

WARD BOUNDARY COMMISSION REPORT TO COUNCIL

ISC: UNRESTRICTED

WBC2014-0772

2014 October 6

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WARD BOUNDARY COMMISSION REPORT ON NUMBER OF COUNCILLORS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Ward Boundary Commission was appointed by Council, as an independent body, to determine the appropriate number of Councillors on Calgary City Council at the 2017 General Election. The Commission Report is Attachment 1.

ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION(S)

The Ward Boundary Commission recommends that Council:

1. Not increase the number of wards or Councillors at this time;
2. Address the number of Councillors following the 2021 General Election which should include an assessment of the implementation of further recommendations listed below;
3. Adopt the concept of Ward Offices in principle and direct the City Manager to explore the idea of establishing local Council offices in existing city or other community facilities in the respective wards to function as the face of City Hall for local issues, in accordance with this report, and report back to Council no later than 2015 June with a financial analysis and proposed operational measures;
4. Direct the City Manager to investigate the feasibility of co-locating some city services with Ward Offices to include the costs, nature of the services being established and the customer service benefits and report to Council through the SPC on Community and Protective Services no later than 2016 June;
5. Establish, at the 2014 October 20 Organizational Meeting, a Task Force of 5 Members of Council, with Administrative support, on Council Effectiveness. This Task Force responsible for recommendations on all aspects of Council and Councillor effectiveness, including, but not necessarily limited to;
 - a. Analysis of current Council organizational innovation Initiatives,
 - b. Developing Council Customer service improvement initiatives,
 - c. Guidelines for strategic and effective operation of a Councillor's office, and
 - d. Researching and recommending for implementation best practices from other Municipalities;
6. Direct the Coordinating Committee of the Councillors' Office to consider development of a comprehensive online communication strategy for the Office which includes all potential methods of communication to reduce the workload on individual Ward staff and Councillors; and
7. Establish, at the 2014 October 20 Organizational Meeting, a Task Force (Committee on Committees) to examine the committees to which Council appoints Members and report back to Council through LGTF no later than June 2015 with implementation on adopted recommendations at the Organizational Meeting in 2015 October.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION / POLICY

At the 2014 March 10 Combined Meeting of Council, Council adopted NM2014-10, Attachment 2, as follows:

“That Council

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Direct;

1. c. The General Managers to canvass all their Business Units with regard to costs that would be incurred over the 2015-2018 business/budget cycle if the number of wards were changed and provide to the CFO for a report to Council, through PFC, no later than 2014 October 06, and
2. Direct the duly appointed Ward Boundary Commission;
 - a. Consult with the two Calgary School Boards with regard to the number of wards and the impacts of changes, and
 - b. Report to Council no later than 2014 October 06 with recommendations on the appropriate number of wards for the City 2017 General Election of Council;”

At the 2014 June 23 Regular Meeting of Council, Council adopted PFC2014-0546 as follows
“That Council:

1. Appoint the following three Electors as members of the Ward Boundary Commission; such appointments to be reviewed at the 2014 October 20 Organizational Meeting of Council, per Report NM2014-10 adopted at the 2014 March 10 Combined Meeting of Council:
 - Tim Creelman, Elector
 - Chris Nelson, Elector
 - Al Duerr, Elector and Former Member of Calgary City Council;”

BACKGROUND

This is the first independent Commission established by Council to examine the issue of the number of councillors and whether this should be increased for the 2017 general election. The current number of Councillors, fourteen, went into effect with the 1977 general election. The Ward Boundary Commission held its first Meeting on 2014 July 02, to determine the best method to approach the task.

In accordance with Section 143(2) of the Municipal Government Act (MGA), below, Council must consist of an odd number of elected officials. This means that increases in the number of wards must be in increments of 2, i.e. 2, 4 or 6, etc.

“143(2) The council of a city or town consists of 7 councillors unless the council passes a bylaw specifying a higher or lower odd number.”

Under Sections 148(2) to (5) of the MGA, Attachment 1, Council has the authority to determine the number of elected persons on Council and the manner in which they represent residents, e.g. at-large, by wards, number per ward, etc.

