Loyalist Township Council Composition and Ward Boundary Review 2024-25

Backgrounder

Discussion Paper C: The Component Parts of the Loyalist Township Council

Some components of Loyalist Township Council are outside the control of the municipality: there must be a "head of council" elected by general vote and an additional member of the municipal Council (currently the deputy mayor) who represents the Township on the Lennox and Addington County Council. The position of mayor and the way that person is elected are not open to modification in this review; however, the remainder of the Council can be reconstituted, should the community and Council see some value in changing the status quo.

The Deputy Mayor: It is interesting to note that there is actually no specific reference in the Ontario *Municipal Act, 2001* to the office of deputy mayor[1] although a position is formally included in many County arrangements and there are varying governance and electoral practices related to identifying the individual who fulfills the office of deputy mayor.

Given that someone is required to play this role on the Lennox and Addington County Council, a fundamental question for this review is "who should elect the deputy mayor?" There are two basic approaches. The position can be open to any qualified elector who files a nomination paper to run specifically for the office and the position is filled on the basis of the votes cast on a separate ballot in a "general vote" (at-large) system. This is a common method at present across Ontario and is the practice in Loyalist Township. In this format, the office of deputy mayor is the second component of the composition of Loyalist Township Council (after the "head of council") and is one of the seven designated seats on Council.

In some other cases across Ontario, however, the position is determined by a majority vote of the elected members of council in a secret ballot and the candidate pool for the office is limited to the people who have already been elected to council.[2] In this indirect format, the office of deputy mayor can be considered a subcategory of council

[1] The term "mayor" does not appear in the *Municipal Act* either, having been replaced by the generic label "head of council," although "mayor" is used in the *City of Toronto Act*.

[2] In many cases, such as the Township of Perth South, the Municipality of North Grenville, and Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, the elected councillor who receives the most votes in a general vote system for all members of council serves as deputy mayor.

and is not counted separately in the composition of council. It should be noted that the Consultant Team has worked with municipalities that have switched from one method to the other as part of a council composition review, some moving from direct election to indirect and others vice versa.

Both alternatives are open to Loyalist Township: that is, to continue with a separate position or to adopt the indirect model. At present, although the deputy mayor is chosen by direct election in a general vote (at-large) system and holds a seat on the Lennox and Addington County Council, all other roles deputy mayors are expected to play are entirely subject to local arrangements and can include, for example, chairing certain committee meetings or performing various duties in the absence of, or on behalf of, the mayor.

Our research suggests contrasting considerations about the role of deputy mayor. Those who support the election of a deputy mayor by general vote frame their assessment around the deputy mayor's role on a county council and the importance of that role to the municipality. The perspectives include the opinion that the deputy mayor should be elected at-large to represent the whole municipality and should be interested in serving the whole municipality, and the County role is important enough that the voters should have a say, not just the people on council. Another perspective is that the deputy mayor's duties are not viewed as onerous and, therefore, changing to election by council would be appropriate since it is more ceremonial and does not involve running the business of the municipality like the mayor, and there is no other real role for the deputy mayor so an appointed deputy mayor would be better.

As implied above, there is no definitive or indisputable advantage from employing one method or the other to select the deputy mayor. Our intention here is to stimulate some discussion in Loyalist Township about whether to confirm the direct election method, thereby leaving five further places to fill, or to consider a modification that would make the deputy mayor position an auxiliary role played by one of the councillors.

Ward Councillors:[1] The third component of Loyalist Township's Council is the councillors themselves, currently five in number. As noted in Discussion Paper B, there is no standard or "appropriate" number of councillors, which means that the number of councillors can be changed, possibly in light of decisions made to modify the method of election for, or to eliminate, the office of the deputy mayor. The present number is the result of a Provincial decision made at amalgamation to establish a ward configuration tied to the relative populations of the three pre-amalgamation municipalities. A change

[1] The term "ward councillor" is used here since that is the present designation. Provincial legislation authorizes a council to "dissolve" the wards and that possibility is considered in Discussion Paper D.

to some other number is possible and could be considered as part of the composition configuration.

Topical Discussion Papers A to F

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

- Discussion Paper A – The Loyalist Electoral System
- Discussion Paper B – What is the Optimal Size for a Municipal Council?
- Discussion Paper C – The Component Parts of the Loyalist Township Council
- Discussion Paper D – The Method of Election for Councillors
- Discussion Paper E – Guiding Principles to Design Wards
- Discussion Paper F – Is a Ward Boundary Review Necessary?