

### **A Smaller Number of Town Council Members?**

A community is incorporated by the Province as a municipality when Cabinet approves a legal document called “Letters Patent”. The Letters Patent establishes the municipality's name and boundary, provides for the first election of the Mayor and Council, and contains a variety of issues related to the local government’s authority. The community of Creston was originally incorporated as a “village” in 1924. On December 7, 1965, this status was officially changed to a “town” and Herb Dodd was designated as Mayor for the Town of Creston. In 1974 the Council Establishment Bylaw #664 was enacted to increase the Council by 2 “aldermen”; resulting in a total of 6 Council members, plus the Mayor, comprising Creston’s governance structure.

As I write this article, our formal governance structure remains the same as it was in 1974; a Council of 6 plus one Mayor. It’s important for me to note that we are preparing for an upcoming by-election, to be scheduled in 2017, due to the passing of Councillor Joe Snopek. Recognizing that we are over half way through our four year term, I was prompted to query the Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development staff if the Town of Creston could leave this Council seat vacant until our next general election. The answer was “no”. However, this process got me thinking about the number of Council Members we have, and wondering if there would be value in reducing that number – i.e. moving to a framework consisting of four Councillors and a Mayor.

If a majority of citizens voted to reduce the number of Council Members at an official referendum, then at the subsequent general election (being October 2018), the citizenry would vote for four (4) Council Members and a Mayor. If the Town of Creston has a referendum this fall regarding borrowing for our proposed Fire Hall Project, then an additional and separate referendum question could be asked at the same time – i.e. should Creston reduce the number of Council Members from six (6) to four (4)?

During the 2014 Municipal election, the District of Lantzville (population 3,389) asked this specific question and this decision was approved with a 761 “YES” vote to a 533 “NO” vote. As such, at the next Municipal election in 2018, Lantzville citizenry will vote for four (4) Council members instead of six (6). There would be pros and cons to such a decision, including but not limited to: potential annual Council budget savings (+/- \$40,000), a reduced quorum (minimum number of Council Members present in order to have an official meeting), a reduction in the varied and valuable perspectives that an increased number of Council provides – to name just a few of the considerations to be made.

While most communities with a population of our size (+5,000) have a Council of six (6) members plus a Mayor, I'm interested in receiving public feedback about if we should ask the subject question at an upcoming referendum. Please let me or any current Councillor know your thoughts -- THANKS!

Don't hesitate to contact me by: Visiting me at my office in Town Hall (238 - 10th Avenue North);

Email me at [ron.toyota@creston.ca](mailto:ron.toyota@creston.ca) , or  
Calling me at (250) 428-2214 (extension 227).

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