

Council Composition Review Committee

Phase 2 Public Engagement: Ward Meetings & At Large Townhall

Feedback Report – Ward and Town Hall Meetings 2024

Presentations:

- * Red River Ward Meeting: September 18
- McKellar Ward Meeting: September 25 (19 in attendance)
- Northwood Ward Meeting: October 10 (22 in attendance)
- Westfort Ward Meeting: October 16 (18 in attendance)
- McIntyre Ward Meeting: October 24 (16 in attendance)
- At Large Townhall: October 30 (15 in attendance & live-streamed)
 - Live-streamed – 31 accessed through Council Meetings & Agendas page; Rogers & Tbaytel numbers are unknown
- Current River Ward Meeting: November 12 (35 in attendance)
- ** Neebing Ward Meeting: November 27, for information

* The Red River Ward meeting took place prior to the data collection period

* * The Neebing Ward meeting presentation will take place after the data collection period. This meeting was originally scheduled to take place during the data collection period and unfortunately had to be cancelled and rescheduled.

Key Themes:

- Ability to connect with a councillor and have interests represented is a significant factor in weighing options.
- Reducing barriers for candidates is important to increase diversity on council.
- Balance of power and number of councillors making decisions that affect the entire city a consideration.
- Loss of voice with respect to neighbourhood identity and representation a concern.

Option 1 (8 Ward Councillors / 4 Wards & 2 At Large Councillors) Feedback

- Concern with division of boundaries, including placement of downtown cores in same ward, a desire to see them split North to South vs. the proposed East to West, that urban areas of the ward will be favoured over rural, and that neighbourhoods could lose representation with the large size of the ward.
- A 4 ward system has the potential for the geographic size to be more difficult for a candidate, creating barriers to run in the municipal election.

- 2 councillors per ward will increase representation and allow constituents to connect with up to two councillors on specific issues. The councillors may advocate together or offer differing perspectives.
- An all ward system without At Large councillors would increase representation and would like to see that model presented as an option.
- All councillors including ward councillors make decisions in the best interest of the city. Ward councillors represent a specific area but are still a voice for the city. Seen as a positive for the ward system.

Option 2 (10 At Large Councillors) Feedback

- The number of decision makers elected by an individual is increased with an all At Large model and is seen as a positive.
- Concern about ability for an all At Large model to adequately represent specific areas of the city or electors in the absence of knowledge and actions typically associated with ward councillors (ex. neighbourhood ward meetings).
- Concern about exacerbated barriers for potential candidates with an all At Large model. For example, higher costs typically associated with an At Large model and tendency toward name recognition by voters.

General Feedback

- Concern that neither option results in a significant cost savings. This is countered with sentiments that the voiced preference for a reduction in council was more related to increased efficiencies.
- Would like a model that looks at a lower ratio of councillor to citizen similar to larger urban centres to reduce number of councillors in general.
- Would like to see a third option to keep current system.
- Concern about reducing the number of councillors when looking at growth for the city.

General Questions Posed

- Why is the system being reviewed?
- How will the work be divided when 2 councillors per ward? How was this model determined?
- Why are there at-large positions added to the ward system?
- Can councillors be split with both part-time and full-time positions?
- Can the final decision of council be appealed?
- Will councillors need to live in the ward they are elected in?
- How were the ward boundaries determined?
- Can a position on council be designated as Indigenous to ensure representation?

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- Why is this not a question on the next ballot?
- Can the model be implemented as a trial?