



# Municipality of the District of St. Mary's

Committee of The Whole (COTW) Meeting

Wednesday, October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022

*We acknowledge that we are gathering in Mi'kma'ki the traditional unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people.*

## 1. Meeting, Date & Time:

The COTW Meeting of the St. Mary's Municipal Council was called to order on Wednesday, October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022, at 4:00 pm in the Council Chambers, Sherbrooke, N.S.

## 2. Attending:

Warden Wier	Councillor Zinck
Deputy Warden Fuller	Councillor Mailman
Councillor Baker	Councillor Harpell
Councillor Malloy	

## Also Attending:

Marissa Jordan, Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)  
Mallory Fraser, Municipal Clerk

## Absent with Regrets:

Marian Fraser, Director of Finance (DOF)

## 3. Additions to the Agenda:

- Omit 8.a. Municipal Fitness Centre Project
- 8.a. Council Meeting Location
- 8.b. Public Hearing Date
- 8.d. Platinum Jubilee Award

## 4. Approval of the Agenda:

*On motion of Councillor Baker and seconded by Deputy Warden Fuller, Council approved the agenda with the additions and omission.*

***Motion approved.***

## 5. Approval of Minutes:

*On motion of Councillor Malloy and seconded by Councillor Harpell, Council approved the minutes of the COTW Meeting held Wednesday, September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2022.*

***Motion approved.***

## 6. Business Arising from the Minutes:

- There was no business arising from the minutes.

## 7. Presentations

### a. Municipal Electoral Boundary Review – Council Size Analysis, Ian Watson, Senior Planner Upland Planning & Design Studios

- The Senior Planner reviewed the Municipal Boundary Review Background & Council Size Report. See the attached Municipality of the District of St. Mary's Municipal Boundary Review Background and Council Size Report.
- Based on the data the Senior Planner recommended maintaining the warden system and reducing the council size and polling districts to five.

- Council asked if the Municipality moved to the mayoral System if they could revert to the Warden System. The Senior Planner advised that once a Council enters the mayoral system, they cannot revert back to the warden system.

*On recommendation of Councillor Harpell, and seconded by Councillor Mailman, Council agreed that the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's remain under the Warden System.*

***Recommendation adopted.***

*On recommendation of Councillor Zinck, and seconded by Councillor Baker, Council approve the recommendation from Upland Planning & Design studio to reduce the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's council size and polling districts to five.*

***Recommendation adopted (2 nays).***

*Councillor Harpell left the meeting at 4:28 pm.*

*The Senior Planner left the meeting at 4:29 pm.*

*Councillor Harpell entered the meeting at 4:30 pm.*

*On motion of Councillor Malloy, and seconded by Councillor Zinck, Council recessed at 4:30 pm.*

***Motion approved.***

*Council returned from recess at 4:34 pm.*

## **8. Other Matters of Business:**

### **a. Council Meeting Location**

- Council agreed to change the Council Meeting that was scheduled to occur in Ecum Secum Fire Hall on October 11<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 to the Greenfield Oldsters Club due to a scheduling conflict.

### **b. Public Hearing Date**

- A Public Hearing is required to hear matters on an appeal of a land development agreement variance that was denied. Every landowner within 30 meters of the property must be notified of the Public Hearing as per section 236 (5) of the MGA.
- Council agreed to hold the Public Hearing on October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2022 at 7:00 pm.

### **c. Mileage & Expense Policy**

- At the last Council Meeting held September 12, 2022, Council directed staff to clearly define 'personal reasons' within the Mileage & Expense Policy. Staff researched the definition and found that it was difficult to define without listing numerous examples. Staff recommended using the wording 'non-municipal related' in its place.

*On recommendation of Deputy Warden Fuller, and seconded by Councillor Baker, Council approve the Mileage and Expense Policy as presented.*

***Recommendation approved.***

### **d. Platinum Jubilee Award**

- Retired Councillor Debbie Findlay received the Provincial Platinum Jubilee Award and Councillor Malloy suggested that Council & staff send a card of congratulations. Council agreed to send a card congratulating Ms. Findlay for her accomplishment.

### **e. In-Camera – Land Matters & Contract Negotiations**

***On motion of Councillor Mailman, and seconded by Councillor Malloy, Council moved to an in-camera session for contract negotiations at 4:43 pm.***

***Motion approved.***

**On motion of Councillor Baker and seconded by Councillor Fuller, Council reconvened to regular session at 5:22 pm.**

**Motion approved.**

- A tender was issued for 2022-2025 Snow Removal for Municipal Facilities. One bid was received. The bid was more than what is budgeted for the fiscal year. Staff recommended to decline the bid and reissue the tender at a later date under a different scope including reducing the term.

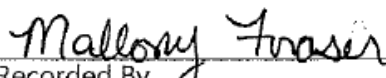
*On recommendation of Councillor Harpell and seconded by Deputy Warden Fuller that Council agree not to award the 2022-2025 Municipal Snow Removal & Ice Control Services Tender and to have staff re-issue another tender with an adjusted scope.*

**Recommendation adopted.**

## **Adjournment**

*On motion of Councillor Zinck, and seconded by Councillor Mailman, there being no further matters of business, Council adjourned at 5:24 pm.*

**Motion approved.**

  
Recorded By  
Mallory Fraser, Municipal Clerk

  
Approved By  
Warden Wier





Municipality of the District of St. Mary's  
Municipal Boundary Review

# Background and Council Size Report

October 5, 2022

UPLAND

Municipal Boundary Review

## **Background and Council Size Report**

This report was prepared by  
UPLAND Planning + Design Inc.

**UPLAND**

For the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's

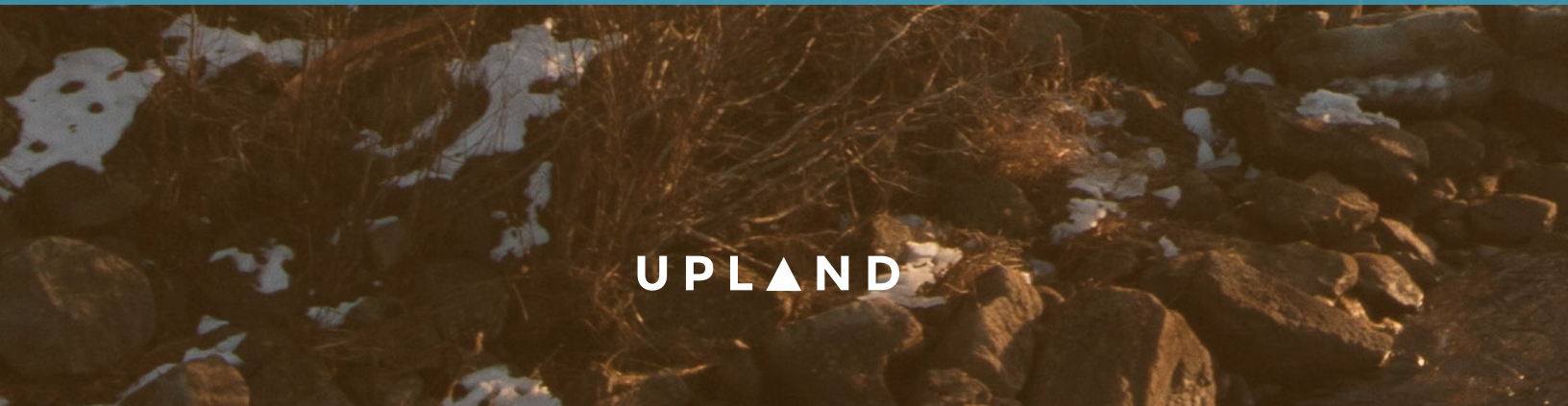




1. Introduction to Background Report.....	01
1 Introduction .....	02
1.1 Current Council Size and Polling Districts.....	03
2. The Municipal Boundary Review Process.....	05
2 The Boundary Review Process .....	06
2.1 Guidelines for Reviewing Municipal Boundaries.....	07
3. Overview of Past NSUARB Decisions .....	11
3 Overview of Past NSUARB Decisions .....	12
3.1 1993 NSUARB Decision.....	13
3.2 1994 NSUARB Decision .....	14
3.3 1999 NSUARB Decision.....	15
3.4 2007 NSUARB Decision .....	16
3.5 2015 NSUARB Decision.....	17
5. Introduction to Council Size Analysis.....	19
4 Introduction .....	20
5. Factors for Evaluating Council Size .....	21
5 Factors for Evaluating Council Size .....	22
5.1 Number of Electors .....	22
5.2 Geographic Size of the Municipality.....	24
6. Overview of Current Council Size and Structure .....	25
6 Overview of Current Council Size and Structure .....	26
6.1 Role of Council and of Staff.....	27
6.2 Current Council Size and Structure.....	29
6.3 Committees.....	30
7. Initial Phase Engagement.....	33
7 Initial Phase Engagement .....	34
7.1 What We Did.....	34
7.2 Key Themes from Stakeholder Interviews.....	35
7.3 Results from Public Survey.....	38
7.4 Public Survey Demographics .....	40
8. Council Size Discussion and Recommendations .....	43
8 Council Size Discussion and Recommendations.....	44
8.1 Discussion.....	45
8.2 Recommendation.....	47
Appendix A: Survey Results .....	49



# Background Report



UPLAND

# 1. Introduction to Background Report

---



# 1 Introduction

Every eight years, municipalities in Nova Scotia are required to review their council size, the number of municipal polling districts and their respective boundaries. This requirement is to ensure effective representation. That is, that every elector's vote has similar power.

As a municipality's population changes, the composition of its polling districts changes as well. To ensure that residents' interests are being represented in an equitable manner, efforts are made through this process so that each polling district has a similar number of residents with common interests and identities. The geographic area of each district is also taken into account.

The Nova Scotia Utilities and Review Board (NSUARB) is responsible for the Municipal Boundary Review process. This independent provincial body is responsible for reviewing and making decisions on applications of municipal boundaries.

