

# Corporate Report

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**REPORT NUMBER** 154-2025-City Manager's Office-Office of the City Clerk

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**DATE**

**PREPARED** April 25, 2025

**FILE**

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**MEETING DATE** June 16, 2025

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**SUBJECT** Proposed Governance Structure - City Council Procedural By-law

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

WITH RESPECT to Report 154-2025 – City Manger's Office – Office of the City Clerk, we recommend that Procedural By-law 51/2021 be repealed and replaced with the new Procedural By-law 217-2025 as substantially outlined within this report;

AND THAT the Calendar of Meetings for 2025 and 2026 be approved;

AND THAT the following Advisory Committees of Council be dissolved with thanks sent to all citizen appointed committee members:

- Anti-Racism and Equity Advisory Committee
- Audit Committee
- Clean, Green & Beautiful Committee
- Community Communications Committee
- Community, Youth and Cultural Funding Appeals Committee
- Coordinating Committee
- Downtown Fort William Revitalization Committee
- EarthCare Advisory Committee
- Official Recognition Committee
- Waterfront Development Committee;

AND THAT Administration update any policy or procedure that requires amendment to align with Procedural By-law 217-2025;

AND THAT Administration conduct a review of the adopted Procedural By-law and new governance structure including feedback from Council and Administration and report back to City Council on or before the end of Q2 2026.

## ***LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN***

The recommended governance changes align with the City of Thunder Bay's 2023–2027 Strategic Plan, Maamawe – Growing Together, particularly its focus on continuous improvement, inclusion, and service excellence. By introducing Standing Committees and modernizing engagement and decision-making processes, the City is taking tangible steps toward its strategic goals of improving access to governance, enhancing accountability, and supporting operational efficiency. These initiatives reflect the City's commitment to better serve its diverse community, deliver positive outcomes for residents, and build a more responsive and sustainable municipal government.

## ***EXECUTIVE SUMMARY***

This report outlines recommended changes to the City of Thunder Bay's governance structure aimed at improving public understanding of how City Council makes decisions and offers greater opportunity for citizen engagement in local government in addition to providing greater efficiency for members of Council and Administration. Key recommendations include the repeal and replacement of Procedural By-law 51/2021 with a revised By-law, the introduction of three Standing Committees (Finance & Administration, Quality of Life, and Growth), adjustments to the Committee of the Whole structure, and the dissolution of all non-legislated Advisory Committees of Council with the exception of three which will transition to Special Purpose Committees to manage specified work associated with the current priorities of City Council.

These changes are designed to streamline decision-making, modernize public engagement, and better align Council functions with administrative support. Proposed scheduling adjustments, refinements to deputation procedures, and revisions to agenda structures further support the goal of improved governance. Public consultation, Council feedback, and administrative review have informed the proposed changes, which are presented for Council's consideration and approval.

This report is being presented as a First Report and will be re-presented at the June 23, 2025, Committee of the Whole meeting for approval. Following approval, direction would be provided to bring forward the by-law that would implement this change.

## ***DISCUSSION***

Administration is recommending a change in Thunder Bay's governance structure which will introduce Standing Committees, change when and how City Council meets, and dissolve non-legislated advisory Committees of Council. Most of this will be implemented through enacting a new Procedural By-law 217-2025. A summary of all changes is provided below.

## **Procedural By-law**

### Addition of Meeting Principles to the Procedural By-law (PBL)

Adding principles to the procedural by-law allows Council to guide good governance forward in a positive way. This also allows for the potential to evaluate the efficiency of meetings going forward. For example, if a principle is to commit to efficient meetings, is Council meeting that goal or principle? This may help to focus Council and Administration on what is behind the rules, and the importance of good governance for community benefit.

