



**Town of Ingersoll  
Resolution of Council  
Regular Meeting of Council  
February 8, 2021**

**Moved by Deputy Mayor Freeman**

**Seconded by Councillor Petrie**

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**THAT** The Council of the Corporation of the Town of Ingersoll receives report numbered A-002-21 as information;

**AND FURTHER THAT** the Council approves the restructuring of Oxford County Council utilizing a weighted voting mechanism based on a minimum of one vote per municipality for any number of electors up to 6,000 and an additional vote for every 6,000 electors thereafter,

**AND FURTHER THAT** the metric to be used shall be the total number of eligible electors following each regularly scheduled election and that this weighting shall remain until the next regularly scheduled election,

**AND FURTHER THAT** the distribution of weights be split equally where the area municipality has more than one representative at County Council,

**AND THAT** the proposal be circulated to the seven other municipalities and Oxford County for consideration of a restructured County Council.

**CARRIED**



**Department:** Administration

**Report Number:** A-002-21

**Council Meeting Date:** February 8, 2021

**Title:** County Composition Consideration

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### Objective

To provide Council with an option for discussion and consideration on realigning the Composition of County Council.

### Background

Council is aware that the County, as required by the Province, is to review and establish its composition prior to the next municipal election. It was to have been completed by December 31<sup>st</sup> 2020 but has been granted an extension until March 31, 2021.

A new composition or retaining the status quo both require a triple majority of municipalities as defined by the Municipal Act.

The Status Quo was proposed by County Council but has failed to meet the threshold required.

Primarily the Urban municipalities have not approved the status quo, where 50 percent of the Council is made up of Urban Councillors and 50 percent of Rural Councillors, as acceptable for the following reasons:

1. Urban municipalities represent more than 65 percent of the population of the County.
2. Assessment of the Urbans represents more than 65 percent of the total for Oxford County.

As such the basic tenet of democracy or representation by population is not being expressed in the current County Council Structure.

The current Warden of the County attended Ingersoll Council in December 2020, where Ingersoll expressed its concerns with the status quo. Including the required need to elect the Warden at large, considering the term and remuneration for the position.

To Staff's knowledge it is unaware of any other activity on addressing the legislative requirement. Failure to submit to the province will leave the composition to the Minister to determine. Staff do not believe that this would be a concern, however a local solution would be preferable in most cases.

## Analysis

Staff have considered the situation and understand that the Province may be unwilling to significantly increase the number of County elected representatives.

However there is a way to ensure better representation without adding significantly to the number at County Council.

Based on Warden Martin's own numbers better representation could be achieved by utilizing a **weighted voting system**.

In today's technological era the implementation of a weighted voting system would be relatively straight forward and easily accomplished. To argue otherwise is not being realistic.

Woodstock would not have to reduce the number of representatives at County Council, their current three members could be allocated 1.33 votes each, totaling the four that they should have under a more balanced system. They could arrange them in a format to suit the City, this is just one option.

Likewise no municipalities would lose any votes, if each municipality were guaranteed at least one vote and an additional vote for each multiple of 6000 electors thereafter. The Warden expressed concern that those municipalities that did not have at least 6000 elector should maintain at least one vote, that should be avoided by ensuring the base for each municipality is one vote.

In this way Tillsonburg would be able to have two votes based on the Warden's own numbers.

Electing a Warden at large is also something the Council has requested be given consideration, in any restructuring of the County Council. Although this is not an unreasonable idea, staff would suggest that it not be pursued at this time for the following reasons:

1. The Province, prior to the municipal elections in 2018, eliminated directly elected heads of Council in four regional governments. The likelihood of that option finding favour with this government at this time is unrealistic.

2. County Councillors themselves are not likely to support the proposal, where the weighted voting system is less contentious, just fairer. County Council members themselves have expressed that they would not support a directly elected head of Council change.

Achieving a better balance of representation through a weighted vote is more advantageous than achieving nothing by proposing too many changes that would not find favour at the County level of governance.

Based on the current numbers the voting totals would be as follows under a weighted system for one vote for every 6000 electors, if implemented:

|                    |                 |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Woodstock</b>   | <b>4 votes</b>  |
| <b>Tillsonburg</b> | <b>2 votes</b>  |
| <b>Ingersoll</b>   | <b>1 vote</b>   |
| <b>Norwich</b>     | <b>1 vote</b>   |
| <b>SWOX</b>        | <b>1 vote</b>   |
| <b>Zorra</b>       | <b>1 vote</b>   |
| <b>EZT</b>         | <b>1 vote</b>   |
| <b>B-B</b>         | <b>1 vote</b>   |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>12 votes</b> |

The change here would provide that the Urbans would have 58 percent of the vote while the rurals would retain 42 percent. This still does not achieve a true representation of the elector distribution but it is a move in the right direction.

As has been seen in the past County Councillors vote not necessarily along urban/rural lines, there is nothing that would suggest a redistribution would impede that going forward. Each member of County Council is independent in their decision making relative to the position their home municipal Councils may support. There have been recent examples of this to demonstrate the practice.

#### **Interdepartmental Implications**

N/A

#### **Financial Implications**

No financial impacts on the Town of Ingersoll

## **Recommendation**

**That The Council of the Corporation of the Town of Ingersoll receives report numbered A-002-21 as information;**

**And further that the Council approves the restructuring of Oxford County Council utilizing a weighted voting mechanism based on a minimum of one vote per municipality for any number of electors up to 6,000 and an additional vote for every 6,000 electors thereafter,**

**And further that the metric to be used shall be the total number of eligible electors following each regularly scheduled election and that this weighting shall remain until the next regularly scheduled election,**

**And further that the distribution of weights be split equally where the area municipality has more than one representative at County Council,**

**And that the proposal be circulated to the seven other municipalities and Oxford County for consideration of a restructured County Council.**

## **Attachments**

None.

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Approved by: William Tigert, Chief Administrative Officer