St. Mary's has a population of 2,161 (2021 Census) who reside through the vast 1,904.08 square kilometres of land in the Municipality. With a population density of 1.1 people per square kilometre, St. Mary's is the least densely populated municipality in the province. In comparison, the population density of Nova Scotia is 18.4 people per square kilometre.



## 1.1 Current Council Size and Polling Districts

Council in St. Mary's is composed of seven councillors, each representing a polling district. The Warden and the Deputy Warden are elected from within the elected Council via secret ballot.

The current municipal polling district boundaries were drawn during the 2015 Municipal Boundary Review process. Each councillor currently represents an average of 259 electors.

Figure 1: Current Municipal Electoral Boundaries

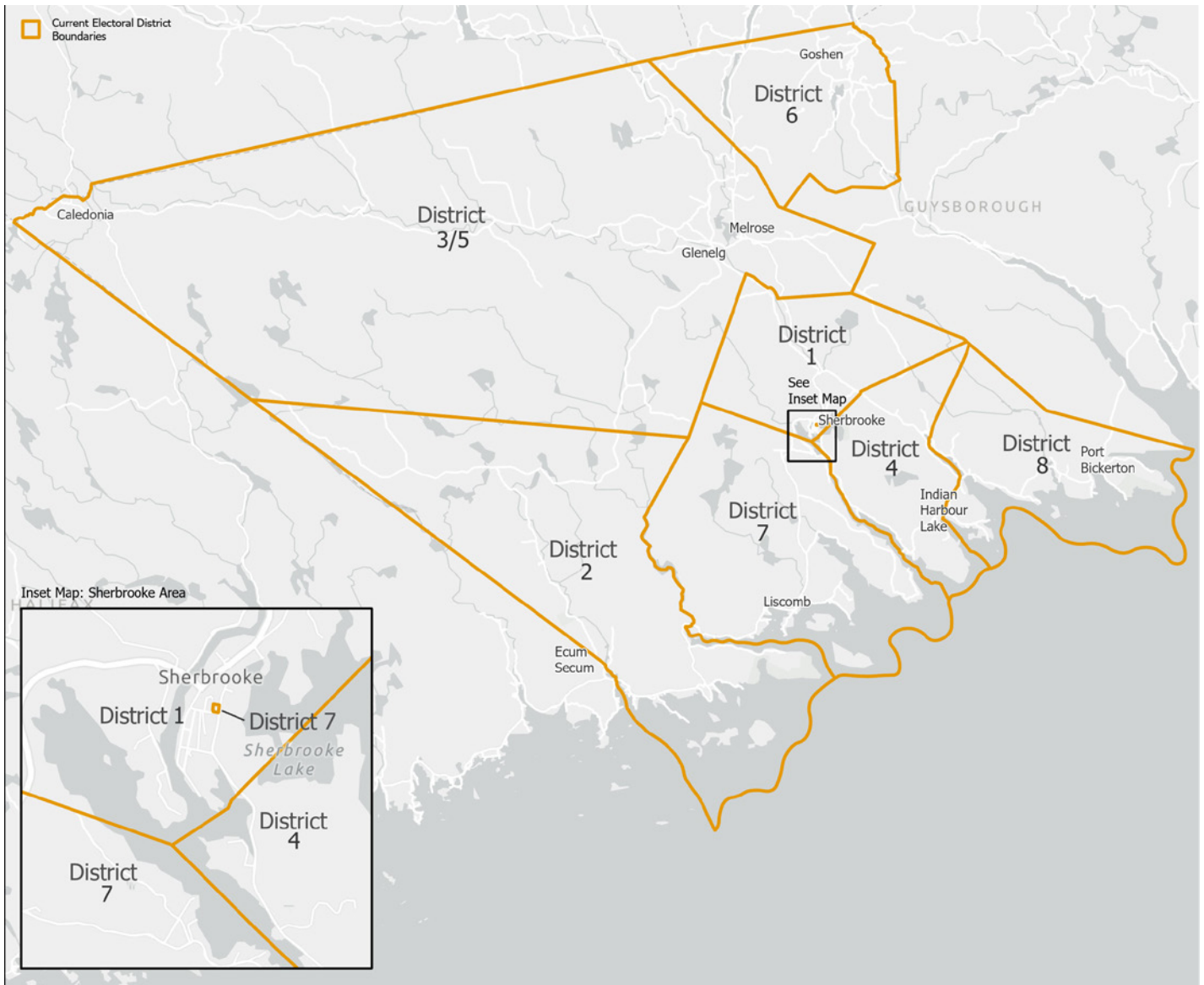


Table 1. : Description of current polling district boundaries in St. Mary's. Elector numbers are from 2020 election.

Polling District	Communities	District Description
<p>District 1 Sherbrooke &amp; Area (285 electors)</p>	<p>Stillwater and majority of Sherbrooke</p>	<p>From 10209 Highway #7, Stillwater to Sherbrooke including Main St. Sherbrooke. From Main St., Sherbrooke to 7759 on Highway #7, Arm Brook inclusive. Beginning at 4262 Sonora Rd to 4110 Sonora Rd, Sherbrooke inclusive. All of Old Road Hill, Sherbrooke until it meets Highway #211 and then back to the intersection of the Highway #7 in Stillwater. Includes Waternish Road up to civic #1537 inclusive.</p>
<p>District 2 Ecum Secum &amp; Area (227 electors)</p>	<p>Ecum Secum, Marie Joseph, New Chester, Fleet Settlement, Liscomb Mills</p>	<p>Beginning at 2284 Highway #7 (Liscombe Lodge) to HRM Boundary Line, Ecum Secum . Includes Moser River from 61 Fleet Loop to 30 Cove Loop. Including from 362 to 2328 New Chester Road, New Chester and from 178 to 242 Fleet Settlement Road, Fleet Settlement inclusive.</p>
<p>District 3/5 Melrose, Glenelg, Caledonia &amp; Area (278 electors)</p>	<p>Aspen, Newtown, Denver, Caledonia, Cameron Settlement, Glenelg</p>	<p>From 10253 Highway #7, Stillwater to 12815 Highway #7 (Maritime Northeast Pipeline), Fishers Mills inclusive. From Waternish Road, civic #1849 to Lead Mine Road civic #327 inclusive. From 9 Highway #347, Aspen to 2484 Highway 347, East River including Cornect Road, East Side Highway 347 from 52 to civic #751. From 1106 to 270 College Grant Road. Highway 348 from 7570 Melrose to 4450 Caledonia and 4262 Lower Caledonia to Trafalgar including civic # 1203 to 101 Lake Crest Drive inclusive.</p>
<p>District 4 Indian Harbour Lake &amp; Sonora Area (247 electors)</p>	<p>Indian Harbour Lake, Jordanville, Sonora and part of St. Mary's River</p>	<p>From 790 Highway 211, Stillwater to 1889 Highway 211 Indian Harbour Lake inclusive and 151 to 905 West Side Indian Harbour lake. From 4037 Sonora Road, Sherbrooke to 1554 Sonora Rd, Sonora inclusive.</p>
<p>District 6 Goshen &amp; Area (288 electors)</p>	<p>Lochiel Lake, South Lochaber, Goshen, Argyle, Eight Island Like, Country Harbour Lake and Borneo</p>	<p>From 14424 Highway 7, South Lochaber to Civic 12907 Highway #7, (Maritime Northeast Pipeline). From civic #25 to civic #148, West Lochaber and 1633 to 1865 College Grant Road inclusive. Lochiel Lake and West Lochiel Lake Rd inclusive. From 597 Borneo Road to Country Harbour Lake, and 18540 Highway 316 to 21650 Highway 316, Country Harbour. Cheese Factory road to #173 and Copper Lake Road to 119 inclusive.</p>
<p>District 7 Liscomb &amp; Area (213 electors)</p>	<p>Little Liscomb, Liscomb, Liscomb Mills, Spanish Ship Bay, Wilson's Cove</p>	<p>West of Arm Brook, from civic 7600 Highway# 7 to Liscomb River, civic 2993 Highway #7, all areas inclusive. Plus all residents in High Crest Nursing Home, Sherbrooke.</p>
<p>District 8 Port Bickerton &amp; Harpellville Area (272 electors)</p>	<p>Port Bickerton, Fisherman's Harbour and Harpellville</p>	<p>East bound from civic 1940 Highway 211, Port Hilford to Port Bickerton and Municipal Boundary, all areas inclusive. Plus from 83 Sonora Rd, Wine Harbour to where it meets Port Hilford on Highway 211.</p>



## 2. The Municipal Boundary Review Process

## 2 The Boundary Review Process

The first step in the Boundary Review process is for the Municipality to conduct a study that looks at the current state of the polling districts. This study is then used to make an application to confirm or change the number of councillors, municipal polling districts, and the respective boundaries. The application is submitted to the NSUARB, and it must include explanations and evidence for the decision to change or maintain the status quo.

A key component to the application is that the Municipality has significantly **engaged its community in the process**, and that their feedback has been considered or incorporated. This is a mandatory step and the NSUARB considers this aspect in their final decision-making.

Once the application has been received, a public hearing is scheduled. At the public hearing, the Municipality presents its application and evidence to the Board, and answers questions from the NSUARB and the community members who registered to speak. Once the hearing has concluded, the Board decision is issued within 60 days. Applications that are declined are returned to the respective Council for review.

The NSUARB recommends going through the study process in two phases. The first phase is to review the number of polling districts and councillors. The second phase is to review the boundaries of each polling district to ensure that electors are being represented equitably.



## 2.1 Guidelines for Reviewing Municipal Boundaries

The review process' main purpose is to ensure **effective representation**. To do so, there are five factors that the NSUARB takes into consideration in making its decision, which are outlined in the *Municipal Government Act*. The factors are:

- + Number of electors
- + Relative parity of voting power
- + Community interest
- + Geographic size
- + Population density

To determine **the number of councillors**, the NSUARB looks at the geographic size and the number of electors in each proposed polling district.

To determine **the number of districts and the district boundaries**, the NSUARB looks at the number of electors, relative parity of voting power, community interest, geographic size and population density. At this stage of the Review, relative voting parity is prioritized as a factor. This looks at the number of electors in each polling district and its deviation from the average number in the Municipality.