- The majority of members have the right to decide.
- The minority of members have the right to be heard.
- All members have the right to information to help make decisions, unless otherwise prevented by law.
- Members have a right to an efficient meeting.
- All members have the right to be treated with respect and courtesy.
- All members have equal rights, privileges and obligations.
- Administration has the responsibility to advise, recommend and inform City Council pursuant to the responsibilities set out in Section 227 of the *Municipal Act*.
- No item shall be placed on an agenda with respect to a matter which is not within the jurisdiction of Council or Committee. The Mayor and/or Chair, in consultation with the City Clerk, will determine if a matter is within the jurisdiction of Council or Committee.
- All efforts must be made by all members to advance the business of the municipality in good faith, with focus on appropriate timeliness to decision making.

### Standing Committees

Standing Committees (SCs) are proposed for Finance & Administration, Quality of Life and Growth. SCs will be composed of four (4) Councillors and the Mayor (5 members in total). Members of Administration will be present at meetings, as required. Agendas will be distributed per the Notice By-law.

The purpose of these committees is to increase the Council efficiency. The committees meet regularly to review and discuss reports of Administration before making recommendations to Council.

Staff reports will be presented to the appropriate committee. The committee will review and provide feedback in order to best inform the final report and recommendation to City Council. This helps to streamline the number of items requiring consultation and helps focus discussion and debate at Council meetings.

The Committee of the Whole structure will continue to exist for Budget, Closed Session and extraordinary items where presentation to more than one SC would be required, e.g. large infrastructure projects such as the Multi Use Facility. The procedural by-law

qualifies this as Special Committee of the Whole which will stand up as appropriate and necessary outside of scheduled meetings.

The mandates of each SC are designed as follows:

### ***Finance & Administration***

The Finance & Administration Committee focuses on financial stewardship and administrative functions of the municipality. This committee provides input, guidance, and recommendations and consults on fiscal planning, budgeting, financial reporting, and the overall governance framework and administrative functions.

### ***Quality of Life***

The Quality of Life Committee focuses on spaces, programs, services, and policies that enhance the well-being, health, safety, and cultural life of residents. This committee provides input, guidance and recommendations, and consults on how the municipality is building an inclusive, accessible, and livable community for all citizens.

### ***Growth***

The Growth Committee focuses on sustainable development, economic prosperity, and long-term planning within the municipality. This committee provides input, guidance and recommendations on matters related to land use, infrastructure expansion, and economic development and consults on thoughtful and balanced community growth.

### **Speaker**

It is proposed that a Speaker be appointed to preside over City Council meetings. The Speaker will function in the same manner as the Chair and be elected by their peers to serve in the role of Speaker. A Deputy Speaker will also be chosen by City Council to fulfill the role when the Speaker is absent. This function will serve at the discretion of the Mayor as the presiding officer as per the requirements of the *Municipal Act*.

### **Meeting Schedule**

Administration is recommending that all meetings of City Council and Standing Committees be scheduled on Tuesdays. Attachments A and B provide the recommended calendar of meetings for the remainder of 2025 and all of 2026. All meetings will continue to be open to the public, unless otherwise closed through the provisions of section 239 of the *Municipal Act*. Meetings will be broadcast on the City's website, Tbaytel and Rogers.

City Council meetings will start at 6:30 p.m. Standing Committee meetings will start at 4:30 p.m. Where a Standing Committee is stacked with another Standing Committee, the meetings will have set start and end times – 4:30 p.m.-7:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.-9:30 p.m. This is in keeping with the principles stated earlier in this report and the commitment to efficient and effective meetings.

### Deputations

Administration is proposing minor changes to the reasons that the City Clerk can decline a deputation request. The expansion to the list of reasons to deny a deputation is to ensure efficient response for members of the public, e.g. if their concern can be addressed by Administration, ensuring that happens in a smooth and efficient manner. This also helps to ensure feedback coming to Standing Committees or advisory committees via a deputation is balanced and in line with the principles of good governance.

