

## Size of Council and Ward Structure

This section discusses three questions that are intertwined in such a way that it is difficult to separate them:

1. How many councillors should the Guelph City Council have?
2. How many councillors should be elected from each ward?
3. How many wards should the City be divided into?

The three questions are linked in such a way that when you answer any two of them, the third answer is determined.

How many councillors should the Guelph City Council have?

- The Ontario *Municipal Act* specifies that a municipality must have at least four elected councillors plus the Mayor for a minimum Council size of five. There is no maximum specified. Council has absolute authority to make this decision; Council's decision is not appealable to any provincial body.
- Beyond the specified minimum, there are no clear principles, standards or formulas to apply in determining the appropriate size of a municipal Council. The size of local Councils in Ontario varies, although within a relatively narrow range.
- Deciding on an appropriate number of councillors is a balancing act. A large number of councillors increases the ability of residents to have access to councillors, but it can slow down and complicate the decision-making process on the floor of Council when every councillor feels a need to weigh in on every discussion.
- Also, Councils need to be large enough to ensure that all the community's interests are represented on Council. A Council should be large enough to represent the diversity of the community in terms of its neighbourhoods, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and other factors.

Table 1 provides information about the number of councillors for all Ontario single-tier municipalities in the 100,000 - 200,000 population range. The table illustrates the above comments about there being no guiding principles that govern the number of councillors and wards. For example, the smallest municipality (Chatham-Kent) has the largest number of councillors.

Table 3  
 Number of Councillors Per Ward, Ontario Single-tier Municipalities, Population 100,000 to 200,000

Municipality	Number of Councillors	Number of Councillors per Ward
Sudbury	12	1
Barrie	10	1
Guelph	12	2
Kingston	12	1
Thunder Bay	12	1 plus 5 at large
Chatham–Kent	17	Varies from 2 to 6

- This information offers little guidance to Guelph but provides reassurance that the City currently falls in the middle of the range and if it increases or decreases the number of councillors slightly it would remain within that range.

How many councillors should be elected from each ward?

- The review of Council composition will consider whether councillors should continue to be elected in two-member wards or whether the electoral system should be modified to single-member wards, as in Barrie, Kingston and Sudbury, or to a system in which wards elect different numbers of councillors as in Chatham-Kent.
- Ever since the present ward system was established in 1990, Guelph has elected its twelve councillors in two-member wards. Two councillors per ward increases the size of council which assists in providing diversity in representation. Two councillors also provide some assurance that a councillor will be available when one councillor is unavailable. This system also provides a constituent with an alternative when one councillor is not sympathetic to the constituent's concerns.
- Two councillors per ward also increase the size of Council which could complicate and prolong debate. It also increases the size of wards which makes it more difficult for councillors to stay on top of issues across their entire ward. It can also lead to confusion when a constituent approaches both councillors, each of whom then approaches city staff.

- Table 3 indicates that four of the six single-tier municipalities in the 100,000-200,000 population range elect councillors in one-member wards and only Guelph uses a pure two-member system. It should be noted, however, that several other smaller single-tier municipalities (like Brantford, Orillia and Peterborough) elect councillors in two-member wards.
- A very small number of municipalities such as Chatham-Kent have wards of different sizes and elect varying numbers of members per ward. These arrangements are typically products of amalgamations and the system works well in those jurisdictions because it recognizes historical circumstances. This system would likely be seen as confusing or unfair in municipalities that did not have these unique historical circumstances.

How many wards should the City be divided into?

- Phase 2 will determine the exact size and shape to wards, but Phase 1 will determine the number of wards.
- When the total number of councillors and the number elected per ward have been determined, then the number of wards has also been indirectly determined. However, answering this question ahead of the number of councillors per ward first may be appropriate.
- Wards should be of a reasonable size. If they are small, residents will have easier access to their councillor, but that may result in a larger number of councillors. If they are too large it will be difficult for a councillor to provide proper representation because of the size and diversity of the large ward.