INVESTIGATION: ALTERNATIVES AND ANALYSIS

The Commission followed the following steps in reaching the recommendations:

1. Review of the research conducted by the Returning Officer and Office of the Councillors into other large size cities in North America;

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2. Scheduled and held four meetings with Members of Council to obtain input. All but two Members of Council were able to attend one of the meetings;
3. Sent a survey to Members of Council to obtain more detail on various issues that were raised. Seven Councillors returned surveys;
4. Met with the Trustees of both the Calgary Board of Education and Calgary Roman Catholic Separate School District No. 1; and
5. As a result of many comments on workload from Councillors, background research was conducted into when Council had recently examined the membership of Aldermen/Councillors on various internal and external committees. This was done through the Committee on Committees in 1990/1991; through a sub-committee of Council's Corporate Effectiveness Special Committee in conjunction with corporate organizational changes in 1998/2000; and again in 2002/2003 with a Report from TkMC on Legislative Governance Review.

Stakeholder Engagement, Research and Communication Strategic Alignment

The recommendations align with two of Council's priorities:

1. A city of inspiring neighbourhoods. Establishment of ward offices within the ward will contribute to Calgarians opportunity to participate in the city; and
2. A well run city. Recommendations 4, 5, and 6 all contribute to responsive excellent services.

Social, Environmental, Economic (External)

These are discussed in Ward Boundary Commission Report, Attachment 1.

Financial Capacity

Current and Future Operating Budget:

As directed by Council, the Chief Financial Officer surveyed all Departments on potential costs that would be incurred if the number of councillors were increased by 2, 4 or 6. The results of this survey are found at Attachment 3.

Current and Future Capital Budget:

See above.

Risk Assessment

There are no risks to the Corporation of The City of Calgary.

REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION(S):

The reasons for the recommendations from the Ward Boundary Commission are outlined and discussed in the attached report, Attachment 1.

ATTACHMENT(S)

Attachment 1 - Ward Boundary Commission Report

Attachment 2 - NOM2014-10

Attachment 3 - CFO's Report on cost to The Corporation from Increasing Number of Councillors

Ward Boundary Commission Report

Mandate

Pursuant to the 2014 March 10 Meeting of Council, NM 2014-10, the Ward Boundary Commission was appointed and directed to look at the composition of Council of the City of Calgary and recommend to Council whether the number of wards should be increased with a corresponding rise in the number of Councillors representing residents. The Commission recommendations are to be forwarded for Council's consideration by 2014 October 06 to enable potential and resulting changes to be implemented in time for the next civic election in 2017 October.

The number of Councillors on Council for the City of Calgary is governed by Section 148 of the Municipal Government Act as follows:

"Division of municipality into wards

148(1) Unless otherwise provided for in a bylaw under this section, when a municipality is divided into wards,

- (a) only an elector who is resident in the ward may vote for a councillor in that ward, and
- (b) councillors are elected for each ward.

(2) A council may by bylaw

- (a) divide the municipality into wards and establish their boundaries,
- (b) in the case of wards established for a municipal district or a specialized municipality, change the number of wards and their boundaries,
- (c) give each ward established or changed a name or number, or both,
- (d) state the number of councillors to be elected for each ward established or changed, and
- (e) in the case of any municipality, including a municipal district or specialized municipality, eliminate the wards.

(3) A council may by bylaw provide for councillors that

- (a) are in addition to the councillors elected for each ward,
- (b) are elected by a vote of the electors of the whole municipality, and
- (c) are councillors for the whole municipality, not a ward.

(4) A council may by bylaw provide that all councillors

- (a) are nominated by ward,
- (b) are elected by a vote of the electors of the whole municipality, and
- (c) are councillors for the whole municipality, not a ward.

- (5) A council may by bylaw provide that all councillors
- (a) are nominated by ward,
 - (b) are elected by a vote of the electors of the whole municipality, and
 - (c) are councillors for the ward in which they were nominated.”

Process

To aid the Commission in accomplishing its mandate, a thorough investigation into the number of elected representatives and other relevant information in jurisdictions across Canada and the United States was undertaken by Administration to ascertain if there was a relevant and consistent formula or ratio in terms of resident representation based upon population and civic government responsibilities in those various jurisdictions.

Four separate meetings were held at City Hall to allow Councillors to provide their views on potential change in the number of elected officials on Council and to engage in a general discussion of the issue.

An online survey was also sent to all Councillors to gauge their views on workload, division of duties and whether they believe it necessary to change the number of wards at the time of the next municipal general election.

The Commission met with City Manager Jeff Fielding to discuss the potential issues a change in the number of Councillors might entail for the continued smooth and consistent running of the City of Calgary along with any structural changes and costs associated with having more Councillors.