### City Council agenda items

The new structure for City Council agendas is proposed to include the following:

- Enhanced Announcements
  - Can include ward & town hall meetings, other civic meetings and events, community events and should focus on good news that has community benefit
- National anthem and land acknowledgement
- Consent agenda
- Addition of Items Arising from Committee of the Whole – Closed Session
- Addition of a section dedicated to Public Meeting under the *Planning Act* which hears applications relative to development, this provides for additional opportunities with up to two (2) meetings each month

### Consent agenda

A consent agenda is being proposed at the City Council level. Consent agendas are a list of items on the agenda containing recommendations. Council can adopt these items in one motion or, upon request of any Member, can request to extract any number of items from the consent agenda and place them on the regular agenda for further discussion. Items included in consent agendas will include reports for information, and housekeeping items (e.g. confirmation of the agenda).

### Recorded votes

Through consultation with Council, it is recommended and supported by Members that all decisions made at the City Council level will be recorded in the minutes for the public to easily access how Members of Council have voted on a particular matter before Council.

### Outstanding List

It is being recommended that the Outstanding List be removed from the procedural by-law. The City Manager, through the City Manager's Workplan and reporting requirements, is responsible for reporting to Council on all outstanding items within the plan.

### Speaking Limits

The following changes are being proposed to speaking limits as outlined in section 7.03 of the Procedural By-Law (PBL).

- (a) Standing Committees, Special – Committee of the Whole, Committee of the Whole – Closed Session, Non-Business Meetings, Special Purpose and Advisory Committees of Council: Members are limited to 3 rounds of speaking, 5 minutes each round. This allows for up to 15 minutes of speaking to an item over the 3 rounds by each Member.
- (b) Presentations and Deputations: Each Member is limited to 1 round of questions of Presenters and Deputants and 1 round of questions of Administration. Members are limited to 3 questions per round of speaking.
- (c) City Council: 3 rounds of speaking are permitted, 5 minutes each round. Consistent with Standing Committee speaking limits, this allows for up to 15 minutes of speaking to an item over the 3 rounds by each Member.
- (d) Public Meeting portion of a City Council Meeting (Applications received under the *Planning Act*): Each Member is limited to 1 round of questioning for each speaker to an application and to Administration, with 3 questions per Member per round. Applicants and Speakers to applications presented at Public Meeting are limited to no more than 5 minutes per speaker.
- (e) Notice of Motion to Reconsider, Rescind or Amend: 3 rounds of speaking are permitted, 10 minutes each round per speaker.

Based on the peer review of other municipalities, there is a high number of Councils using specific time limits for speaking. The City of Thunder Bay remains an anomaly in the application of the number of questions (3) per round. This proposed change allows for each Member to speak up to 15 minutes on each item at all meetings (5 minutes per 3 rounds) with the exception of speaking to a Notice of Motion which would have a higher threshold of time (10 minutes). Responses to questions asked by Administration is included in that time and Administration will be required to become more efficient within their responses to questions of Council. Further, it is often assistive to both the Member of Council and Administration if questions on a particular report are extensive to connect prior to the meeting which allows the Member of Council to best understand what is being proposed and for the member of Administration to focus on brevity and key points in responses to questions within Meetings.

### Strong Mayor Powers

Procedural By-law 217-2025 reflects the change in legislation that took effect in 2023 and provide greater authority and autonomy to the City's elected Mayor. This includes the delineation of Mayoral Decisions, Mayoral Directions and the time periods associated with Mayoral vetoes and Council's opportunity to override. It should further be noted that the Mayor has some authority to decide on which Members of Council

may be appointed to Council committees, along with appointing the Chairs and Vice Chairs. The Mayor may also establish, dissolve and assign functions to committees. These powers are limited to committees comprised of elected officials.

### **Advisory Committees of Council**

It is recommended that only those advisory committees of Council which are legislated or have requirements within legislation remain, with the remaining committees being dissolved. This allows the municipality to shift toward more progressive engagement methods; engagement becomes more open, timely, and effective. This modernization is aligned with Thunder Bay's commitment to inclusion and responsiveness, allowing Administration to engage with diverse community voices beyond the limitations of formal committee structures.

