**Subject:** County Council Composition and Election of Warden Report  
**Report Number:** CLK 20-21  
**Author:** Michelle Smibert  
**Meeting Type:** Council Meeting  
**Meeting Date:** Monday, May 25, 2020

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**RECOMMENDATION:**  
THAT the County of Oxford be requested to change the status quo to increase the number of representatives on County Council effective the next term of Council so that the Town of Tillsonburg has 2 members; and

THAT the Warden be selected from an election at large.

**BACKGROUND:**  
At the April 27th, 2020 Council meeting, direction was given to staff to provide a report on the addition of a second county councillor for Tillsonburg, to review the options for the selection of Warden and to provide other information as part of the review including at-large members.

**DISCUSSION:**  
1) Tillsonburg Council representation – attached please find Report dated April 24, 2017 written by the Clerk that recommended the addition of another county councillor to represent the interests of Tillsonburg. So even as far back as 2017, there has been a desire by the Town of Tillsonburg to have one additional county councillor (2 in total).

Although the current allotment of one county councillor from Tillsonburg achieves the status quo of the ten member council to provide 50% representation for urban municipalities and 50% representation for rural municipalities, there is a discrepancy in terms of representation by population. For example, if we use the numbers for 2022 in the County Report, you will see that municipalities such as Blandford-Blenheim, East Zorra-Tavistock, South-West Oxford and Zorra all have around 8,000 residents per County Councillor while Tillsonburg has the highest number of residents per County Councillor at 17,590.

If you assume that the threshold for one councillor is 8,000 residents then Tillsonburg should have 2 members sitting on County Council. The increase in the number of Councillors for Tillsonburg will likely trigger a review of the number of Councillors for both Ingersoll and Woodstock. I understand that the composition has ensured the 50% representation from the urban municipalities and 50% representation from the rural
municipalities but with growth normally occurring in urban areas, at some point there was going to be an imbalance that would need to be addressed. Most political systems in the Country use a representation by population formula. It upholds a basic principle of parliamentary democracy that all votes should be counted equally.

I understand that different Counties configure their county council composition differently and some look at the population only so as the population increases then there is a trigger for additional members and if there is a population decline then the number of representatives are scaled back but there is always a guarantee that each municipality will have at least one representative at County Council.

One of the reasons for this review of County Council is tied to the Provincial Government review of the County and the effective delivery of services. Given the Province’s announcement not to proceed with Regional Government in Oxford County at this time, there is likely an expectation that we perhaps look at a change in the status quo to ensure that the County has the most effective governance system in place to best serve all constituents in Oxford. What seems to be missing is a framework to help us identify what ideal County Council structure provides us with the “best system” as there are different perceptions or assumptions on what “best” really means.

It can be argued that a balanced representation on Council comes in the form of a blended ward system and at-large system. We see this blended representation on most lower tier councils. While at-large members was not an option that appeared in the County report, this might be a matter worth exploring or perhaps the at-large member might be the Warden’s position which is discussed further in this report.

Staff would like to note that we will continue to gather information and best practices as it relates to this matter but due to the current time restrictions and deadlines we want to be sure to provide some preliminary information to the County at this time. Additional reports/comments may be filed in the next few weeks with Council.

2) Election of the Warden – During the review completed in 2017, the Town of Tillsonburg supported the selection of the Warden on an election at large. The rationale for this was to ensure that the constituents had a say in who would lead County Council as opposed to those few already on County Council. There is a lot of research that compares the pros and cons of elections at large and the following are some of those pros:

- Likely better to represent the entire County as opposed to a smaller area or community as there are already designated voices for each community;
- The at large system promotes the concept of a municipal wide focus, with the Warden being elected by the County and concerned for the County as a whole rather than placing a priority on community interests;
- With the responsibilities representing both local councils and leading a County, there might be an argument that many people don’t have the time to do both and may have to quit their jobs – an at large election might allow someone interested...
in serving the County to do so without also having to dedicate the time to serve at the local level as well;

- The at-large system helps with the dual duty scenario where councillors have to serve two “masters” with ethical and practical dilemmas when the local priorities may be in conflict with County issues.

CONSULTATION - Mayor Molnar

FINANCIAL IMPACT/FUNDING SOURCE

COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN (CSP) LINKAGE

1. Excellence in Local Government
   - ☐ Demonstrate strong leadership in Town initiatives
   - ☑ Streamline communication and effectively collaborate within local government
   - ☑ Demonstrate accountability

2. Economic Sustainability
   - ☐ Support new and existing businesses and provide a variety of employment opportunities
   - ☐ Provide diverse retail services in the downtown core
   - ☐ Provide appropriate education and training opportunities in line with Tillsonburg’s economy

3. Demographic Balance
   - ☐ Make Tillsonburg an attractive place to live for youth and young professionals
   - ☐ Provide opportunities for families to thrive
   - ☐ Support the aging population and an active senior citizenship

4. Culture and Community
   - ☐ Promote Tillsonburg as a unique and welcoming community
   - ☐ Provide a variety of leisure and cultural opportunities to suit all interests
   - ☐ Improve mobility and promote environmentally sustainable living

ATTACHMENTS
Appendix A – County of Oxford Report and Previous Town of Tillsonburg Report
Appendix B – CLK 17-10 County Council Composition
Report Approval Details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document Title:</th>
<th>CLK 20-21 County Council Composition and Election of Head of Council.docx</th>
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| Attachments:    | - CLK 20-21 Appendix A - Council Composition Review.pdf
|                 | - CLK 20-21 Appendix B - CLK 17-10 County Council Composition.pdf |
| Final Approval Date: | May 20, 2020 |

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

**Kyle Pratt - May 20, 2020 - 3:34 PM**