The Commission met separately with Board of Trustees for both the Calgary Board of Education and the Calgary Roman Catholic Separate School District No. 1 to discover what effects a change in the number of wards would have on these two entities in consideration that both are linked electorally through the ward boundary system and joint election agreements under the Local Authorities Election Act. The question was the impact of additional wards might have on the number of elected trustees.

Framing the Issue

A. Local Government as the Embodiment of Democracy

Ultimately the issue of proper representation is the ability of Members of Council to effectively listen to and effect necessary change on behalf of not only their ward residents but also for the entire population of Calgary. Does the increasing number of people being represented by each Councillor mean a weakening of democracy? Is there a limit to the number of people a Councillor can effectively represent?

B. Fair and Equitable Workload for Councillors

Is there a point at which the number of residents an individual Councillor can be expected to represent becomes too great a burden on that individual's own well being? If the work becomes too exhausting because of ward population numbers relentlessly increasing will that in turn lead to many people, who would otherwise wish to stand for future office, declining such an opportunity because the job is far too demanding and punishing to allow any type of reasonable private life?

C. Calgary's Booming Population

Both issues, *A* and *B* above, have been brought into much sharper focus by the seemingly relentless increase in the population of the city. The latest census figures released this summer show that Calgary's total population in April 2014 stood at 1,195,194. That is an increase of 38,508 residents over one year. This annual growth rate of 3.3% is similar to the year previous and, if economic and employment projections are to be believed, there is little to suggest that trend will reverse in the near future. Alberta and Calgary have always experienced some degree of boom and bust but the long-term trend for decades has seen the city's population rising faster than the national average.

Such numbers would indicate that by the next municipal election in October 2017 the population of Calgary may surpass 1,300,000 people. If the current system of 14 wards in the city remains in place, such numbers would mean the average Councillor would be responsible for well over 90,000 residents. This projected population is almost three times Calgary's population of 450,000 in 1976, when the number of Councillors was last increased to the current 14. However, it must also be noted at that time the role was looked upon as part-time with much lower compensation and significantly fewer office and administrative resources.

D. Duties of Council

The duties of Councillors are determined by Section 153 of the Municipal Government Act as follows:

“Councillors have the following duties:

- (a) to consider the welfare and interests of the municipality as a whole and to bring to council’s attention anything that would promote the welfare or interests of the municipality;
- (b) to participate generally in developing and evaluating the policies and programs of the municipality;
- (c) to participate in council meetings and council committee meetings and meetings of other bodies to which they are appointed by the council;
- (d) to obtain information about the operation or administration of the municipality from the chief administrative officer or a person designated by the chief administrative officer;
- (e) to keep in confidence matters discussed in private at a council or council committee meeting until discussed at a meeting held in public;
- (f) to perform any other duty or function imposed on councillors by this or any other enactment or by the council.”

In layman’s terms, this means that under (a) to (f) Councillors are required to act essentially as the Board of Directors of the municipality which in Calgary’s case is a very large multi-billion dollar corporation. Their fiduciary role in promoting the best interests of the municipality is complicated by the obligation to be representatives on Council committees and outside committees, which not only requires a considerable time commitment, but introduces additional governance complexities.

Beyond this legislated responsibility which has a focus on the best interests of the municipality, operating under a ward system creates expectations that Councillors will represent the interests of the ward, and by extension the electorate. This introduces further complexity for Councillors, in that from time to time there may be a conflict between their legislated obligations to the municipality as a whole and the perceived best interests of a community in a specific ward.

There has further developed over time a strong expectation that Councillors will be directly engaged in answering questions and directly addressing resident

complaints in their ward. This expectation is by no means consistent across communities in Calgary, but it can add considerable time to an already strained workload for Councillors.

E. Distribution of Workload

How is the committee work distributed amongst Councillors? Is it evenly distributed, or do some Councillors carry a disproportionate burden? What participation on outside committees or boards could be constituted as a 'requirement' of Council versus a 'desire' of Council? Do some Councillors sit on more outside boards than their fellows? Do those Councillors representing more of a suburban ward have a different workload from those based more in the inner city? Do wards experiencing more new development or redevelopment necessitate more time being spent by the Councillor responsible?

F. Prioritization

Councillors' responsibilities can be largely broken into two large and separate categories – the legislated strategic planning and policy making undertaken for the municipality as a whole in the ongoing delivery of good governance, and representing ward interests through dealing with the issues and complaints raised by their ward constituents. The first of those duties involves committee work and Council decision-making that is much more regulated in terms of attendance and time spent. The second area allows Councillors more latitude in determining exactly what he or she is going to get involved in and to what depth and extent. The priority given to these separate areas is a decision made by individual Councillors.

