim to enhance public engagement and clarity in how decisions are made.

Embedding a minimum of one (1) Ward or Town Hall meeting requirement complements this by localizing and regularizing public access to members of council and civic decision-making.

Finally, given that City Administration has begun hosting new events such as Thunder Bay Talks — informal, open-house style opportunities for residents to connect with staff about services, programs, and initiatives - Council should follow in-kind. These are positive steps towards enhancing accessibility and breaking down barriers between the municipality and residents. A minimum of one (1) Ward or Townhall meeting requirement complements this model by linking it to the elected official layer, reinforcing communication at the political-representative level, not just administrative.

In short, mandating a minimum of one (1) Ward or Townhall meetings per calendar year aligns with the broader direction of increased transparency, strengthened engagement, improved governance structure, and citizen-driven representation. It creates a predictable and regular link between residents, their wards, their City Council, and decision-making — reinforcing democratic legitimacy and community trust.

As outlined in this memorandum, I provide the following motion for council's consideration,

WITH RESPECT to the Memorandum from Councillor Greg Johnsen dated November 5, 2025, we recommend that Administration prepare an amendment to By-law 225-1998 (as amended) that requires each member of council to hold a minimum of one (1) Ward or Townhall meeting per year beginning in 2027;

AND THAT Administration bring this report and proposed by-law amendment to the Standing Committee on Finance and Administration in Q2 2026 prior to presentation to City Council for approval;

AND THAT any necessary by-laws be presented to Council for ratification.

C.C. John Collin, City Manager