

Town of Lincoln 2024-25 Ward Boundary and Council Composition Review Backgrounder

Discussion Paper C: The Component Parts of Lincoln's Council

Some components of the Town of Lincoln's Council are outside the control of the municipality, namely that there must be a "head of council" elected by general vote. The position of Mayor, the powers associated with the position, and the way that person is elected are not open to modification in this review. Neither is the number of Regional representatives, which are established by Niagara Regional Council. The remainder of the Council can be reconstituted, should the community and Council see some value in changing the status quo.

The Deputy Mayor: There is actually no specific reference in the Ontario *Municipal Act, 2001* to the office of Deputy Mayor¹, providing a great degree of freedom for municipalities to utilize (or not utilize) the position. In general, the Deputy Mayor is often conceived as supporting the Mayor, standing in to chair meetings or fulfil certain procedural or administrative duties if the Mayor is unable or unwilling to complete such duties.

The Deputy Mayor of Lincoln is assigned on a rotating basis, as per Council's procedural by-law. Each member of council assumes the role for a quarterly (three-month period) basis. Rotation occurs starting with one member from Ward 1 and determined alphabetically by last name and continues in numerical order through each ward, through to the end of the term of council. There are no stated additional stipends associated with holding the Deputy Mayor's role for the six-month period. The role and duties of the Deputy Mayor are stipulated in council's procedural by-law.

Alternatives exist to this model of selection. In some cases, the Deputy Mayor is chosen by a majority vote of the elected members of Council in a secret ballot. In other municipalities the Deputy Mayor is selected by the Mayor. Another method would involve directly electing the Deputy Mayor during the regular municipal election period. Across Niagara Region, a variety of selection methods are used. For instance, councillors in Grimsby agree to a six-month rotation schedule at the start of the term of Council. In St. Catharines, the Deputy Mayor is selected by council to serve a two-year

¹ The term "mayor" does not appear in the *Municipal Act* either, having been replaced by the generic label "head of council," although "mayor" is used in the *City of Toronto Act*.



term. Notably, the Deputy Mayor of St. Catharine's is compensated for the hours they spend fulfilling the role, based upon the Mayor's basic hourly rate, which is \$60.66 per hour. In Niagara-on-the-Lake, the Deputy Lord Mayor is filled by by-law by the Councillor who received the greatest number of votes in the election.

There is no definitive or indisputable advantage from employing one method or the other to select the Deputy Mayor. The examples listed below have some advantages, however. Determining the selection order at the outset of council may allow councillor to determine when they would be potentially taking on additional duties as Deputy Mayor and provide them with an opportunity to manage other elements of their personal and professional life. Selecting the councillor who receives the most votes would ensure that person has support among the community but may foist upon someone responsibilities they had not planned upon when they ran for election. Selecting one person from amongst council for a longer term than three months, as St. Catharine's and Grimsby do, would also ensure that someone would potentially be taking on additional responsibilities with some degree of enthusiasm. An elected Deputy Mayor would ensure the person filling the role has wide-spread community support. However, where elected Deputy Mayors are used in Ontario, that person also generally serves on an upper-tier council.

As mentioned, there is no "right way" to determine who should serve as Deputy Mayor. In Lincoln, where neither Councillors nor the Mayor are conceived as "full time" positions, an effective Deputy Mayor could better support the role of the Mayor, both procedurally, at council and committee meetings, and in the community. Our intention is to stimulate some discussion in Lincoln about whether to confirm the appointment method or to consider a modification, including making the Deputy Mayor an elected position. Doing so, however, would be in the scope of the Council Composition Review.

Regional Councillors: Lincoln has two representatives on Niagara Region Council. The first is the Mayor, who by virtue of being elected as Mayor of Lincoln also serves as a Regional Councillor. The second is a Regional Councillor elected at-large from Lincoln. Each Regional Councillor is paid \$40,355.50 by Niagara Region, with Standing Committee chairs receiving an additional \$2,000.00.