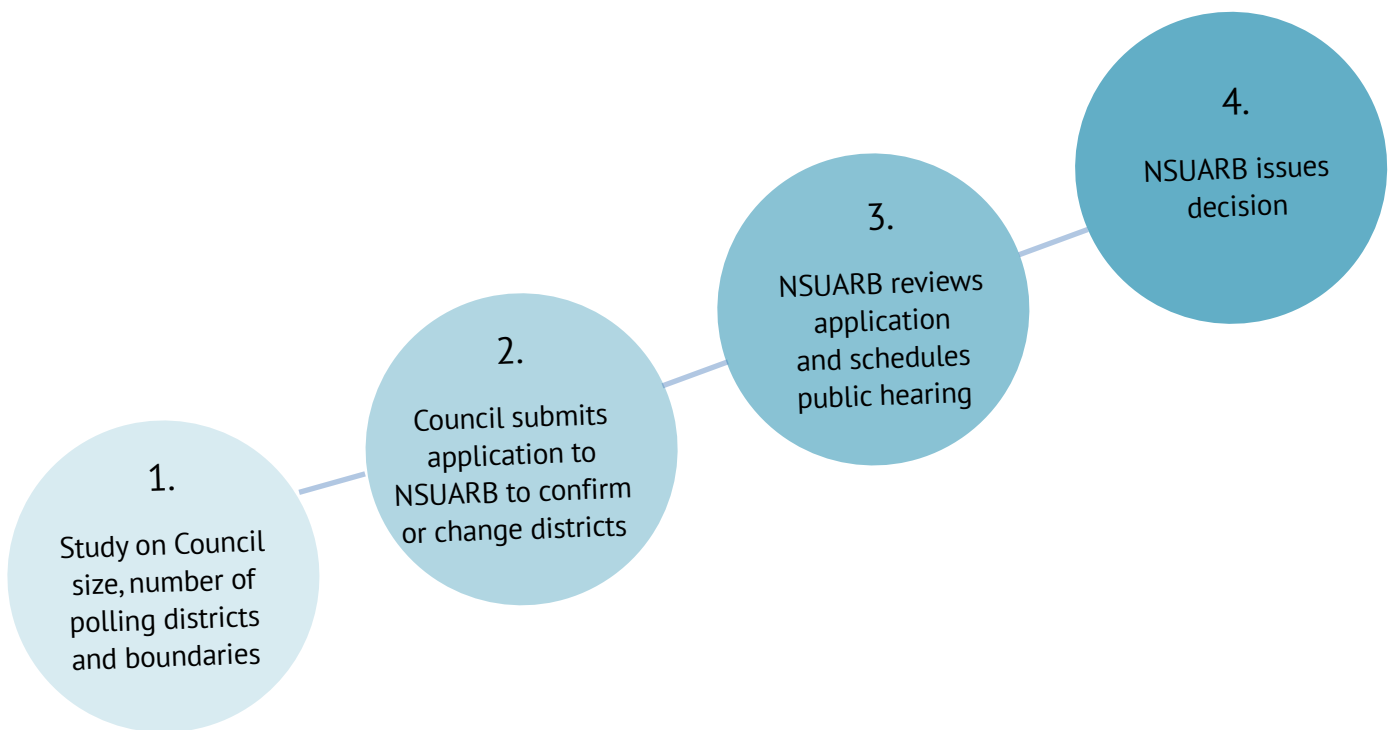
In 2004, the NSUARB established two **thresholds for relative voting parity** that would serve as a guideline when drawing boundaries. The regular threshold is +/- 10% from the average number of electors in the Municipality. When falling within this threshold, not much justification is needed for the boundaries proposed. In cases where the number of electors in a proposed polling district is +/- 25% from the average number in the Municipality, a very detailed justification is needed on why this is the case. Community interest and geography have justified other municipalities' applications to have districts outside of the 10% threshold. The number of electors is based on numbers from the preceding municipal election.



Table 2. : Comparison of the size of Council and number of polling districts between Municipality of the District of St. Mary's and other rural municipalities.

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Number of electors</b>	<b>Number of polling districts</b>	<b>Average number of electors per polling district</b>	<b>Population density (2021 census)</b>	<b>Total area (square kilometres, 2021 census)</b>	<b>Average area per polling district (square kilometres)</b>
District of St. Mary's	1,810	7	259	1.1	1,904.08	272.01
District of Guyborough	3,756	8	470	2.2	2,115.25	264.41
District of Shelburne	3,320	7	474	2.4	1,816.71	259.53
County of Victoria	4,933	8	617	2.6	2,836.19	354.52
District of Argyle	6,264	9	696	5.2	1,526.07	169.56
County of Richmond	7,008	10	701	7.2	1,246.08	124.61
District of Digby	5,523	5	1,105	6.8	2,512.28	502.46
District of Barrington	5,532	5	1,070	10.3	631.98	126.40

Figure 2: Municipal Boundary Review Process







# 3. Overview of Past NSUARB Decisions

---

### 3 Overview of Past NSUARB Decisions

While the requirement for regular municipal boundary reviews has been mandatory since 2006, applications from the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's have preceded that year. It is important to understand previous NSUARB decisions to observe the trend of the changes in the Municipality.

A key challenge for St. Mary's has been trying to balance the decline in population with its vast geography. In the 1993 and 1999 decisions, the NSUARB stated that the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's had the lowest average number of voters per councillor across rural municipalities in the province.



Photo: UPLAND Studio and Design

### 3.1 1993 NSUARB Decision

In preparation for the 1994 municipal election, the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's applied to maintain the status quo of its council size, number of polling districts and the respective boundaries. At the time, each of the eight municipal polling districts was represented by a Councillor. With the average number of voters per councillor being 295, two polling districts were beyond the +/-25% voter variance. This latter variance was the norm at the time.

The Municipality argued that the reason for maintaining the status quo was the Municipal Reform Process that would include a restructuring of municipal boundaries.

The NSUARB declined the application and returned it to Council for amendments, and asked Council to consider the possible reduction of polling districts and councillors. In its decision, the Board cited two reasons for declining. First, too many districts had a high elector variance, with one district having 41% fewer voters than the average number in the Municipality. Second, that the province would not be following up with the municipal reforms, which rendered the reason for maintaining the status quo null.



## 3.2 1994 NSUARB Decision

Following the 1993 decision, the Municipality submitted an amended application at the request of the NSUARB. In this instance, the Municipality proposed 6 polling districts, with the boundaries of all districts being redrawn, except for one. The average number of voters that each councillor would represent would be 394 voters.

While relative voter parity would have been achieved within the +/-10% threshold, the Board did not agree with the proposal in full. Relative voter parity would have been achieved by dividing communities and the creation of a V-shaped district. The combination of Districts 3 and 5 was a concern to several councillors, as there was only one way to travel between both districts.

The Board presented an alternative to Council, where polling districts would be reduced to seven by combining Districts 3 & 5 and leaving all other districts as they were. The average number of voters that a councillor represented would be 338 voters. While the new district would be composed of 398 voters, the Board's opinion was that this number was not unreasonable for one councillor to represent. Although the Board stated that boundaries could be drawn more equitably, this was not needed at the time.

Council maintained its 1993 position, and voiced their preference for the status quo to remain due to the vast geography of the Municipality. Furthermore, Council stated that there would be no financial benefit from reducing the number of councillors. The Board, once again, disagreed with maintaining the status quo.

In its final decision, the Board directed the Council to combine Districts 3 and 5 into one, with the boundaries of all other districts to remain. Each district would continue to be represented by one councillor.

### 3.3 1999 NSUARB Decision

Leading to the 2000 elections, the Municipality applied to keep the polling districts as they were. That is, to maintain seven polling districts, seven councillors and the boundaries from the 1994 NSUARB decision. The average number of electors that a councillor represented was 325. Two polling districts, District 2 and 7 were close to the +/- 25% variance from the average number of electors.

The Municipality provided a few reasons behind maintaining the status quo: the vast geography of the Municipality, and pockets of unique community identity and interests. Furthermore, Council was reluctant in decreasing their size. A councillor also stated that all other councillors had other sources of employment. A reduction in the size of Council would result in a higher workload that would be more difficult to handle, while not having a significant impact on the municipal budget.

The NSUARB approved the application to confirm the number of polling districts, councillors and municipal polling district boundaries. However, it noted that District 2, which bordered the Halifax Regional Municipality, would have to be monitored due to having the highest elector variance at -22.1%.

### 3.4 2007 NSUARB Decision

In 2007, Council applied to maintain the status quo of its council size, number of polling districts and district boundaries. This number of polling districts and councillors would remain at seven, with the average number of electors that a councillor represented being 290. Four polling districts exceeded the +/-10% variance, with two of them (Districts 1 and 7) over +/-20% variance.

In the study presented to the Board, the Municipality explored the possibility of combining districts. They stated that the combinations only created large geographic areas and with communities with differing interests, instead of achieving proportional representation. This would place a burden on councillors to represent their communities. Furthermore, the Municipality argued that resurveying for new boundary lines would impose a great financial burden to a municipality with such a small population. Community feedback during engagement sessions was in support of the status quo to retain the number of councillors and polling districts.

While the NSUARB agreed on maintaining the number of polling districts and councillors, it disagreed with maintaining the district boundaries as they were. To the Board, the reasons given did not suffice to justify four districts being in excess of +/-10% voter parity. It also stated that variances up to +/-25% need to provide detailed written justification showing that the increase was needed due to population density, community of interest of geographic size. The financial burden of redrawing boundaries was not enough justification.

The Board decided to approve the number of polling districts and councillors, but the application was sent back to the Municipality to re-examine the boundaries to meet variance guidelines.

### 3.5 2015 NSUARB Decision

For the 2015 review process, the Municipality applied to maintain the number of councillors and polling districts at seven, but to change the boundaries of all polling districts. The average number of electors per councillor was 265.

