

Rationale for decision of 10 Councillors + a mayor

1) Committee & Council debate centred around the following points of debate regarding a reduction in Council size:

Pros:

- Addresses public perception that there are too many councillors in Lunenburg county
- Reducing the size of council would likely provide the opportunity to streamline decision-making:
 - Research suggests that smaller groups can more effectively make decisions
 - the need for sub and standing committees would be reduced
- marginal reduction in costs due to fewer councillor salaries, expenses & staff support to Council members
- May improve ability of council to work regionally

Cons:

- Larger council provides greater opportunity for diversity of views of councillors (larger pool of backgrounds, views, etc)
- Larger council sizes generally correlate with smaller campaigns, minimizing financial barriers to winning office
- Larger council size can provide greater representation of local community concerns at the council table

2) Once survey results were available the key points of the debate were as follows

- Council heard clearly from the survey that the majority of respondents wished to see a reduction in the size of Council.
- The Boundary review recommended 8 Councillors + a mayor, based on the survey results and their research.
- The importance of adopting the input from the public.
- Council was concerned that 8 is too drastic of a change – the difference in percentage for 8 vs 10 councillors was extremely close.
- A reduction from 12 to 8 councillors represents a loss of 1/3 of all councillors, this is a significant change from the last boundary review where public input was to keep council size the same
- MODL has a large geographic area & service to residents from Councillors would decrease
- Councillor Ernst also expressed concern that Council had perhaps rushed the decision on the size of council, moved to reconsider the decision.
 - Council approved the reconsideration and re-debated the size of Council on Oct 14th, 2014.
 - The result of that debate was to uphold the decision to go with 10 councillors.

Q&As

Why didn't Council follow the results of the survey, which showed 8+ a mayor as the most popular response?

- A Majority (over 70%) responded that they wished to see a reduction in the # of Councillors:
 - 6 Councillors – 21.4%;
 - 8 Councillors – 26.06%
 - 10 Councillors – 25.48%
 - 12 Councillors – 21.57%

- The results of the survey were a very important factor in council's decision, but it wasn't the only one:
 - Council weighed
 - Public input via the survey
 - Staff reports regarding factors to consider when determining the size of Council
 - recent decisions of the URB to overrule municipal submissions (reducing Councils)
 - Boundary Review Committee's recommendation (of 8 councillors + a Mayor)
 - Reports such as One NS calling for local government reform and rationalization

In an election whichever candidate gets the most votes wins, even if they do not have the majority of votes, why didn't council choose the most popular option?

- Nature of our municipal government is representative:
 - we elect representatives to make decisions on our behalf
 - we absolutely expect them to be responsive to resident's concerns
 - we expect them to carefully balance information and advice coming from a wide range of sources, including:
 - the public,
 - staff,
 - legal advice,
 - their own experience & knowledge
 - The survey was one means for councillors to gauge public opinion on this issue, but we expect them to make up their own mind based on public input as well as all other relevant sources of information.

Residents did not have enough information on what factors should be considered when setting the size of council, doesn't this mean that the survey responses are not valid?

- Staff and Council tried to balance the need to provide information to residents with the limited time residents have to review complex information and provide an informed response.
- Information was presented to the boundary review committee, at Council meetings, and at the public information sessions on factors that play can play into the number of councillors needed to represent a municipality.
- In hindsight, more information on factors to consider could have been included in the cover letter attached to the survey. MODL will bear these comments in mind when preparing future public consultation on this and other topics.
- While there could have been some more information circulated with the survey, over 2000 residents responded to the survey and did not question the amount of information available. *Council has to balance concerns over the survey design and information with the need to respect the opinions of the residents who duly submitted their surveys.*