G. Impact of Social Media

The increasing use of social media is undoubtedly another area which has changed the work of Councillors rather drastically in recent years. Where once issues were raised via letters or phone calls, they are now raised 24 hours a day through Facebook, Twitter, e-mail and a multitude of other developing social media networks and online tools. Residents now ask questions in real time and often expect answers as quickly from their representative. Social media, as a communication tool, is only going to increase in usage. How does this affect a Councillor's workload and what steps can be used to not just try to respond but to harness and deal with this cultural shift in information sharing?

H. Councillors At-Large

City Councillors are currently elected by ward with one Councillor per ward. However, some jurisdictions elect members 'at large' so they can represent the entire city. Is that something that would work in Calgary? Should it be considered for all Councillors in order to share the workload more evenly or should it be looked at for suggested new Councillors so the wards remain the same but there are extra Councillors elected who would serve the city as a whole?

Findings

A. Prioritization by Councillors Varies Significantly

The Commission found that all Members of Council work very long hours, well beyond what should be reasonably expected by the electorate. The Commission was impressed by the commitment and personal sacrifice made by Members of Council in carrying out their respective duties. The Commission nevertheless observed that there was a wide difference in the priorities that Councillors give to the various aspects of their responsibilities. As mentioned above, with Councillor workload broken down into the statutory (attending committee meetings and dealing with Council business) and ward maintenance (meeting with community associations, addressing complaints from ward constituents), there was quite a discrepancy in the amount of time spent performing the various functions.

All Councillors participate relatively equally in the statutory work of Council including participation on Standing Policy Committees and Special Committees of Council. When it comes to outside committees, there is considerable variance in the participation by individual Councillors.

In addition, some Councillors are very engaged in personally answering complaints, contacts and phone calls to their office, which pose a significant time burden. Others rarely deal with such complaints and contacts personally, opting to have them addressed either by assistants or other administrative resources. Some of these priorities are self imposed; others are a function of historical precedence and expectations in certain wards.

There is also a significant difference in the time commitments of certain Members of Council relative to ward related development, whether it be development permit review in existing communities or Area Structure Plan participation and review in developing communities.

Overall, there is little in the way of guidelines to assist Councillors in managing their time most effectively given the disparate expectations placed on Councillors, and little in the way of special assistance for those Councillors with unique or ward specific responsibilities that extend beyond the norm.

B. Managing Social Media

In decades past if someone wanted to directly engage a Member of Council or lodge a complaint, it had to be in the form of either a phone call, letter, or since the 1990's, email. The explosion in social media platforms has changed all that. Now, Members of Council are forced to deal with an almost endless inundation of both information and requests for service through multiple communication platforms. There are no guidelines or training in place on ways to manage social media to minimize its negative impacts, while maximizing social media to better inform and interact with residents. Going forward, it is clearly impossible to expect that individual Members of Council will be able to respond directly to routine requests or complaints in a manner that might have been possible in the past.

What seemed lacking was a communications strategy that would help Members of Council to not just react to social media, but use it as a tool to more effectively deal with and respond to issues in their wards more effectively. Social media is being used reasonably effectively by some Members of Council, but much more could be done to improve this use of what is increasingly becoming the communication channel of choice for so many Calgarians.

C. The Effects of Increasing Number of Residents

To many Councillors, this is the crux of the matter. Are Councillors overworked and residents short-changed in terms of access because there are simply too many Calgarians for 14 elected officials to serve? After consultation with Members of Council including the Mayor, the Commission believes that simply increasing the numbers of Councillors will have little positive material impact on the challenges facing Council, and the democratic process fundamental to effective municipal governance. It could also have a negative impact relative to statutory municipal governance processes. Some Councillors were adamant that their numbers be increased while others are as strident in believing it will make little difference to the workload or representation. On balance, the Commission would come down in favor of the latter. That is not to say the status quo is acceptable. In fact, it is believed fundamental changes need to be made as this city grows increasingly larger in the years to come. This will be addressed in our Recommendations to Council.

In exploring this option of additional Councillors, the Commission found that a 10 or 15 per cent reduction in the number of residents being represented by an individual Councillor if, for example, two extra wards were established, would address the

proportional representation issue for little more than 6 years, or 1 to 2 general elections. Given current growth rates, the population would quickly catch up until the current population/Councillor ratio was restored. The proportionate representation argument would eventually lead to a situation where the city would endlessly be increasing the number of Councillors as it grew. A number of Councillors stated that the optimum ratio of councillor to residents is 1:65,000. At that level, Council would have to increase by 6 members to achieve the ratio in 2017 and increase by 2 every 4-8 years thereafter.