At the time of the application, five of the seven districts exceeded the +/-10% variance (Districts 1, 2, 3&5, 7 and 8), with two of them exceeding the +/-25% variance (Districts 1 and 8). Shifting the boundary lines would achieve voter parity within the +/-10% variance guideline. In order to achieve voter parity, two major changes were proposed that involved splitting communities. First, that some residents would be moved to different polling districts. Second, that the polling station of the Sherbrooke Nursing Home in District be moved to District 7. Given that residents in the nursing home came from different parts of the Municipality, it was the Municipality's opinion that they could be represented by any Councillor.

During the study period, the Municipality conducted a series of public meetings and provided the opportunity to receive written feedback on the proposed changes. A group of electors showed their dissatisfaction with modifying the boundaries of Districts 4 and 8. The proposal would mean that voters would have to travel further to reach a ballot box, which had the potential to increase voter apathy. While the NSUARB sympathized with this and noted it as a recurring issue with rural municipalities, this was not enough reason to not redraw the boundaries. For the Board, voter parity was a primary consideration. Furthermore, the Municipality had explained during public meetings that arrangements could be made to lessen the burden of travelling to vote.

The NSUARB approved the Municipality's application as presented, maintaining seven polling districts and councillors, and the change to the district boundaries. However, the Board recommended that the number of districts be decreased in future reviews, which had also come up during public meetings.

Table 3. : Summary of NSUARB decisions

Decision Year	Council application to NSUARB	Summary of NSUARB Decision
1993	<p><b>Confirm council size, number of polling districts and boundaries.</b>                      Maintain eight polling districts, one councillor per district. No modifications to boundaries.</p>	<p><b>Declined application.</b>                      Returned to Council to reduce number of districts and to modify boundaries. One district with over 40% voter variance.</p>
1994	<p><b>Change council size, number of polling districts and boundaries.</b>                      Change to six polling districts, one councillor per district. All boundaries redrawn except for one.</p>	<p><b>Declined application.</b>                      Directed Council to combine Districts 3 and 5, and maintain all other boundaries. Council application divided communities.</p>
1999	<p><b>Confirm council size, number of polling districts and boundaries.</b>                      Maintain seven polling districts, seven councillors, and existing boundaries.</p>	<p><b>Approved application as presented.</b></p>
2007	<p><b>Confirm council size, number of polling districts and boundaries.</b>                      Maintain seven polling districts, seven councillors, and existing boundaries</p>	<p><b>Approved application in part.</b>                      Confirmed number of councillors and polling districts. Returned to Council to re-examine boundaries.</p>
2015	<p><b>Confirm council size and number of polling districts, but change boundaries.</b>                      Maintain seven polling districts and councillors. Change boundaries to meet voter parity.</p>	<p><b>Approved application as presented.</b>                      Recommended reduction in polling districts in future Reviews.</p>



# 5. Introduction to Council Size Analysis

---

---

## 4 Introduction

There is no standard council size in Nova Scotia. Although the *Municipal Government Act* requires a minimum of three council members, council sizes range from five members to sixteen. Many factors are considered when determining a council's size, as this affects a community's level of representation in the Municipality. The smaller the council, the more residents a councillor represents.

This Council Size Analysis has the goal of evaluating whether the current Council size in the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's is still appropriate. For this analysis, we first will look at the two key factors that the Nova Scotia Utilities and Review Board (NSUARB)

considers when making a decision on the number of councillors: the number of electors and the geographic size of the municipality. We then provide an overview of the current Council size and structure. As this information does not tell the full story, we interviewed Council and senior staff to better understand their work. We also asked for the public's feedback on the current size of Council and the level of representation in the municipal decision-making process. The results of both types of engagement are included in this Report.

Based on the information collected, this Report concludes with an analysis of the Council Size, which will inform the Boundary Review in the next chapter of this study.

# 5. Factors for Evaluating Council Size

---

# 5 Factors for Evaluating Council Size

## 5.1 Number of Electors

Effective representation is one of the key goals of the Municipal Boundary Review Process. A Municipality's Council size and structure, and its corresponding district boundaries are largely based on the population size, the number of electors, and how the population is distributed across the Municipality.

### Definition of an Elector

Electors are individuals who are eligible to vote. According to the *Municipal Government Act*, this means that they must meet all of the following criteria:

- + Be eighteen years on the first advance polling day;
- + Be a Canadian citizen on the first advance polling day;
- + Be a permanent resident in Nova Scotia in the 6 months preceding the first advance polling day; and,
- + Be a permanent resident in the municipality before the first advance polling day.

When looking at the size of Council, the NSUARB takes the number of electors in the Municipality into consideration, not the total population.

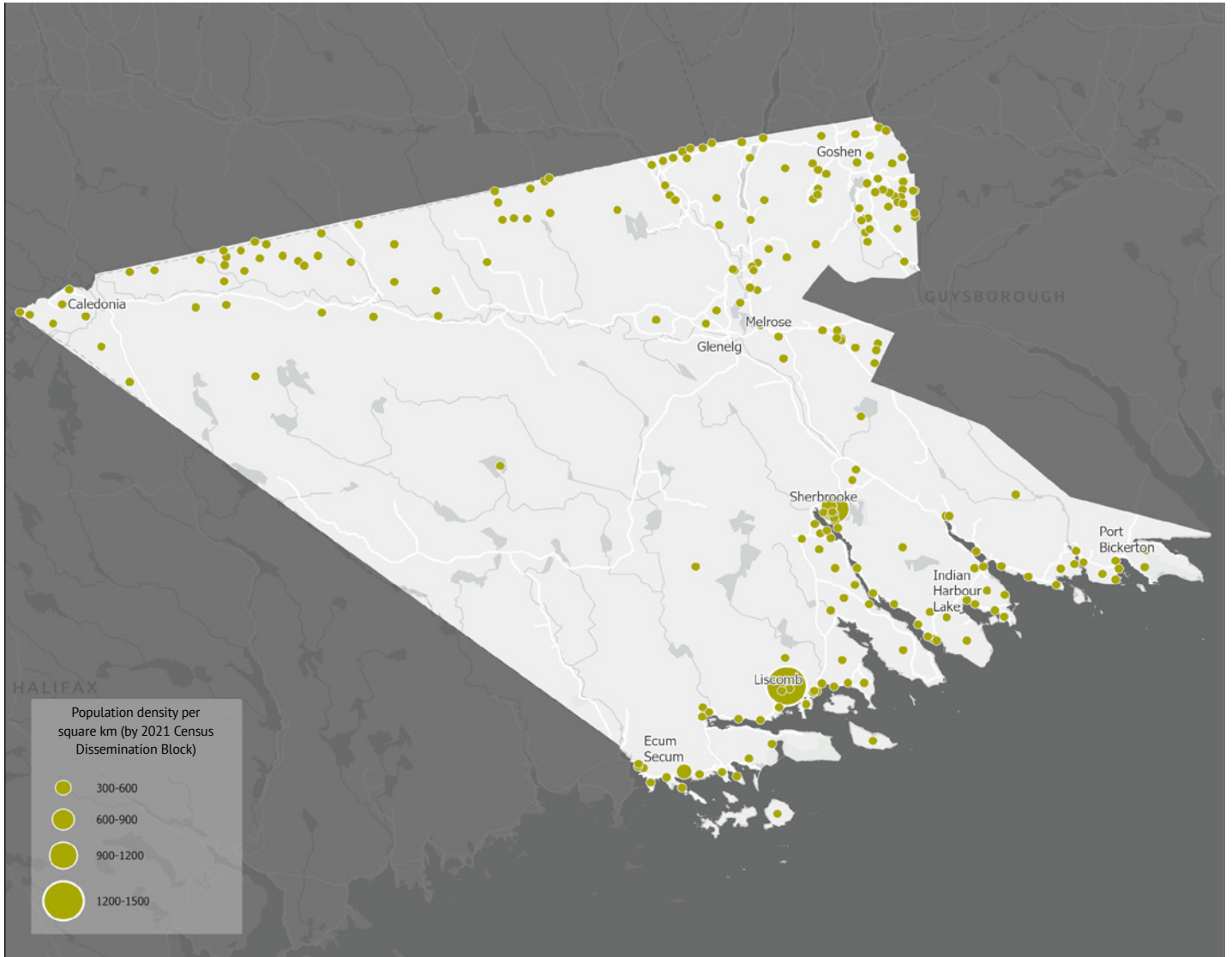
### Number of Electors and Population Changes

Rural municipalities in Nova Scotia have observed similar population trends, with their residents getting older, and, thus, the total number of people declining. The District of St. Mary's is not an exception to this trend.

In the 2021 Census, the total population was 2,161, a decrease of 3.2% from 2016. Although the rate of this decrease has been slowing down, it has still translated to a loss of people, and, thus, a loss of electors. The 2020 elections saw a total of 1810, which was a decrease from the 1852 in the 2016 municipal elections.

Map 1 shows the distribution of the population in St. Mary's based on the 2021 Census. Many residents are located in Sherbrooke, along the coast, and along the northern and eastern municipal boundaries with the County of Pictou and the District of Guysborough, respectively. Communities are very sparse, with not many residing in the centre of St. Mary's.

Map 1. Population distribution in St. Mary's according to the 2021 Census





## 5.2 Geographic Size of the Municipality

The District of St. Mary's is the 12th largest municipality by land area and the least densely populated in Nova Scotia. According to the 2021 Census, the total land area of the Municipality is 1,904.08 square kilometres, and its population density is 1.1 people per square kilometre.

Travelling by car from the southwest corner of the District to the northeast corner can take up to 1.5 hours, assuming good road conditions.

The table below shows the total land area of each polling district.

Table 4. Total land area of each municipal polling district in St. Mary's

<b>Polling District</b>	<b>Total land area (in square kilometres)</b>
1	121.03
2	409.84
3/5	988.81
4	107.16
6	144.88
7	250.47
8	164.83

# 6. Overview of Current Council Size and Structure

---

---

## 6 Overview of Current Council Size and Structure

Every four years, residents in the District of St. Mary's vote in their respective district for the councillor that will represent them and their community's interests.

Candidates may run against others, or may run unopposed. If a candidate runs unopposed, they can win their seat by "acclamation". Otherwise, the candidate who wins the majority of the votes in their district becomes the councillor representing that community.

