

## Municipal Boundary Review

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Since its creation in 1890, the Town of Yarmouth Council has been comprised of six (6) councillors and a mayor. It was the first Town in Nova Scotia, and one of the first in Canada, to adopt a “one ward” system.

*The first real issue to be debated concerned the “one” ward system within the Town. This issue was first raised at a Town Council meeting on October 14<sup>th</sup>, 1890. The one ward system meant that in any year, the entire electorate voted for three or more councillors. The uniqueness of this system was the subject of an article which appeared in the Telegram, January 23, 1891.*

*The prevailing system of having incorporated towns divided into wards is causing considerable interest in Ontario, and strong reasons are set forth against it. Yarmouth has been the first incorporated town in this province to dispense with the ward system and no good reason can be assigned in favor of cutting up into wards... An article in the Toronto Week of the 9<sup>th</sup> inst. shows the direction of public sentiment on the question in that province after long experience it says: -*

*It is noteworthy that in the discussions which have been rife of late touching civic affairs, the press and the people, of all shards of politics have been in unusual accordance on one point. All unite in condemning the ward system... The ward politician, the civic councillor who regards it as his special duty to his constituents to secure the largest possible appropriations of city funds within the special ward he represents is, it is agreed, the natural outcome of this system.*

*This “one ward” system, unique to Yarmouth in Nova Scotia, was meant to facilitate the best interests of the whole town by eliminating the competition of interests which was evident in the municipal system when the urban needs were placed at the mercy of the rural majority. As pointed out in the article, the intent of this system was to counteract the special treatment of one ward over another which was the result of a councillor’s vested interest in his own ward. <sup>1</sup>*

There was a brief 10-year period where wards were used, starting in 1975. Since abolishing the ward system in 1985, there has been no major feedback to return to wards. Of the 26 Towns in Nova Scotia, only 3 elect in wards today.

The population for the Town of Yarmouth based on the 2021 census is 6829, up since the first time since 1991. Based on this data, the ratio of councillors to citizens is one councillor for every 1138 citizens. Shown in Figure 1<sup>2</sup> below is the Town’s ranking in comparison to other towns with 6 councillors.

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<sup>1</sup> Margaret J. Dixon, “A very go-ahead little town”: Business Interest, State Formation and Community in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, 1890-1894 (master’s thesis, Carleton University, 2000), 59-60.

<sup>2</sup> All population figures from 2021 Statistics Canada Census

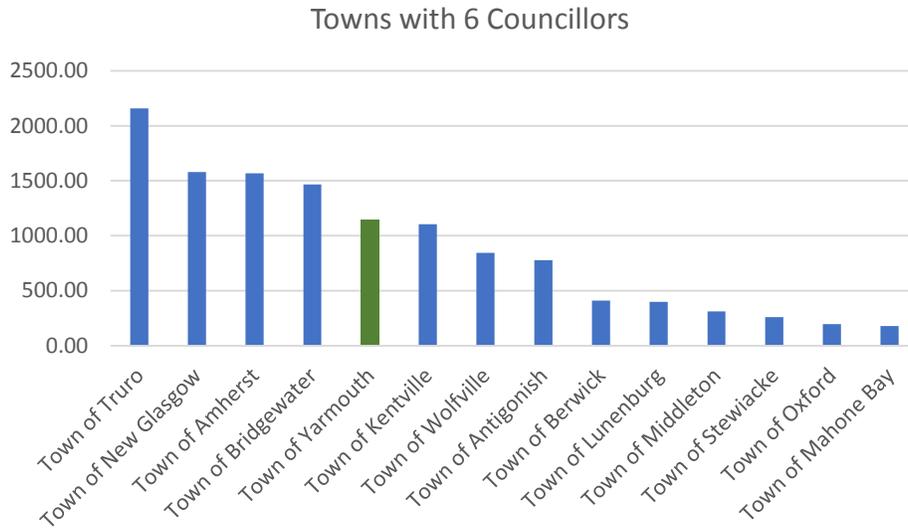


Figure 1. Population for each councillor in towns with six councillors plus Mayor.

If the Town of Yarmouth were to reduce the number of councillors to 4, the councillor to citizen ratio would be one councillor for every 1707 citizens, which is 70% greater than the next highest ratio as seen in Figure 2.

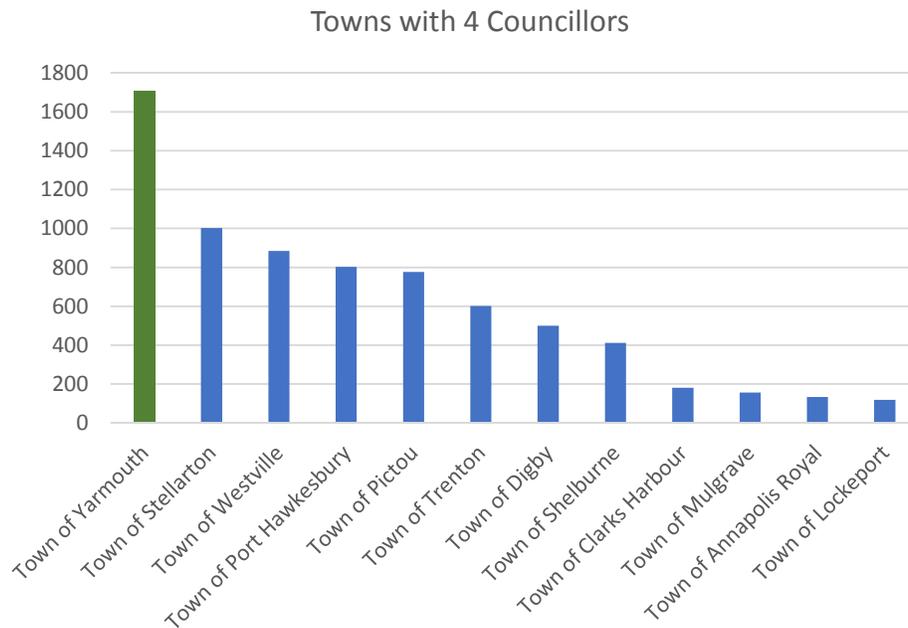


Figure 2. Population for each councillor in towns with four councillors plus Mayor.

The above information was available online and in person for feedback. The survey was made available from July 15<sup>th</sup> to August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022 and was advertised in the newspaper and across all social media platforms.

Of the 171 responses, 103 indicated that they were a Town of Yarmouth resident. The Town residents indicated that 66% (68 votes) preferred a six person council, plus a mayor, while 34% (35 votes) favored a four person council, plus a mayor.

### Number of Councillors



74% (76 votes) preferred electing at large, while 26% (27 votes) favored wards.

### Type of Electing



88% (91 votes) voted in the last election, while 8% (8 votes) did not vote, and 4% (4 votes) preferred not to say.

## Voted in Last Election



■ Yes ■ No ■ Prefer not to say

2 public participation meetings were held on October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022. No member of the public attended either meeting.

It is important to note that Council is involved in over 20 committees and boards. This level of commitment and representation requires a significant amount of time from each council member. When this commitment is paired with invitations to events within the community, it is often a challenge to ensure there is council representation each time it is needed/requested. With fewer councillors, this would substantially increase the demand on each individual councillor.

Based upon the data above, and feedback from the public, it is recommended that the Town of Yarmouth apply to confirm the number of councillors at six, plus a mayor, all elected at large.