It is believed that having more Councillors could actually increase the time being spent on city wide Council business as it could become harder to get majority agreement on major city wide issues as well as increase the amount of time in questioning and debating public policy through the formal Council and Committee process. It would be virtually impossible to imagine a scenario where adding additional Councillors would not significantly add to the time spent on formal Council business. This would totally counteract the short lived benefit in reduced time spent with constituents on ward related work.

The Commission recognizes that more Councillors could lessen the work involved in non- statutory committee work by essentially spreading the load. While outside the mandate of the Commission, the issue surrounding the number and relevance of these outside committees is something that should be addressed in another forum.

D. Other Jurisdictions

Our investigation into the number of elected ward representatives in other jurisdictions provided little guidance. The number of Councillors varies widely as do the duties involved. For example Edmonton has 12 Councillors, Vancouver 10 (elected at-large), Winnipeg 15, Toronto 44, and Regina 10. Calgary was one of the highest ranking Canadian cities in terms of the number of residents each Councillor represents and also ranked highly in the amount of Council committees (Edmonton has 50 committees, Calgary 81) to which Councillors are appointed to represent Council. However, Calgary has more staff support for Councillors than other large cities with the exception of Toronto.

In the US, the numbers of Councillors are generally lower: Phoenix has ~~eight~~ 8 wards, Houston 11 and Philadelphia 10.

One interesting and relevant fact that did emerge from the research conducted was: that the number of formally recognized communities within the municipal jurisdiction sees Calgary as a clear leader. Calgary has 242 such communities, Edmonton 157, Toronto 140, Ottawa 100 and Regina 28. Given that some Councillors told the Commission they try to attend every community meeting in their ward, this obviously imposes a huge burden on the time those representatives

spend on community interface. It should be pointed out that other Councillors said they only attend community meetings as required. With an average of 18 communities per ward and assuming a monthly meeting held in each community, such a major difference in the approach of individual Councillors results in an equally large difference in workload arising from this one area of community involvement alone.

E. At-Large Councillors

There was very little interest in the potential introduction of at-large councillors in any form. Current representatives believed such a move might pave the way for partisan politics in local government, which no one wanted to see. This can be seen in Vancouver where all Councillors are elected at-large. Other Councillors mentioned that having some elected by wards and others elected by the entire city could result in a two-tier system where some representatives would have a larger mandate. It was also thought to be potentially divisive as the costs involved in running a city-wide campaign to be elected Councillor would be prohibitive for all but a very few Calgarians – it would be akin to having three Mayoral races at the same time if, as an example, two Councillors were elected at-large.

F. Views of the School Boards

There was little support for the idea of increasing the number of wards from either the Calgary Roman Catholic Separate School District or the Calgary Board of Education. Both Boards expressed concerns that if, for example, Council voted to increase to 16 wards it would create potential difficulties as currently each has seven members and would therefore need to themselves increase by two trustees if they were to retain an odd number of representatives to reduce the potential of tie votes. From the perspective of the School Boards, to consider a move to more Trustees, the City would need to increase by four Councillors to continue the current pairing of two wards per trustee. However, the Trustees of both Boards see no need to increase the number of elected Trustees as it is their opinion that their current workload is quite acceptable and the cost of adding Trustees is not within the current budget. The Province has capped administrative costs of all school boards at 4% of the total budget which results in little leeway in terms of funding additional Trustees.

If The City increased the number of Councillors and the School Boards did not increase the number of Trustees, the cost of elections for all three jurisdictions would rise significantly as The City would have to conduct elections based on three separate sets of boundaries.

The Trustees, though obviously having a different mandate, did not express concerns about any increased workload arising from the growth in population.

Both Boards have orientation programs for newly elected members, which re-elected Trustees are mandated to attend, to help develop a city wide approach to issues. The Calgary Board of Education, in particular, said that beginning in the late 1990s Trustees made a governance decision to change the focus of Trustees to city wide education issues rather with less focus on ward issues. Among the changes were instituting processes where individual queries and complaints from residents were addressed by the Administration with only unresolved or exceptional complaints being dealt with by individual Trustees. They stated that this took a few years before residents fully accepted this approach, but that change in philosophy was eventually reflected in a significant reduction in the amount of complaint resolution individual Trustees needed to address. The net effect has been to free up Trustee time to focus more on strategic issues by mitigating the increase in workload that additional school children in the system would otherwise have brought.