There are 111 citizen appointments available for 16 Committees of Council. There have been challenges with recruitment to committees with more than 15% of citizen positions currently vacant. Committees have also been challenged achieving quorum at their meetings. Since September 2024, 25% of committee meetings have been cancelled or have been conducted as information sessions because of lack of quorum. It is Administration's opinion that engagement for committee related matters can be managed differently and more effectively, with a larger demographic.

There are currently 57 Council appointments required for all advisory committees, outside boards and agencies. By approving the recommended committees for dissolution, the number of council appointments would be 41 in total.

Through Administration's initial review of peer municipalities (Report 361-2024), most have less than half of the advisory committees currently in place in Thunder Bay. The work advisory committees were guiding will not cease, it will continue to be completed by Administration in consultation with the broader community, and Administration will report to the Standing Committees and City Council as required.

Further, Administration is committed to implementing a more robust volunteer management program that would include a change in advertising, recruitment, onboarding/orientation, and volunteer recognition for those appointed to committees.

The following legislated committees are recommended to continue:

- Accessibility Advisory Committee
- City of Thunder Bay Appeals Tribunal
- Committee of Adjustment
- Community Safety & Well-Being Advisory Committee
- Heritage Advisory Committee
- Lift+ Specialized Transit Eligibility Appeal Panel

The following committees are recommended to continue as Special Purpose committees:

- Intergovernmental Affairs Committee
- Mayor's Task Force on Building More Homes Advisory Committee
- Recruitment Committee

The Intergovernmental Affairs Committee has discussed the governance review as a committee and made a recommendation to change the composition to include the Chair of each Standing Committee, the Mayor and a Member of Council who is strategically aligned with other orders of government. The Mayors Task Force connects directly to the provincial priority of building more homes and the Recruitment Committee manages the recruitment, screening and appointment to the Synergy North and Tbaytel Boards. There is the potential that the mandate of the Recruitment Committee may expand to assist with the work associated with screening additional appointments to the legislated Council Advisory Committees recommended to remain.

The introduction of Standing Committees aims to centralize and streamline Council's decision-making process. These committees are designed to absorb much of the consultative and oversight roles previously held by various advisory committees, ensuring a more efficient review of municipal operations and policy development. The following committees are recommended for dissolution:

- Anti-Racism & Equity Advisory Committee, EarthCare Advisory Committee, Waterfront Development Committee, Community Communications Committee, and Downtown Fort William Revitalization Committee
  - While the formal advisory role of the above noted Committees will cease, their important work will not. Work will continue via Administration and be brought forward to the appropriate Standing Committees for review and consultation. This ensures continuity while improving efficiency. There is also the potential for working groups or task teams to best align with this work outside of the construct of a City Council Advisory Committee. The City of Thunder Bay has many committees and working groups that are not designated as Council Advisory Committees that do great work for our community and are not as prescriptive nor hold as many potential barriers to involvement.
- Clean, Green & Beautiful Advisory Committee, Community, Youth and Cultural Funding Appeals Committee
  - Administration will continue with its internal grant review process. Instead of having a standalone committee to hear appeals or determine grant recommendations, those matters will now be heard by the Quality of Life Standing Committee.
- Coordinating Committee



- Administrative review of the Procedural By-law will continue as part of the continuous improvement of the Office of the City Clerk. Recommendations for amendments will be presented directly to City Council, allowing for input from all Members. Training for the Speaker, Deputy Speaker, Chairs and Vice-Chairs will be scheduled as required.
- Official Recognition Committee
  - Approval of awards of achievement will be assumed by the Standing Committee on Quality of Life.
- Audit Committee
  - The Finance & Administration Standing Committee will now assume this role. Providing input and approval as required before presentation of financial reports to City Council.

## **CONSULTATION**

There was a public survey made available for three (3) weeks in March. This survey was sent to all Members of Council, advisory Committees and advertised to the public. Survey responses were low, with less than 100 responses received. Overall, the responses were receptive of the changes to the governance structure and recognized that a change in advisory committees would be beneficial.