The *Municipal Elections Act* requires that those intending to run for municipal government must meet certain conditions, including but not limited to:

- + Being 18 years of age at the time of nomination
- + Being a Canadian citizen
- + Being a regular resident in the municipality or in an area annexed to the municipality for 6 months preceding nomination day, and continue to reside there
- + Not being a current Member of Parliament or Senator, judge, member of a village commission, or a councillor or employee of another municipality or municipal board

The most recent municipal elections in Nova Scotia took place on October 17, 2020, where councillors for all seven districts in St. Mary's were elected. A special election was run on January 16, 2021 for District 8, after the previously elected Councillor resigned. Five of the current seven councillors were elected to their positions for the first time.

## 6.1 Role of Council and of Staff

The *Municipal Government Act* outlines the role of Council and the administration of a municipality. Council represents residents within a municipality, and they have decision-making power and provide direction on policies, plans and administration. Council also represents the interests of the Municipality with outside committees, agencies, and organizations.

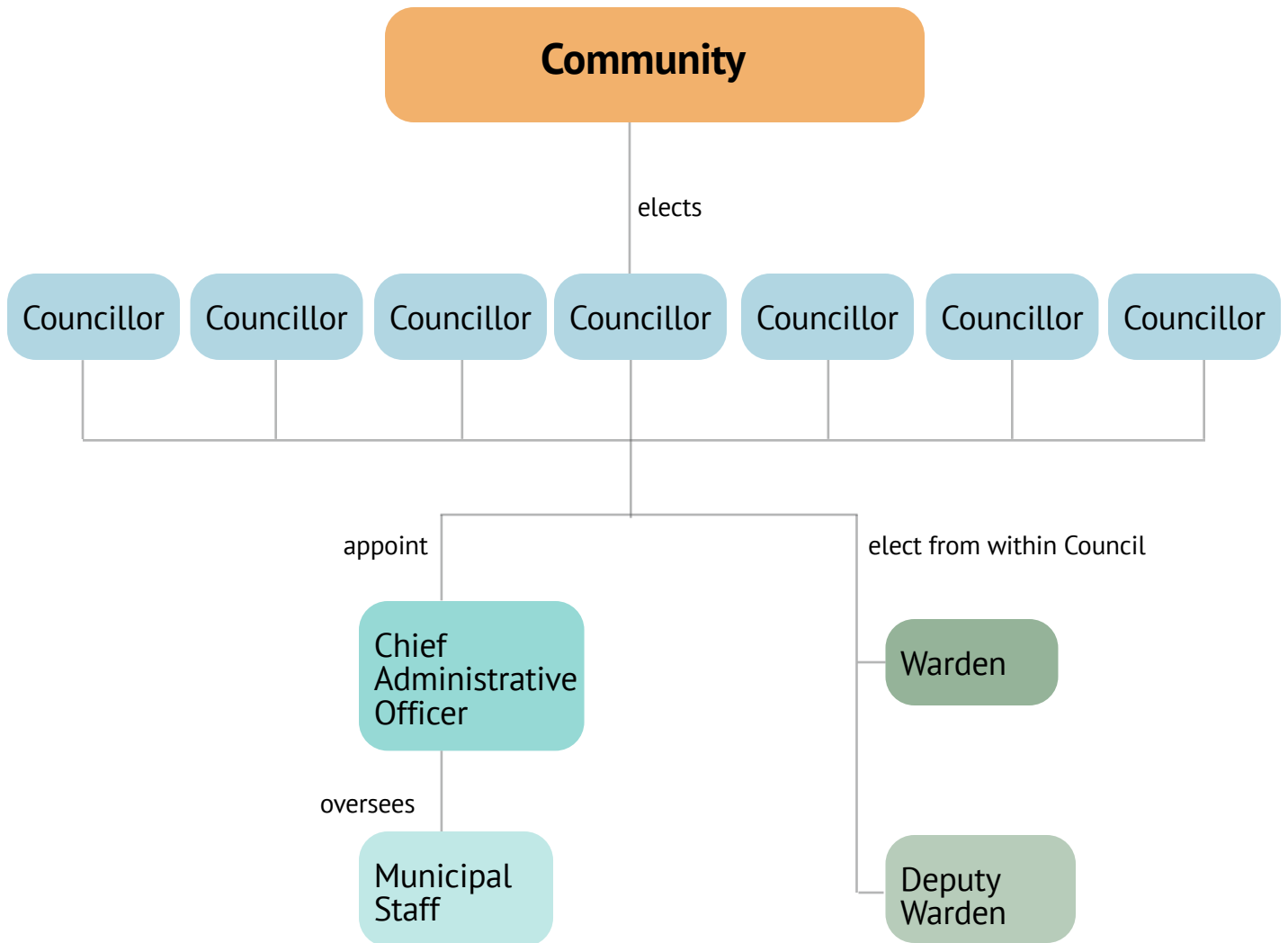
The day-to-day operations and administration of a municipality are in the hands of the municipal staff, who are led by the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). The CAO is appointed by Council and reports to it. The CAO is also the link between Council and staff, as Council cannot directly dictate the work of staff.

### Support from Municipal Staff

The day-to-day work of Council in St. Mary's is supported by municipal staff, which includes the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), the Director of Finance and the Municipal Clerk. The support that staff provide is one of the responsibilities of their roles, but the degree to which they do this depends on the task at hand. It can range from preparing and circulating meeting agendas, to assisting with responses to residents' inquiries. Municipal staff also assist with welcoming and orienting the new council after an election, which can take a significant amount of time if councillors are new to the position.

Figure 1 shows a diagram that represents the relationships between the community, Council and municipal staff.

Figure 1. Diagram of relationships between community, Council and municipal staff





## 6.2 Current Council Size and Structure

According to the *Municipal Government Act*, municipal councils must have at least three members, with a councillor being elected for each polling district in a municipality. The *Municipal Government Act* does not make mention of the maximum size of a council.

In the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's, councillor positions are part-time, and on a volunteer basis, for which they are paid an honorarium. Councillors must take the Oath to Office and agree to the Code of Conduct once elected.

The Municipality operates with a Warden system, where, once elected, councillors run within Council to become Warden and Deputy Warden. The Warden leads all Council meetings, and is expected to provide strategic direction to Council, in addition to being the key representative of the Municipality.

The Deputy Warden can step into the Warden's responsibilities when the Warden is absent or not available. Both the Warden and the Deputy Warden are compensated for the additional responsibilities.

## 6.3 Committees

Committees are established to oversee and advise in a number of areas within the Municipality and the region. At each Annual General Meeting, Councillors volunteer for the Committee(s) they would like to participate in, and their membership is decided by Council consensus. There is no minimum number of Committees that a Councillor must participate in, and there is no additional compensation for their participation in committees.

There are a total of 16 committees that Council is involved in, with 7 of them being hosted In-House by the Municipality, and 9 of them being Outside Boards and Agencies that are organized by bodies other than the Municipality. Table 2 shows a table of the Internal and External Committees in which the Municipality participates.

The frequency of meetings for each Committee varies from twice a month to once every couple of months. Due to the public health restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, meetings had to take place virtually, with all public Council meetings being recorded.

As restrictions have lifted, meetings have resumed taking place in-person, with the recordings of the meetings being available to the public for viewing. In-house Committee meetings mainly take place at the Municipal Office in Sherbrooke. Outside Committee meetings can take place outside of the boundaries of St. Mary's.

In addition to the Committee meetings outlined above, Council is also expected to attend monthly Council meetings, and Committee of the Whole meetings twice a month. These meetings regularly take place at the Municipal Office in Sherbrooke. "Special" Committee of the Whole or Council meetings may also be called in order to deal with time-sensitive matters or when Council workload exceeds the regular scheduled meetings.

There is no minimum number of committees that a councillor must be part of, nor a minimum number of hours that a councillor must dedicate to their position. Currently, all in-house and external committees in St. Mary's have at least one councillor.

Table 5. List of municipal committees hosted in-house and externally

<b>In-House Committee</b>	<b>External Committees</b>
Accessibility Committee	Eastern Counties Regional Library (Board Member)
Active Transportation Committee	Region #2 Solid Waste
Audit Committee	Sherbrooke Village Commission (Board Member)
Emergency Measure Organization (EMO) Committee	Guysborough Adult Learning Association (Board Member)
Fences Arbitration Committee	Port Hawkesbury Paper Forest Advisory Committee
Fire Services Committee	Wild Islands Tourism Advancement Program
	Port Bickerton Lighthouse Association
	Guysborough Community Health Board
	Guysborough County Tourism Board



# 7. Initial Phase Engagement

---



## 7 Initial Phase Engagement

### 7.1 What We Did

In order to gain a more holistic understanding of how the community envisions its governance structure, we conducted a public survey that addressed questions on the Municipality's Council size and governance. As the outcomes might impact councillors and municipal staff's responsibilities, we also conducted individual interviews with them.

#### Stakeholder Interviews

Between July and September 2022, we conducted a total of ten individual interviews, seven of them with councillors and three with senior municipal staff. The interviews took place virtually and over the phone.

The purpose of these interviews was to gain a better understanding of the roles and responsibilities of those interviewed, any potential challenges that they might have experienced in order to accomplish their tasks, and their workloads.

#### Public Survey

A public survey was made available to the public between July 19 and August 26, 2022 to gather feedback on the current Council size, government structure, and the level of representation in the municipal decision-making process.

The survey had 12 questions, with most of them being multiple choice. The survey was primarily hosted online. Recognizing that internet access is a barrier for many in rural communities, printed copies of the survey were made available through the Municipality. In total, we collected 73 survey responses across both survey forms.

The complete survey results can be found in Appendix A.

#### Emails

Participants were able to contact the project team via email for any additional comments or questions about the Boundary Review. We received one email with comments, and this has been incorporated into the Discussion section of this Report.