G. Cost of Additional Councillors

As part of NOM 2014-10, the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) has prepared information for Council on the cost to the Corporation of increasing the number of Councillors. This information is included as Attachment 3 to this Report.

Discussion of Findings

A. Business as Usual or Redefining the Role?

The Commission noted that the Manning Foundation recently presented its own study of the increase in workload for City Councillors with the conclusion that an extra researcher for each of the 14 representatives would address the issue. While that view certainly has some merit, the Commission believes that such an approach assumes the retention of a business as usual approach. The addition of extra staff will definitely help in the short term but within a few years that extra pair of hands will be swallowed up by the demands of ever more Calgarians to look after. The Commission has the same hesitation around extra staffing being the sole solution to the problem of Council workload, in the same manner it believes another two or even four Councillors at the next election would not solve the larger issue of ensuring good governance in a more sustainable, long term manner.

As stated earlier, the workload of Councillors can be broken into two areas - strategic planning and policy issues affecting the future of the entire city in which they have a voice alongside 14 colleagues and ward issues in which they are often cast in the role of an individual complaints department as well as resolving and representing individual ward specific issues. The increase in the population per ward primarily affects the latter aspect of this workload, as more people to

represent will probably lead to more residents' queries and complaints. As indicated above, individual different Councillors have different ways of addressing ward issues. Some have staff pass on calls to Administration or direct callers to use 311. Others take a very personal approach to resolution of problems in their ward even if they are not necessarily ward specific. Attending community association meetings, as noted, also varies tremendously. These are all time consuming activities, which, in the smaller city Calgary once was, would have been the lifeblood of ward representation. The broader issue is whether residents can keep expecting Councillors to do that type of work in a city well past a million people and facing the huge demands that accommodating an extra 35,000 residents a year entail?

Also as stated earlier, the Commission considered the impact additional Councillors would have on the legislated strategic planning and policy making aspects of the job? Would 18 representatives make decisions quicker? As was mentioned during one of our meetings "There's a reason 12 people sit on a jury." Would 4 additional voices address issues or nuances of policy that current Councillors miss? The Commission believes this would be possible, but unlikely given the diversity reflected in the current makeup of Calgary City Council. Certainly it would spread out the committee work but perhaps a reduction in the number of committees would accommodate the same result.

As alluded to earlier in this report, the Commission believes it is time to redefine the role of Council. Rather than increasing the number of Councillors to support business as usual, the Commission believes Council should consider focusing more of its time and attention on its primary role as a "Board of Directors" of a complex multi-billion dollar Corporation. The Commission believes that given finite resources and the challenges faced by the incredible growth Calgary is and will be facing in the future, Council should refocus more of its collective efforts on city-wide, strategic issues, and address the many personally time consuming local, ward related issues through existing municipal management processes such as 311, along with an enhanced community interface models that could improve upon the current approach. This is explored more fully below.

B. What Does Democracy Entail in the Age of Social Media?

The rapid growth in the city's population poses significant challenges in and of itself, but it has also created special challenges for Ward Councillors representing residents in the age of social media. Increasingly all politicians are using social media as an election tool and, if elected, the expectation is to continue to use this method of communication. The reality is that once you engage people in this manner there is a clear expectation that this engagement will continue. There is no putting this genie back into any digital bottle. The expectation is the tweets, e-mails and text messages will keep increasing. Having two or four extra wards would mitigate the increase in the short term but the trend in expecting instant access to

elected officials is growing and will eventually swamp any additional resources unless a different way of managing social media is developed.

Councillors' individual methods of handling social media and online tools are highly varied with no apparent common strategy identified. There is little or no apparent training in the effective use of social media. It was apparent that managing social media and using it as a tool to address ward related issues by, for instance, informing residents on a larger scale of ward related issues and how they are being addressed and resolved, could improve communications while saving the time required to respond to issues on an individual basis.

C. What are Reasonable Expectations for Public Interaction with Councillors?

No politician wants to ignore a potential voter. In our discussion with Councillors several estimated that the number of their ward residents who contacted them each month amounted to approximately 0.5% of the ward population and of that number half would be repetitious callers. Assuming a ward of 100,000 residents, that would mean 500 of those people would contact Councillors directly and of that number 250 would be 'regulars' – individuals that anyone serving in a public role gets to know only too well. The question arises: is it fair or reasonable to expect Councillors to spend between 20 and 50 per cent of their time on concerns raised by those residents who actually make up only a tiny proportion of the people living in a ward? The Commission's view is that there are better uses of Councillors' time and that a better way of addressing those concerns can and should be found. The intent is not to completely remove a personal approach to critical ward issues, but with finite time limitations, if Councillors can be relieved from personally responding to much of the repetitive, ward specific issues, they could focus on larger, City wide strategic and policy issues that will increasingly demand their attention.

