

# Municipality of Port Hope 2025 Ward Boundary & Council Composition Review

Background

## Discussion Paper C: The Component Parts of the Port Hope Council

### Context

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One component of Port Hope council is outside the control of the municipality: there must be a “head of council” elected by general vote to fulfill the roles set out in the *Municipal Act, 2001* section 225 and part VI.1 related to the newly implemented special (“strong mayor”) powers and duties of the head of council. The Mayor is also Port Hope’s only representative on Northumberland County Council.

The office 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 from the status quo.

**The Deputy Mayor:** The **Deputy Mayor** helps support the Mayor and may take on extra duties. Interestingly, the law doesn’t say municipalities must have a Deputy Mayor—it’s up to each municipality to decide.

In Northumberland County, most towns **elect their Deputy Mayor directly** (meaning voters choose them). But in **Port Hope and Hamilton Township**, the Deputy Mayor is **chosen by Council** after the election.

There are two basic approaches to choosing a Deputy Mayor:

#### 1. Direct Election (At-Large)

- Anyone can run for Deputy Mayor.
- Voters choose the winner on a separate ballot.
- This is common in many Ontario towns.

#### 2. Council Appointment

- Only elected councillors can be chosen.
- Council votes to pick one of their members.
- In some towns, the councillor with the most votes automatically becomes Deputy Mayor.



In Port Hope, the Deputy Mayor used to serve for the full four-year term. But the current procedural bylaw states that, “Every Member of Council, with the exception of the Mayor, shall be the Deputy Mayor for a period of approximately eight (8) months consecutively during a four (4) year term of Council, on a rotating basis.” However, in 2022, two members decided not to participate and as such, Council decided that **four different councillors** would each take turns as Deputy Mayor, **one per year**.

The Consultant Team has worked with municipalities that have switched from one method to the other as part of a composition review, some moving from direct election to indirect and others vice versa. Our research in these municipalities suggests contrasting considerations about the way the Deputy Mayor is elected; a number of arguments can be posed to support each alternative, as illustrated in the following chart.

Figure Ci: Perceived Implications of Alternative Methods of Electing a Deputy Mayor

| Selected by Council                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Selected by General Vote                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Many residents are not well-informed about the expectations for a Deputy Mayor; members of Council are better able to judge the qualities needed for the position.</li><li>• The Deputy Mayor does not have the legislative authority vested in the Mayor so does not need public endorsement.</li><li>• The selection of the Deputy Mayor by Council is not an “all or nothing” situation; that is, those not selected to fill the office continue to serve on Council.</li><li>• The Deputy Mayor would continue to be the point of contact for residents of one particular ward, and as a ward Councillor would still be expected to pay close attention to issues that are ward specific.</li><li>• There is little apparent public pressure to make a change.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Deputy Mayor should have the confidence of electors across the whole municipality, not just in one ward.</li><li>• Candidates for the office would enter the race expecting to serve the whole municipality, not later filling the role in addition to representing a ward.</li><li>• The present arrangement only requires Councillors to make their case to one another to win the position so the selection may be based on personal relationships rather than demonstrated capacity.</li><li>• An at-large election involving the entire community is clearly more democratic but also potentially costly for candidates.</li><li>• Establishing a separate elective office has implications for the overall size of council.</li></ul> |



## Choosing A Deputy Mayor: What's The Best Way?

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As implied above, there's no perfect answer for choosing a Deputy Mayor. Some towns let voters decide (called direct election), while others let the Council choose one of its members (called **indirect election**). Both ways have pros and cons.

This review is meant to help Port Hope decide:

- Should we **keep the current system**, where Council picks the Deputy Mayor from current council members?
- Or should we **change it**, so voters choose the Deputy Mayor in a separate election?

If the Deputy Mayor becomes a separate position, it could also change the **total number of people on Council**.

## Ward Councillors: The Third Piece Of Council

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Besides the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, Port Hope has **six councillors** elected from **two wards** (areas of town). There's no rule about how many councillors a town should have, so this number **can be changed**.

The current setup was decided when Port Hope was formed in 2001, after the Town of Port Hope and Township of Hope joined together. At that time, they agreed on a seven-member Council.

As shown earlier in **Discussion Paper B**, seven members is common in towns with a similar population. But Port Hope could choose a different number if it makes sense for the community.



## Topical Discussion Papers A to F

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Port Hope will release several Discussion Papers on its website to help residents understand the different topics being considered in this review:

- **Discussion Paper A:** Understanding The Current System
- **Discussion Paper B:** How Big Should Council Be?
- ***Discussion Paper C: The Component Parts of the Port Hope Council***
- **Discussion Paper D:** The Method of Election for Councillors
- **Discussion Paper E:** Guiding Principles to Design Wards
- **Discussion Paper F:** Why a Ward Boundary Review?

Your input is essential. These papers are here to inform and invite your feedback. Help shape the future of Port Hope's local government.