## 7.2 Key Themes from Stakeholder Interviews

### Workload and Time Commitment

The number of hours that councillors in St. Mary's spend on their positions varies from 2 to 15 hours each week. Many factors contribute to this, including:

- + Participation in committees and related work
- + Role within Council
- + Distance travelled to meetings

All but one councillor spends the majority of their time with formal council work rather than with constituency work. The time dedicated to constituency work can vary depending on whether constituents contact them about issues, or if there are events in the community that they might need to attend.

In the most recent Boundary Review in 2015, the NSUARB indicated that the Municipality should look into reducing its Council size. We asked stakeholders on the potential impacts of such reduction. Some responded that it would not impact their work significantly. Others raised concerns about the added workload and time needed to dedicate to council duties, especially since the majority of councillors have employment outside of their council duties. We also heard some concerns about the potential impact on staff's workloads.

### Diversity of Perspectives

We heard throughout the interviews that the seven councillors in the Municipality bring different perspectives and opinions to many issues that are discussed, and that this is, in part, due to the variety of professions in which councillors work outside of their council duties. With the current Council, all interviewed noted that, although some discussion takes place during meetings, councillors usually come to agreement with each other, and that no major hurdles exist when they disagree.

Except for those who are retired from the workforce, all current councillors in the Municipality have other jobs. Five of seven councillors currently have other jobs. While the different perspectives and work backgrounds enrich conversations, it was also pointed out that some might not be able to dedicate the time needed to their council work.

### Relationship with Constituents

Constituents can contact their representatives in St. Mary's in-person, by email or by phone. Contact information for each councillor can be found on the municipal website. The degree in which each councillor engages with their constituents varies. Some wait to be contacted by their constituents, while others attend gatherings in the community on a regular basis.

Residents also contact the Municipality directly when issues arise, and in many instances, municipal staff see the responses through.

### Recruiting New Councillors

Many of the councillors we interviewed ran because they wanted to see change and improvements to their community, with five councillors being elected for the first time.

In the most recent municipal elections, five of seven councillors in the Municipality won their seats by acclamation. This means that there were no other candidates running against them. Some of the candidacies were received close to the deadline.

Stakeholders perceived a hesitancy from their fellow residents around running for Council. Two of the key reasons that we heard about this hesitation were the time commitment required for the position, and the insufficient pay for the work expected. Interviewees also mentioned that one of the hardest parts of their positions was facing criticism for their work, which not many might be open to.

### Support from Staff

Municipal staff who work with Council spend around 30% of their time on tasks directly related to Council. We heard throughout the interviews that municipal staff has offered crucial support to Council, especially as five of the seven current councillors are new. Support includes preparing for meetings, technology support, and answering to residents' inquiries that are shared with staff by councillors.

### Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic

The public health restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic impacted Council in many different fronts.

When running as candidates in 2020, many councillors mentioned not being able to knock on doors, or meet electors face-to-face at events. Only one of the current Councillors mentioned knocking on doors during their campaign. We heard that this gap in interactions has also impacted how some councillors work with their constituents and respond to their issues, as they had not had enough opportunities to connect with residents when campaigning.

The transition to virtual Council meetings meant having to adjust to the new technology, for which municipal staff provided support. There were also a perception that some councillors held back on what they said in some occasions, as the meetings were now being recorded.

## 7.3 Results from Public Survey

The public survey had the objective to gather the community's opinion on the current council size and potential changes to it that respondents wanted to see. We designed the survey to be as clear as possible while keeping it short. The community was also able to contact us by email for further comments or questions. Below are the key findings from the survey.

### Changes to Council Size

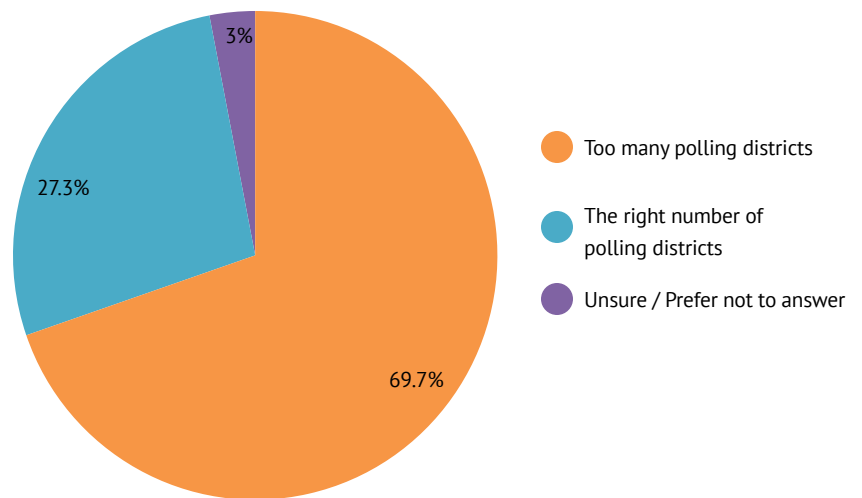
Close to 70% of survey respondents thought that there are currently too many polling districts in the Municipality, and close to 67% of respondents wanted to see each councillor represent more residents.

### Ideal Number of Councillors

We asked the community what would be the right number of councillors for the Municipality. The survey presented respondents only with odd numbers. This was done so because, assuming that the Warden system remains, it prevents tied votes.

Close to 46% of respondents wanted to see three councillors leading the Municipality, 24.5% wanted to see five councillors, 28% saw seven councillors in the future, and one respondent wanted to see nine or more councillors. This indicates that the majority of respondents wish to see a reduction in Council size.

Figure 2. With regards to the number of polling districts in the Municipality, in your opinion are there too many districts, the right number, or too few?



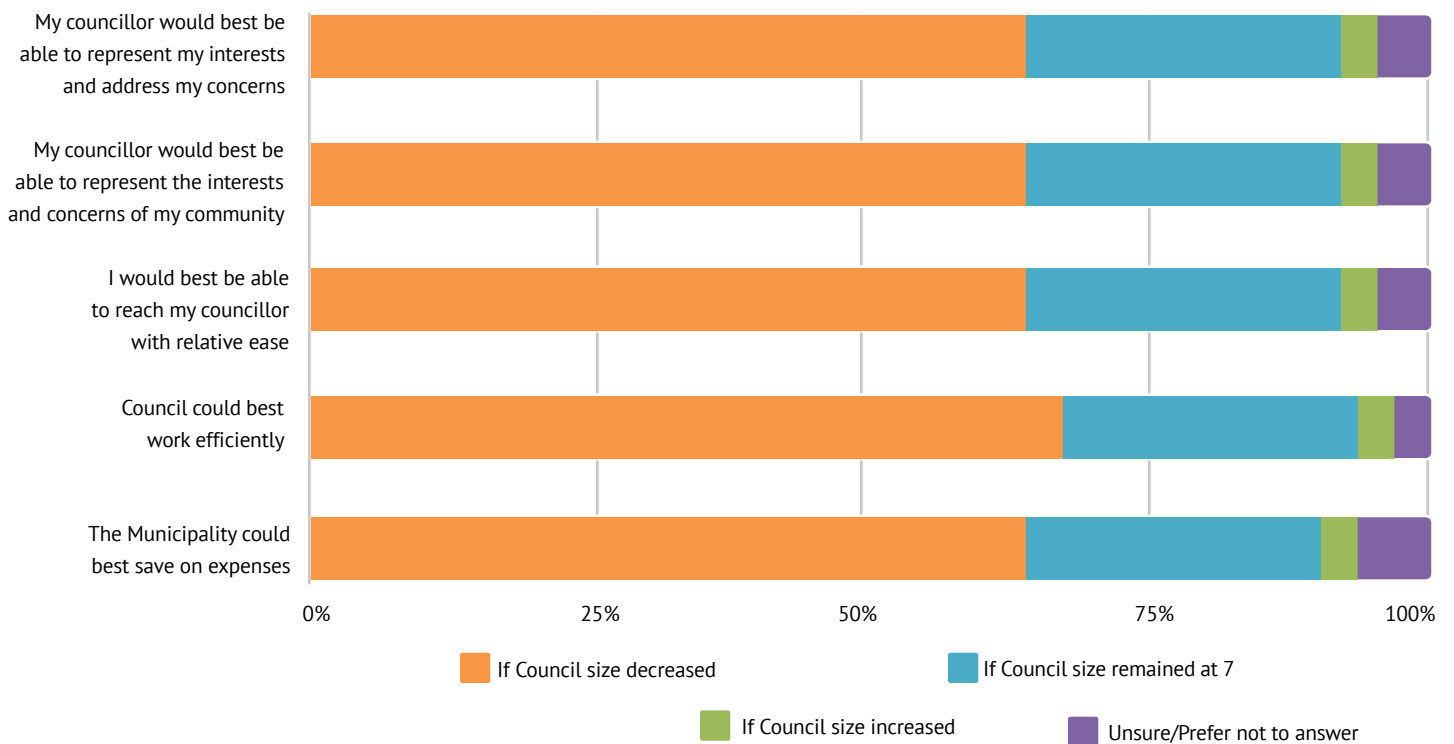
### Impacts of potential changes of Council size

We asked the community about their opinions on how representation and governance might be impacted by potential changes in Council size and, hence, in the number of councillors. To many of the questions that we asked, survey respondents felt that governance could be better improved with a decrease in the number of councillors.

### Changes to governance system

The Municipality currently operates under the Warden system. The majority of respondents indicated that they did not support a change to the Mayoral system, or were unsure/did not answer the question. Only 38% of respondents indicated supporting the possibility of transitioning to a Mayoral system.

Figure 3. What are your views on how council impact governance?





