

**COUNCIL MEETING**  
**OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK**

**REPORT CLK-2025-01**  
**January 14, 2025**

**SUBJECT:           Response to Notice of Motion – Options to Reduce  
Council Size to Lessen Financial Impact on Taxpayer**

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**APPROVING:       Rob Axiak, Chief Administrative Officer**

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WELLAND choose Option #\_\_\_\_; and further

THAT Welland City Council subsequently directs staff to conduct a ward boundary review only if a change in the number of Council members is approved.

**RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN:**

This recommendation is aligned to Council’s strategic priority of ensuring “**Liveability**” by creating a sense of belonging while enhancing mobility by improving access to recreation and community events, ensuring adequate housing options, encouraging job growth, and improving ways to efficiently move people throughout the city.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

This report responds to Welland City Council's directive to explore options for reducing council size to lessen the cost to the taxpayer. Council subsequently directed staff to initiative public engagement on this topic to validate and support council decision making. The public engagement results strongly support the reduction of Council. Should Council choose a reduction, the change in the number of members would occur as part of the 2026 municipal election and the financial savings realized as part of the 2027 budget.

**BACKGROUND:**

This report fulfills the Notice of Motion (NOM) passed by Welland City Council on April 9, 2024, which is as follows:

*“THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WELLAND directs staff to provide council with options on a reduced council size, with the sole objective to reduce the cost on to the taxpayer.”*

On September 03, 2024, Council further directed staff to complete public engagement on this topic to aid in decision-making.

## **DISCUSSION:**

### **Public Engagement Overview and Survey Results**

The following provides a summary of the results from the public engagement survey conducted through the Engage Welland platform between October 16 and November 20, 2024. The survey sought to collect community feedback on council composition and representation. Below is a snapshot of the survey results, and the summary extracted from Engage Welland is attached as Appendix I.

### **Survey Participation and Engagement Metrics - Total Visits: 909**

**Respondent Demographics:** Participants were asked to identify their capacity to respond to the survey. The breakdown of responses is as follows:

- **Resident (homeowner): 86.6% (264 respondents)**
- Resident (renter): 9.5% (29 respondents)
- Business Owner: 3.3% (10 respondents)
- Non-profit Organization Representative: 0.3% (1 respondent)
- Other: 0.3% (1 respondent)

### **Preferred Council Composition:**

- **5-7 members: 51.3% (156 respondents)**
- 8-10 members: 28.9% (88 respondents)
- 11-13 members: 16.8% (51 respondents)
- More than 13 members: 3.0% (9 respondents)

### **Perception of Current Representation:**

- Very well: 6.2% (19 respondents)
- Well: 16.4% (50 respondents)
- **Average: 37.4% (114 respondents)**
- Poorly: 29.2% (89 respondents)
- Very poorly: 10.8% (33 respondents)

### **Key Criteria for Determining Council Size:**

- **Population size: 71.5% (218 respondents)**
- Geographic area: 50.8% (155 respondents)

- Representation of diverse voices (age, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic, etc.): 32.5% (99 respondents)
- Economic factors (businesses, industries, etc.): 26.9% (82 respondents)
- Other: 7.9% (24 respondents)

**Future Growth Impacts on Council Size:**

- **Decrease: 52.1% (159 respondents)**
- Keep the current number: 30.2% (92 respondents)
- Increase: 11.1% (34 respondents)
- Unsure: 6.6% (20 respondents)

**Survey Outcome:**

**The survey results strongly support the reduction of members of Council to SIX (6) Councillors plus the Mayor (1), for a total of SEVEN (7) elected officials.**

**OPTIONS:**

Through the NOM cited in this report, council had directed staff to provide recommendations for reducing the size of council with a primary focus on lessening the financial impact on the taxpayers of Welland. With this in mind, various configurations were examined and shown below, for Council’s consideration when choosing an option:

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 Part Time Councillors</li> <li>• 1 Full Time Mayor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 Part Time Councillors</li> <li>• 1 Full Time Mayor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8 Part Time Councillors</li> <li>• 1 Full Time Mayor</li> </ul>
<b><u>5</u> Elected Officials</b>	<b><u>7</u> Elected Officials</b>	<b><u>9</u> Elected Officials</b>

Option 2 (above) would be the option most aligned with both the original NOM and the results of the public engagement survey. In addition, Option 2 would only require a basic update / review to the current ward boundary structure as the current six wards would remain with only minor modifications based on the number of residents in each ward, inclusive of growth projections.

**Timing:**

As outlined in the Municipal Act, sections 217(1) and 222(8), the deadline for a municipal council to approve a by-law changing the ward structure and/or the council composition is December 31, 2025. Meeting this deadline is essential for these changes to be effective for the upcoming municipal election. Moreover, step one as noted in this report is to gain approval by council to reduce the

composition of council to 7, allowing enough time to complete a ward boundary review this Fall before the December 31, 2025, deadline.

**FINANCIAL:**

Based on the 2024 Budget, the total financial expense of a Council of 13 members, including remuneration, professional development, milage, allowances, pension, benefits, health tax, and cell phone, equate to **\$631,848.00**.

The options shown below is based on the 2024 Mayor and Council Budget for Remuneration and Expenses.

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Mayor: \$123,348 4 Councillors: \$169,500 <b>Total: \$292,848</b>	Mayor: \$123,348 6 Councillors: \$254,250 <b>Total: \$377,598</b>	Mayor: \$123,348 8 Councillors: \$339,000 <b>Total: \$462,348</b>
Savings: <b>\$339,000</b>	Savings: <b>\$254,250</b>	Savings: <b>\$169,500</b>
Tax Savings Impact: <b>0.69%</b>	Tax Savings Impact: <b>0.52%</b>	Tax Savings Impact: <b>0.34%</b>

**ATTACHMENT:**

Appendix I – Project Report – Engage Welland – Council Composition