D. How Do We Get Government Out to the People?

Much of this report has looked at the issues surrounding the potential increase in the number of wards and Councillors. However, while the Commission is recommending no increase in the number of Councillors at this time, there remains the entirely valid question of how is democracy being served if one Councillor is forced to represent so many residents? Are those residents being short-changed? How can their voice be heard if they choose to raise it on some matter vital to them?

As noted above, many of the calls and contacts with Councillors are made by the same individuals, while the vast majority of residents never feel the need to call a Councillor. Yet the average resident wants and needs to be informed and to discuss issues with others in the community as well as their representative from time to time. A key consideration is that while the report has focused on population numbers up until now, Calgary is not only growing in population, it is growing in

geographical area as well. Calgary is a very large, geographically dispersed city and often those who are accustomed to traveling and working downtown forget how time consuming and expensive it can be to make a trip from the suburbs. Without designated parking and often little knowledge of downtown street patterns and traffic issues, the average resident who wants to come to City Hall from the far north west or deep south east can experience significant cost and stress .

After a number of very insightful discussions with Members of Council, the Commission is convinced that there is a better way to provide Members of Council with a stronger 'touch point' in their respective wards along with a far easier and more effective way for ward residents to interact with their Councillor and the municipality generally. To provide better service to community, the Commission feels it is time to consider taking city hall out to the people, creating a model that will enable residents to meet regularly and interact with their Councillor and with City Hall in general in their own communities. This idea and suggestion is the backbone of our recommendations listed below.

Recommendations

A. Number of Councillors:

As indicated above, it is not clear that increasing the number of Councillors would have a meaningful impact in reducing the workload of Council, especially in the long term. It could have a temporary impact on reducing complaint resolution and reducing work involved on a variety of municipal matters, such as planning, development, land use, development permits, traffic, parks and road maintenance, etc. However, the increase in numbers of Councillors could as easily lengthen the discussion and decision making process during committee and Council meetings, negating the benefit of time saved addressing ward specific issues and complaints. Basing the number of wards on a population ratio is not the simple solution it might appear, given that Calgary's growth is taking a path that would see the size of Council becoming unwieldy in short order.

It is also difficult to recommend increasing Councillors at this time when somewhat self-imposed duties of Councillors differ so much. The Commission heard that while some Councillors may be overloaded because they deal with the majority of complaints personally, others appear to manage just fine with a staff member passing the majority of their complaints and inquiries to Administration who in most cases are the ones who ultimately deal with them. The Commission believes that there are some best practices in time saving methods already being put into action, but they are being done on an ad hoc and individual basis. That being said, the Commission believes additional resources are needed for Council to deliver on their overall responsibilities and feels that if the recommendations are adopted and

implemented significant time savings can be achieved in the present and the number of councillors can be revisited in the future.

The Commission does not recommend increasing the number of wards or Councillors at this time, however, the Commission recommends that the number of Councillors be addressed following the 2021 General Election to include an assessment of the implementation of further recommendations listed below.

B. Further Recommendations:

As a result of its examination of the issues relating to an optimum number of Councillors for Calgary for the next general election, the Commission respectfully offers some recommendations for further consideration of Council that tie to and are effectively extensions to the recommendation in (A.) above. While beyond the Commission's specific mandate, it is believed that Council should give special consideration to a number of actions that would require additional work by both Council and the Administration before implementation.

1. Ward offices for Councillors staffed by City of Calgary employees

Currently to visit a Member of Council one has to fight traffic to go downtown (if one does not take transit), and pay high parking charges for the right to access City Hall. As the city expands geographically, there is the very real potential for residents, especially those in far reaching peripheral communities, to feel increasingly disengaged from their municipal government. The Commission strongly recommends that Council consider establishing a Ward Office in each of the 14 Wards. By definition they would be closer to the public being served, could be situated in easily accessible areas with good bus, rail and road access and hopefully ample free parking. Our suggestion would be to use a room or rooms in already existing City facilities or in community halls which are either already owned by the city or can be rented quite reasonably from community associations.