## 7.4 Public Survey Demographics

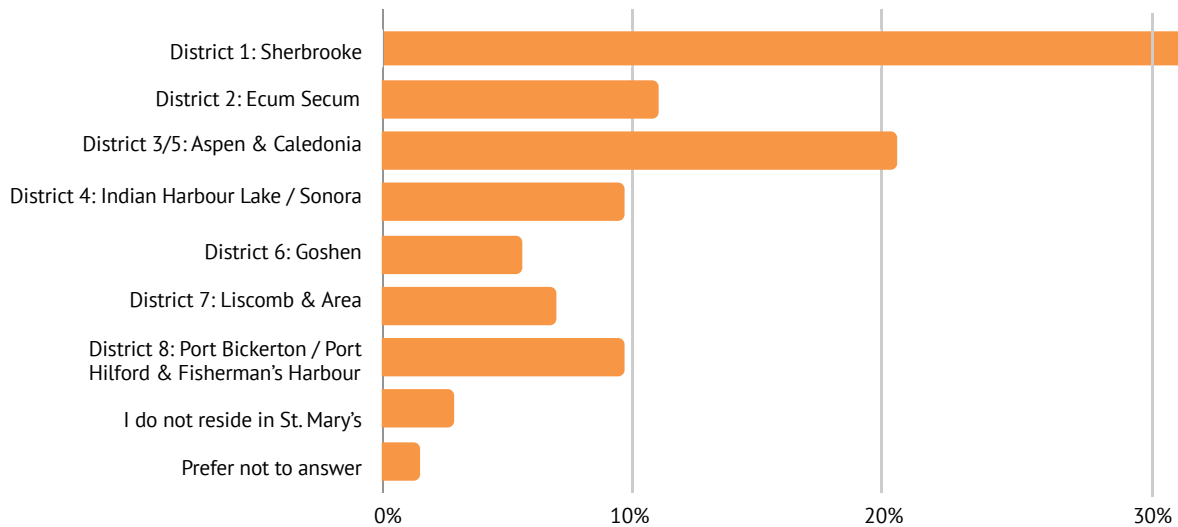
It is important to understand who answered to the survey, to ensure that the opinions that we're hearing are representative of the community. This gives us insights as to who we're hearing from and who we are missing.

### Polling District of Residence

The community of Sherbrooke is the service centre of the Municipality. The entirety of the community is divided into more than one district.

Close to 33% of survey respondents indicated living in District 1 in Sherbrooke, which is represented by Councillor Courtney Mailman. The second largest group of respondents (20.6%) resides in District 3/5, which is represented by Warden Weir and also encompasses the largest land area in St. Mary's.

Figure 4. In which polling district in the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's do you currently reside?



### Length of Residence in the Municipality

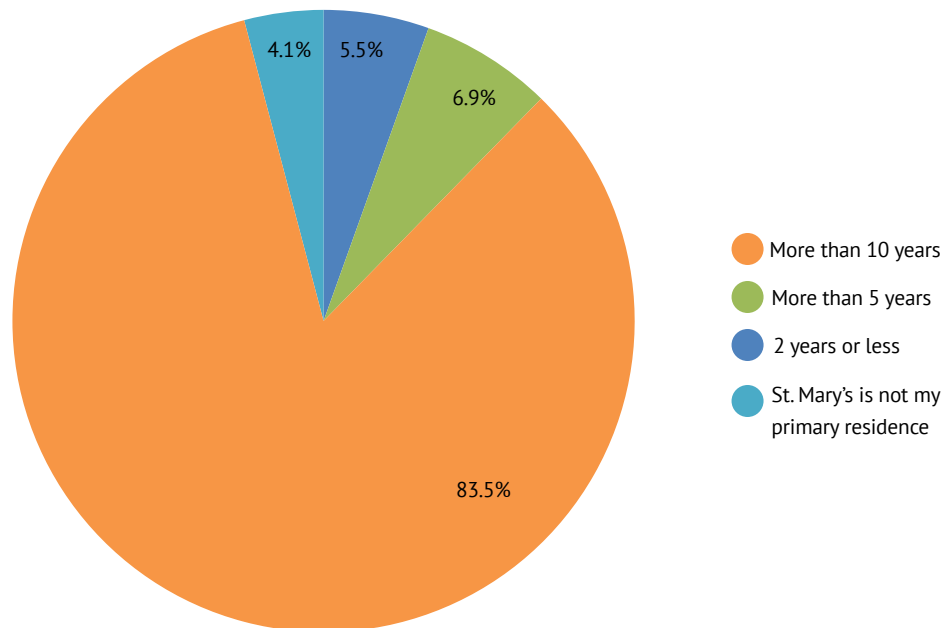
More than 80% of respondents indicated long-term residency in St. Mary's. Just under 13% of respondents indicated being fairly new to the Municipality, while around 4% of respondents not being residents in St. Mary's on a regular basis.

### Age

Around 55% of survey respondents indicated being between the ages of 35 to 64 years of age. 27% of respondents were over 65 years of age, and 15% of respondents were between 18-34 years. There were no respondents who were below the legal voting age.

Because the breakdown of age groups differs from the Census, we have not compared the statistics.

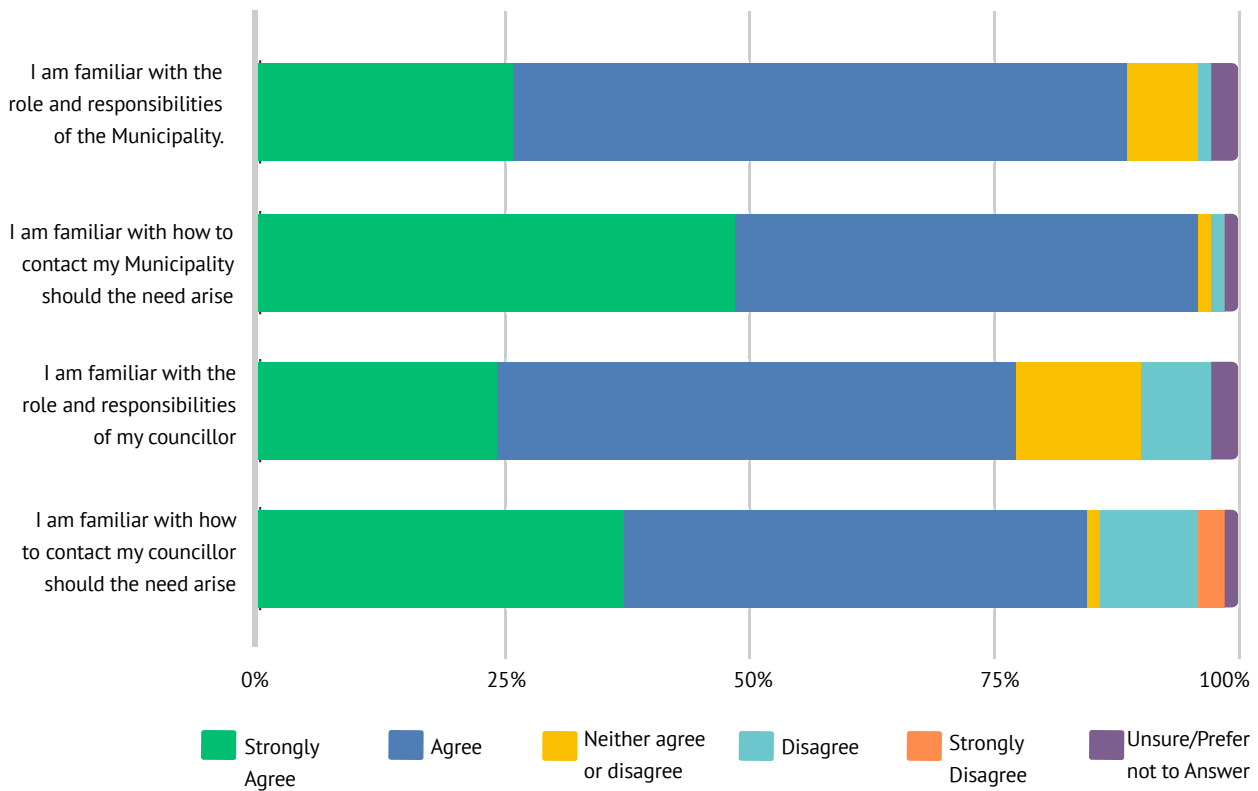
Figure 5. How long has the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's been your primary residence?



## Engagement with the Municipality

To see how engaged respondents are with the role of Council and the Municipality, we asked in the survey to rate their familiarity with certain aspects of their municipal government. For most of the statements that we posed, respondents seemed to be familiar with their municipal government and their councillors.

Figure 6. What is your level of agreement with the following statements?



# 8. Council Size Discussion and Recommendations

---

## 8 Council Size Discussion and Recommendations

The NSUARB recommends looking at two key factors when evaluating a municipality's Council size: number of electors and geographic size of the Municipality.

Given that a change in the Council size can impact the workload of Council and municipal staff, and impacts how residents are represented in the decision-making process, further factors must be taken into account.

## 8.1 Discussion

### Number of Electors

Each councillor in the Municipality currently represents an average of 259 electors, the lowest of any rural municipality in Nova Scotia. The Municipality of the District of Guysborough has the second lowest average number of electors per polling district, at 470.

In our survey, we also saw that the majority of respondents wanted to see a reduction in the number of councillors and, conversely, an increase in the number of electors that each councillor represents. This could impact councillors' workload. However, we heard through our interviews that most of their time is spent on formal council work and meetings, which would not be affected by the number of electors a councillor represents.

### Geographic Size

The vast geography of St. Mary's is a concern that was brought up, both in the interviews and in the survey. While we heard from some survey respondents that they wanted to be represented by someone who lived closer to them, contacting their councillors can also take place by email and over the phone.

Travelling to meetings hosted outside of the Municipality took the most time for councillors sitting on external committees. However, it was also emphasized that the frequency of those meetings is monthly or even quarterly in some cases.



### Community Representation

Improvement to internet access in St. Mary's has allowed residents to more easily connect with their councillors. While travel and road access can be a worry to councillors, there are now diverse ways that they can connect with their constituents. However, given that much of councillors' work relates to the formal aspect of the role and to committee meetings, travel to meetings must be taken into consideration, as well as the ways in which committee duties are divided.

Many survey respondents want to see three councillors providing leadership to the Municipality. This would also entail each councillor taking on a bigger workload. Although it might be manageable for some, this presents difficulties for those who hold other jobs. Given that the diversity in perspectives is a positive aspect of the current Council, the appropriate number should allow residents in different stages in their lives to put themselves forward as Council candidates.

As municipal staff provides significant support to Council, their capacities should also be considered.