Niagara Regional Council has 32 members – one Chair, the 12 elected Mayors of Niagara's lower-tier municipalities and 19 elected representatives from the lower-tier municipalities. Across Niagara, those elected as Regional Councillors do not also serve on local council. Lincoln's procedural by-law (sec. 7.10), like others throughout the Region, provide the Regional Councillor the opportunity to report to city council, using language that the Regional Councillor "may present updates as to relevant business being conducted at Niagara Region", indicating that attendance and participation is not mandatory, required or expected.

Local Councillors: Lincoln Council currently has eight councillors (9 including the Mayor). Each councillor receives a yearly stipend of \$21,949.10, meaning that it would



be expected they would have some form of outside income (either pension or business/employment income). As a result, they are best considered “part-time” representatives – a description neither intended to be derogatory nor entirely representative of the hours or effort put into their position. As noted in Discussion Paper B, there is no standard or “appropriate” number of councillors, which means that the number of councilors can be changed.

Lincoln’s eight councilors are elected from four wards (two per ward) – a system that has been in place since the Town’s inception in 1970. Familiarity, however, is not a sound basis to keep this system in place. Given the size and diversity of the community, it is worthwhile to consider possible alternatives, including an at-large system or electing councilors (either full or part-time) in single-member wards. We explore each, below.

	Advantages	Disadvantages
At-Large Electoral System	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Representatives would ideally focus on the entire community, rather than just one part (a ward);• Those elected would require city-wide support to secure re-election, potentially making them more responsive to residents;• Residents would have multiple representatives they could access for service or advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The resources needed to run a competitive campaign would be substantially more than a ward election, potentially dissuading some from running;• Those elected could come from a single neighbourhood and lack familiarity with other parts of the community;• Smaller communities may be underrepresented on council;• Constituency requests may fall on one or few councillors and lines of accountability may be unclear for residents
Ward Electoral System	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Representatives are local and tied to specific geographies of the city;• Voters can hold their representatives directly accountable for their decisions or	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Representatives may be narrowly focused on their own wards, rather than city-wide priorities



	Advantages	Disadvantages
	<p>performance while in office</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lower campaign costs may encourage greater competition;• Consistent representation of communities across city	

Both at-large and ward systems have benefits and drawbacks. Where an at-large system promotes a city-wide focus, representatives may overlook certain communities within the city. Those elected in an at-large system may come from a single community (even, theoretically, the same neighbourhood). For instance, Lincoln has a sizable rural community. While this area is large in geographic size, it has a small population. In an at-large system, it is a possibility that every representative could come from the urbanized portion of the city. An at-large election is also most costly to contest, potentially limiting competition and entrenching certain well-resourced incumbents. Even with these disadvantages noted, if dissolving the wards to elect the councillors at-large is widely supported in the public consultations, the Consultant Team would share that information with Council along with the reasons why residents support it.

If a ward system is preferred, it is worth considering how councilors are elected in wards. Currently, each ward has two representatives. This has advantages, especially given that each councillor is “part time”. In this system, residents have two representatives and two outlets to express concerns, seek support or request information (in addition, of course, to the Town’s customer service department). However, it is possible that this may create a disproportionate workload for one of the two representatives and create confusion among members of the public when holding council to account. In a system with one councillor per ward, residents have a clear line of accountability. They would, however, not be able to access two members of council for ward concerns or requests for local information.



Topical Discussion Papers A to E

Discussion Papers will be available to residents, each addressing one of the topics to be considered in this review:

- Discussion Paper A – Lincoln's Electoral System
- Discussion Paper B – What is the Optimal Size for a Municipal Council?
- *Discussion Paper C – The Component Parts of Lincoln's Council*
- Discussion Paper D – Guiding Principles to Design Wards
- Discussion Paper E – Is a Ward Boundary and Council Composition Review Necessary?