A second survey was provided to Members of Council only. Focus group sessions as well as one-on-one consultations were scheduled with all Members of Council to review proposed changes. The majority of Council were in support of the proposed governance changes providing suggestions to further review – meeting schedules, the Speaker, speaking limits, and recorded votes. Most of those suggestions have been included in the draft Procedural By-law. Several meetings were also scheduled with the Executive Leadership Team for their review and input of the proposed changes.

Some of the feedback received from Council focus groups is provided below.

- All Councillors were in support of the introduction of recorded votes on all votes at City Council.
- Members were in support of the consent agenda addition to City Council.
- Some Councillors were concerned about the dissolution of select advisory committees, namely EarthCare, Community Communications and Clean, Green & Beautiful.
- A small number of Councillors prefer the Committee of the Whole Structure rather than a move to Standing Committees.
- Most were in favour of the introduction of the Speaker at City Council. Suggestion to appoint the Acting Mayor to be the Speaker during their assigned month and to continue to use Chair and not Speaker as the identifier of the position were suggestions by a select number of Councillors.

- A small number of Councillors were interested in an evaluation of the new structure, 6 to 8 months after the change.
- Councillors want to ensure there will still be training opportunities made available for Chairs and Vice Chairs.
- Overall, Councillors were in favour of the change to speaking limits.
- A couple of Councillors were challenged by holding meetings on Tuesdays, starting at 4:30 p.m. and the 2.5 hour limit on Standing Committee meetings.
- No concerns were brought forward about the change in process for the Outstanding List. The view was shared that it no longer serves the purpose of what it was initially intended to do.
- A request was made for a robust communication strategy to advise the public of the changes.

### ***FINANCIAL IMPLICATION***

There are no immediate financial implications associated with this report. It is recognized that the reduction of committees will reduce the Committee expense budget for meals and parking. Budget adjustments will be managed through the annual operating budget review process.

### ***CONCLUSION***

The proposed governance changes mark a significant step forward in strengthening the effectiveness, inclusivity, community connection and transparency of the City of Thunder Bay's municipal operations. By repealing Procedural By-law 51/2021 and introducing a modernized governance framework centered around Standing Committees, streamlined procedures, and enhanced public engagement, the City is positioning itself to better meet the needs of a growing and diverse community. These changes align with the City's strategic priorities and reflect standard practices in municipal government across Ontario. Continued monitoring and evaluation of the new structure will ensure its long-term success and adaptability. Administration is committed to supporting a smooth transition, providing training and support in conjunction with the introduction of By-law 217-2025 and will report back to Council with a comprehensive review by the end of Q2 2026.

### ***BACKGROUND***

At the October 21, 2024 Committee of the Whole meeting, Report 361-2024 – City Manager's Office – Office of the City Clerk – Governance Process Changes – Preliminary Review was presented. A resolution was passed recommending that the Director of Legislative Services & City Clerk be directed to continue the work associated with implementing a new governance process that modifies the Committee of the Whole structure and introduces a Standing Committee structure.

Procedural By-law 5/2021 was adopted by City Council on August 9, 2021 and replaced By-law 128-2012, as amended, which had been in place since November 26, 2012.

From 1987 to present day, only the Committee of the Whole structure has been used. Committee of the Whole is currently broken into sections: Infrastructure and Operations, Planning, Community Services and Administrative Services.

Standing committees are not a new structure to the City. Following amalgamation in 1970, standing committees were utilized until approximately 1987 in addition to Committee of the Whole.

***REFERENCE MATERIAL ATTACHED***

Attachment A – Draft Procedural By-law 217-2025 **(Distributed Separately - Please note, a copy of the By-Law will be provided for City Council and the public in advance of the June 23, 2025 meeting)**

Attachment B – 2025 Calendar of Meetings

Attachment C – 2026 Calendar of Meetings

***REPORT PREPARED BY***

Krista Power, Director of Legislative Services & City Clerk

***REPORT SIGNED AND VERIFIED BY***

Kerri Marshall, Acting City Manager

Date (06/06/2025)