

COUNCIL COMPOSITION

BACKGROUND

Southwest Middlesex's existing council composition was established by Minister's Order through the municipal restructuring process. The council is made up of eight elected members, including two members which are elected at-large (Mayor and Deputy Mayor) and two ward representatives from each of the three wards.

Reviewing the composition of Southwest Middlesex council was included as an objective for this term of council in the most recent update to the municipality's strategic plan. The *Municipal Act, 2001* provides that a municipality can change its composition, subject to certain rules.

To make a change to the composition, the following rules require that a local municipality must have:

- At least five members, including one member whom shall be the head of council;
- Members must be elected in accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act*;
- The head of council must be elected by a general vote;
- Members other than the head of council, must be elected by a general vote or ward or by any combination of general vote or wards; and
- The representation of a local municipality on the council of an upper-tier municipality shall not be affected by the by-law of a local municipality under this section.

If council opts to make changes to its composition, it must do so by by-law and the by-law would not come into force until the new council is organized, either the first regular election following the passing of the by-law, or if a by-law is passed in the regular election year before voting day, it comes into effect after the second regular election following the passage of the by-law.

ANALYSIS

The role of council is defined by legislation, as is the role of the head of council, but the role of the individual councillor is not. The general understanding of the role of the individual councillor is to serve in the following ways:

- As a public representative,
- As a policy-maker, and
- In a stewardship role.

As a representative for the public, councillors consider the multi-faceted views of the public that they represent, while also being aware of the issue for the municipal corporation in general. The policy-making role requires working together with other councillors and as a whole identifying the issues, reaching an agreement on the goals, providing direction to staff to research an issue and then considering the information that staff provides, working with fellow council members to make a decision on the best course of action, and directing staff to implement the policy and then work with staff to

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evaluate the policy. The stewardship role is to ensure that the municipal corporation's financial and administrative (human) resources are being used efficiently and effectively.

Council composition reviews generally include reviews of the size of council and/or the ward structure. If council opts to consider changing either the size of council, ward vs. at-large representation, or the number of councilors representing each ward, or the number of wards, it may wish to consider public input to allow for feedback from electors.

If council wishes to make a change to council composition prior to the 2018 term of council a by-law must be passed prior to the end of 2017. Such a change would then see the 2018 municipal election carried out as if the composition changes were in place.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the report on council composition be received for information.