This would become, over time, the 'face' of City Hall in the community. Ward Councillors could use this as their base and, in similar fashion to the way MPs and MLAs already do, have regular meeting hours for where residents could come to express concerns or discuss issues. Each Ward Office would have a staff person from Administration to support its function. Staff would deal with day to day issues on behalf of the Councillor, provide support to the Councillor on ward related issues like development permits and redesignations, and schedule meetings in the Ward Office for the Member of Council.

A very positive additional outcome of this approach would be to create an opportunity for developing exceptional City employees, expanding their work

experience, corporate knowledge and familiarity with both the political process and the challenges of community interaction. This person would represent the Ward Councillor while at the same time be a direct, readily accessible administrative interface in the ward able to handle and advise residents on issues. It is believed that this could alleviate and focus much of the personal time individual Councillors devote to ward issues while increasing their 'touch' with ward residents

It is recognized that current expectations of how residents approach their Ward Councillors or City Hall generally, would not change overnight, but the introduction of a Ward Office would be a dramatic signal from Council that it is fully committed to enhancing, not detracting, from its interface with residents, wherever they live in Calgary. It is felt that having a physical office in the ward would accentuate such change.

The Commission recommends that Council adopt the concept of Ward Offices in principle and direct the City Manager to explore the idea of establishing local ward based Councillor Offices in existing city or other community facilities in the respective wards to function as the face of City Hall for local issues, and report back to Council no later than 2015 June with a financial analysis and proposed implementation strategy.

2. Other City Services

Stepping well outside of the Commission mandate but following up on the above, if Ward Offices are established, it would make sense to migrate some city services out to those Offices. The City Manager saw this as an opportunity which may start on a small scale but could eventually alleviate a lot of frustration for residents by allowing them to conduct business with the City without the need to travel downtown. There would likely be some incremental costs but the Commission believes that these could be minimized through co-occupation of space with Ward Councillor offices, with the ultimate benefit to the residents of Calgary potentially quite significant. This could add to The City's customer service to residents: the city recently picked by the Economist magazine as the 5th most livable in the world.

The Commission recommends that Council direct the City Manager to investigate the feasibility of co-locating some city services with Ward Offices to include the costs, nature of the services being established and the customer service benefits and report to Council through the SPC on Community and Protective Services no later than 2016 June.

3. Governance

There are few, if any, guidelines for Councillors, especially those newly elected, to follow which would assist them in efficient and effective management of their time. The Commission believes that Council should carefully examine the workload requirements of Council so as to prioritize and focus its activities. As recommended above, this could involve looking a new model of community interaction and governance that relieves individual Councillors from some of their current burdens while potentially significantly enhancing their relationship with their residents all making Council more efficient and effective.

The Commission recommends that Council establish a Task Force of 5 Members of Council, with required Administrative support, on Council Effectiveness. This Task Force would be responsible for recommendations on all aspects of Councils and Councillor effectiveness, including, but not necessarily limited to:

- a. Analysis of current Council organizational innovation Initiatives;
- b. Developing Council Customer service improvement initiatives;
- c. Guidelines for strategic and effective operation of a Councillor's office; and
- d. Researching and recommending for implementation best practices from other Municipalities.

4. Councillors' Office Communication Strategy

A consistent theme in the Commission's meetings with Council was the challenge all Members of Council had in dealing with communications incoming through multiple media forms. This creates considerable workload for Members of Council and their existing administrative staff in responding in a timely matter to resident's requests. It was also apparent that there had not been a lot of consideration given to how to use social media more effectively as a mass information tool, focusing less on resolving information requests on an individual basis by developing tools to ensure that a broader audience who might be also impacted by an issue be included in outbound communications. In this way Social media could be managed to the benefit of Councillors, with individual members of Council only needing to be engaged as required in particularly sensitive or serious matters.

The Commission recommends that Council direct the Office of the Councillors to consider developing a comprehensive online communication strategy for the Office which includes all potential methods of communication to reduce the workload on individual Ward staff and Councillors.

5. Task Force on Committees

The workload issue from Committees arose many times during discussion with stakeholders. There has been an expressed intent to re-establish the Committee on Committees under the auspices of the Legislative Governance Task Force (LGTF) of Council. This Committee has been formed in the past and accomplished the aim of reducing the number of boards, committees, commissions, etc. to which Council appoints elected officials.

Establish a Task Force (Committee on Committees) to examine the committees to which Council appoints Members and report back to Council through LGTF no later than June 2015 with implementation on adopted recommendations at the Organizational Meeting in 2015 October.