

**Governance & District Boundary Review Committee**  
**May 19, 2010**

**TO:** Mayor Kelly and members of the Governance and District Boundary Review Committee

**SUBMITTED BY:**   
Cathy Mellett, Acting Municipal Clerk/Manager

**DATE:** May 14, 2010

**SUBJECT:** Phase One Consultation on Governance and Boundary Review

**SUPPLEMENTARY  
INFORMATION REPORT**

**ORIGIN**

Request from the Committee for the number of persons supporting a smaller regional council from the various public consultations undertaken between January and March of this year.

**BACKGROUND**

The public consultations are summarized as follows:

- seven public meetings were held in conjunction with community council meetings.
- a comprehensive citizen's survey was conducted on behalf of the Municipality by Thinkwell Research.
- an on-line survey was placed on the Municipality's web site.
- written submissions were solicited over the Municipality's web site.

## DISCUSSION

The Thinkwell Citizen survey was a random survey that can be considered to have statistical validity in reflecting the views of the Municipality's population. With a 10.3% completion rate (2,240 surveys completed), the responses are statistically verifiable within a margin of 2.4%, 19 times out of 20.

The opinions provided through the other forums simply represent the views of those that participated. One (1) of the written submissions represented an organization (Chamber of Commerce).

The results are summarized as follows:

### **Thinkwell Citizen Survey**

A number of questions regarding governance were asked of the residents who responded to HRM's Thinkwell Citizen Survey. The most specific question related to size of Council was Q. 11 which stated: *Regional Council currently consists of the Mayor (elected at large) and 23 councillors each representing a district of HRM, who meet weekly as Regional Council. Councillors also meet monthly in six (6) Community Councils to consider local and community issues. Do you feel adequately represented by Council under the current Council and Community Council structure?*

Of the 2,240 citizens who responded to this survey question fifty-two percent (52.5% or 1,165 people) responded that Yes they did feel adequately represented; 18.5% (403) responded that No they did not feel adequately represented; and 29% responded that they did not know or did not have an opinion.

Of the 18.5% (403) who responded that No, they did not feel adequately represented, a significant number (40% or 162 people) felt the reason was the size of Council. The remaining 60% (241) provided other reasons such as more transparency, focussing on important issues, more community input and involvement, better rural/urban representation or other specific issues of concern.

The following table outlines the submissions from the web survey, written submissions and the seven (7) public meetings:

Source	Favour Smaller Council		Favour Status Quo /Larger Council	
	Number*	% of total	Number *	% of total
Web Survey Total = 47	34	73%	Status quo 9 Larger 3	20% 7%
Public Meetings 72 speakers approx 400 attended the public meetings	15	21%	Status quo 55 Larger 2	76% 3%
Written Submissions	12	63%	Status quo 5 Larger 2	26% 11%

*\* numbers and percentages may not match exactly due to non-responses/ or no opinions expressed*

Three written submissions were received subsequent to the completion of the phase 1 consultation. All three (3) submissions have favoured a smaller Council.

### **BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

Research conducted regarding models of constituent support based on size of district and population indicate that:

A larger Council, would result in increased costs for salary, equipment, support staff, capital and district funds, as well as renovation to accommodate a larger number of Councillors in City Hall.

A smaller Council might result in some modest savings. However, there may be no significant cost savings accrued due to anticipated increases in support requirements. Responses from the Councillors survey, the Thinkwell Citizen Survey, as well as a number of presenters pointed out that residents expect to be able to have their issues addressed by their Councillor. With larger districts Councillors could require additional support to meet residents' expectations. This would depend on the extent of the reduction in Council size as well as citizen expectations.

Retention of Council at the current size would have no significant cost impact. Modest efficiencies may be achieved through alignment of Community Councils.

**FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN**

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

**ATTACHMENTS**

None

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/commcoun/cc.html> then choose the appropriate Community Council and meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

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