



The Corporation of the  
City of Sault Ste. Marie

**C O U N C I L   R E P O R T**

2017 03 06

**TO:** Members of City Council  
**AUTHOR:** Mayor Christian Provenzano  
**DEPARTMENT:** Office of the Mayor  
**RE:** Recommendations of City Council Review Committee

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**PURPOSE**

On June 13, 2016 City Council passed the following resolution:

**Council Composition/Geographic (Ward) Division Review**

Moved by: Councillor M. Shoemaker  
Seconded by: Councillor S. Hollingsworth

*Whereas since 1965 when the townships of Korah and Tarentorus amalgamated with the City of Sault Ste. Marie, there have been 12 city councillors representing six wards at the City Council of the City of Sault Ste. Marie; and*

*Whereas since 1965 the population of the City of Sault Ste. Marie has ranged from a low of approximately 70,000 in 1965 to a high of approximately 81,000 in 1980, and currently sits at approximately 75,000; and*

*Whereas the Council of the City of Sault Ste. Marie last considered changes to its composition in 2002, which was 14 years ago; and*

*Whereas it is incumbent on the Council of the City of Sault Ste. Marie to ensure both effectiveness and efficiency in all City departments, including in their own composition; and*

*Now Therefore Be It Resolved that the Council of the City of Sault Ste. Marie strike a committee consisting of five councillors, being Councillors Shoemaker, Myers, Hollingsworth, Christian, and Bruni as well as Mayor Provenzano with the City Clerk as a resource to the Committee, to consider and make recommendations and report on:*

- 1. The recommended number of City Councillors for the City of Sault Ste. Marie; and*
- 2. The best geographic division for the recommended council make-up; and*
- 3. The foreseeable consequences, positive and negative, if a recommendation to change the current composition and geographic division is brought forward.*

## **BACKGROUND**

The Council Review Committee met on five occasions: June 28, September 1, October 6, October 25, 2016 and January 17, 2017.

Three public open houses were held: Wednesday, November 9, 2016 at the Northern Community Centre, Monday, November 14, 2016 at the Civic Centre and Tuesday, November 22 at the John Rhodes Community Centre.

An online survey was developed to solicit public input and made available online from November 1 to November 30, 2016. The survey elicited 696 responses. Paper copies of surveys were also available at the City Clerk's office and at the open houses. Two paper responses were received.

The public was also invited to submit additional comments. Five emails were received at the City Clerk's email address. Committee members also received emailed comments from their constituents.

Current members of Council and 18 past members of Council were interviewed. All of the foregoing information was made available to the Committee for its review and consideration and that same information is attached hereto for Council accordingly.

## **ANALYSIS**

The majority of survey responses from the public indicated support for moving to a six ward, one – member system. However, the committee was concerned that this approach would seriously jeopardize the City's governance. The concerns were, speaking generally, as follows:

1. Having wards of one councillor per ward would leave geographic areas of the city unrepresented if a councillor was ill or travelling;
2. Having only six councillors seriously jeopardized the amount of committee work that councillors could undertake. For instance, all city councillors would have to sit on the DSSAB for the entire term of council with no rotation;

3. Council quorum would be significantly reduced to four councillors (plus the Mayor) and as a consequence, three people could ultimately make a decision that significantly impacts the entire community;
4. City councillors could potentially require additional staff resources to manage and respond to their constituents increasing FTE cost at the city.

The committee also considered and discussed the ward system versus the at large system.

The ward system is used by almost all urban municipalities in Ontario. The key reasons are that this system ensures that all geographic areas of the community are represented on Council and that candidates are able to focus their resources (human and financial) on smaller area of the community rather than having to run city-wide campaigns. The ward system also ensures a more equitable workload among council members. There are very few examples of at large systems and the ones that do exist resulted from amalgamations.

The majority opinion of the committee, therefore, was that we should maintain the ward system and that six councillors was too few. As a result of the foregoing, the discussion at the committee ranged from maintaining the status quo of twelve councillors and six wards to eight councillors and four wards.

A minority of the committee felt that, based on some of the research provided by the Clerk and done by a committee member independently, that the correct number of councillors, based on the city's population, was eight councillors over four wards. There was some concern by the remainder of the committee that reducing four councillors from the current complement would have an adverse effect on the quality of the discussion and debate at the council meetings and, also, on the committee work load per councillor. City councillors do not receive additional remuneration for committee work and do undertake a significant committee work load. The concern from those who expressed it was that the committee workload would increase substantially if the number of councillors decreased from twelve to eight. Also, there was some concern that the ward size would be quite large making the general work of a city councillor significantly more demanding.

As a result, this proposition did not receive majority support of the committee.

A minority of the committee wanted to maintain the status quo: twelve councillors over six wards. This proposition also did not receive the support of the majority of the committee. The community is not currently growing and has not grown in some time. The most recent statistics Canada data indicates that our population has decreased. We have, objectively, more city councillors per capita than many other communities in Ontario. Additionally, our population and our economy is not growing in proportion to the city's financial obligations. Mayor and Council have working hard to ensure that administration is making adjustments so that city services are sustainable over the long term. It is only

natural and responsible in the circumstances for council to consider its own composition and adjust to the current reality of the community. Maintaining the status quo is inconsistent with the direction that this council has taken to date and not in keeping with most of its efforts.

This proposition also did not receive majority support of the committee.

As a result of the discussion at the committee about maintaining the status quo versus moving to eight councillors over four wards, it became evident that the majority of the committee was comfortable with moving to a ten member five ward system. There was little concern that a reduction from twelve to ten would have the same impacts as a reduction of twelve to eight. City councillors could still be expected to manage the workload, including committee work and constituent calls, on a part time basis. Although quorum would be reduced, it would not be reduced to a level that could potentially jeopardize good governance.

The majority opinion of the Committee was to recommend adopting a five ward system with two members per ward, for a total Council size of eleven inclusive of the Mayor.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The elimination of two council positions would result in annual savings of approximately \$50,000 to \$60,000. Any further elimination of council positions would result in additional savings of approximately \$25,000 per position to \$30,000 per position.

It is not expected that a reduction of twelve councillors to ten councillors would require the addition of any part time or full time employees.

#### **STRATEGIC PLAN / POLICY IMPACT**

This matter is not addressed directly in the strategic plan but it is consistent with the Value (Fiscal Responsibility) and Vision outlined therein.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is therefore recommended that Council approve the change in council composition in principle from a twelve member six ward system to a ten member five ward system effective the 2018-2022 term of Council; and,

Further that the appropriate staff be directed to make the necessary adjustments to the ward boundaries in accord with the governing legislation and report back to Council on said adjustments; and,

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Further that the appropriate staff be directed to prepare the necessary by-laws to effect this change and to report back to Council.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christian Provenzano".

Christian Provenzano

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