### Financial Implications

The financial implications of a reduction in Council size must also be considered. Although the

majority of survey respondents saw a Council reduction a good way to save on expenses, a reduction on the number of councillors might not necessarily translate to a decrease in municipal expenses.

Instead, reflecting that workload might increase, along with the need to travel to meetings and with constituent work, special consideration must be given to how much councillors are being compensated. Reducing the Council size too much would mean potentially having to change the councillor positions into full-time ones, with the potential of risking the diversity of experiences that the current Council has.

Many of the written comments suggested decreasing Council size, but keeping the Council compensation budget the same (spread among fewer Councillors) to ease the burdens of the job and encourage more candidates.

### Recruitment of New Candidates

With more than half of the Council seats having been won by acclamation and with no districts having had more than two candidates running in the most recent municipal elections there are clear challenges in the recruitment of candidates for Council.

## 8.2 Recommendation

We understand that changing a municipality's Council size cannot be taken lightly. Potential changes can impact the workload that councillors and municipal staff have, as well as how residents are represented in the municipal decision-making process.

Taking into consideration the 2015 direction from the NSUARB, the decline in population, the different factors that we explored during our study, and residents' opinions on how they would like to see themselves represented on Council, we recommend that the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's reduce its number of polling districts and its Council size.

### Council Size

Assuming the above reduction, the question then becomes what is the appropriate Council size. While 46% of survey respondents wanted to see three councillors leading the Municipality, based on our analysis, this number might be too small.

With a low population density in St. Mary's, reducing the council size to just three would mean much more travel and time spent on the road

by each individual; the average district size is currently 311 square kilometres, and would increase to 727 square kilometres with a Council size of three. This also risks further reducing the potential pool of councillors to those who can approach the role as a full-time job, to the detriment of having a diverse slate of councillors around the table.

Thus, we recommend a council size of five be considered as the primary direction for exploring new electoral boundaries.

### Reaffirming the Warden System

We did not hear a strong desire from participants to explore a change to the Mayoral system, nor did our observation of the current functioning of the Municipality identify any particular challenges related to the current Warden system, so this study will not address this further.

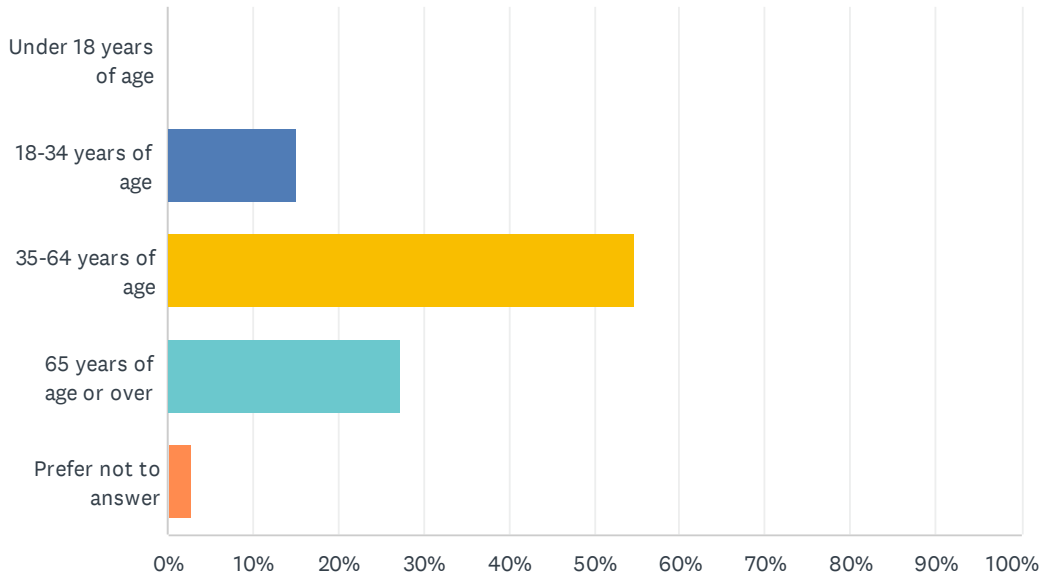


# Appendix A: Survey Results

---

# Q1 What is your age? Please select one option.

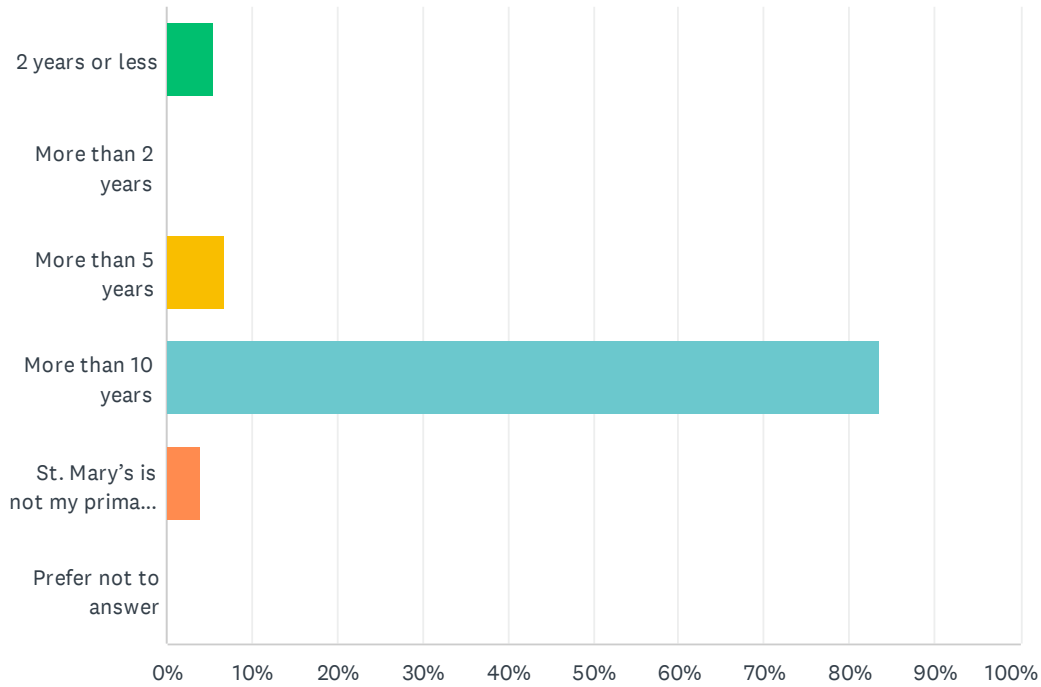
Answered: 73 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Under 18 years of age	0.00%	0
18-34 years of age	15.07%	11
35-64 years of age	54.79%	40
65 years of age or over	27.40%	20
Prefer not to answer	2.74%	2
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>73</b>

## Q2 How long has the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's been your primary residence? Please select one option.

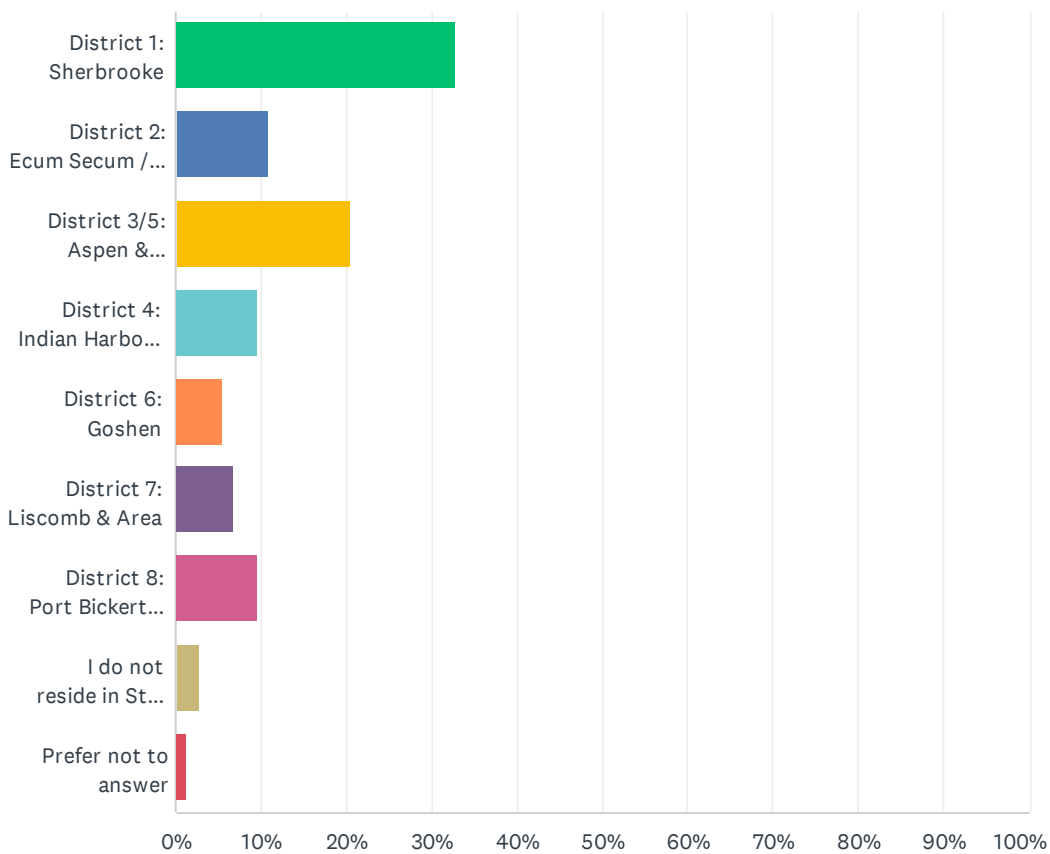
Answered: 73 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
2 years or less	5.48%	4
More than 2 years	0.00%	0
More than 5 years	6.85%	5
More than 10 years	83.56%	61
St. Mary's is not my primary residence	4.11%	3
Prefer not to answer	0.00%	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>73</b>

**Q3 To the best of your knowledge, in which polling district in the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's do you currently reside in? Please select one option. A map is available in the next section, and you can come back to this question.**

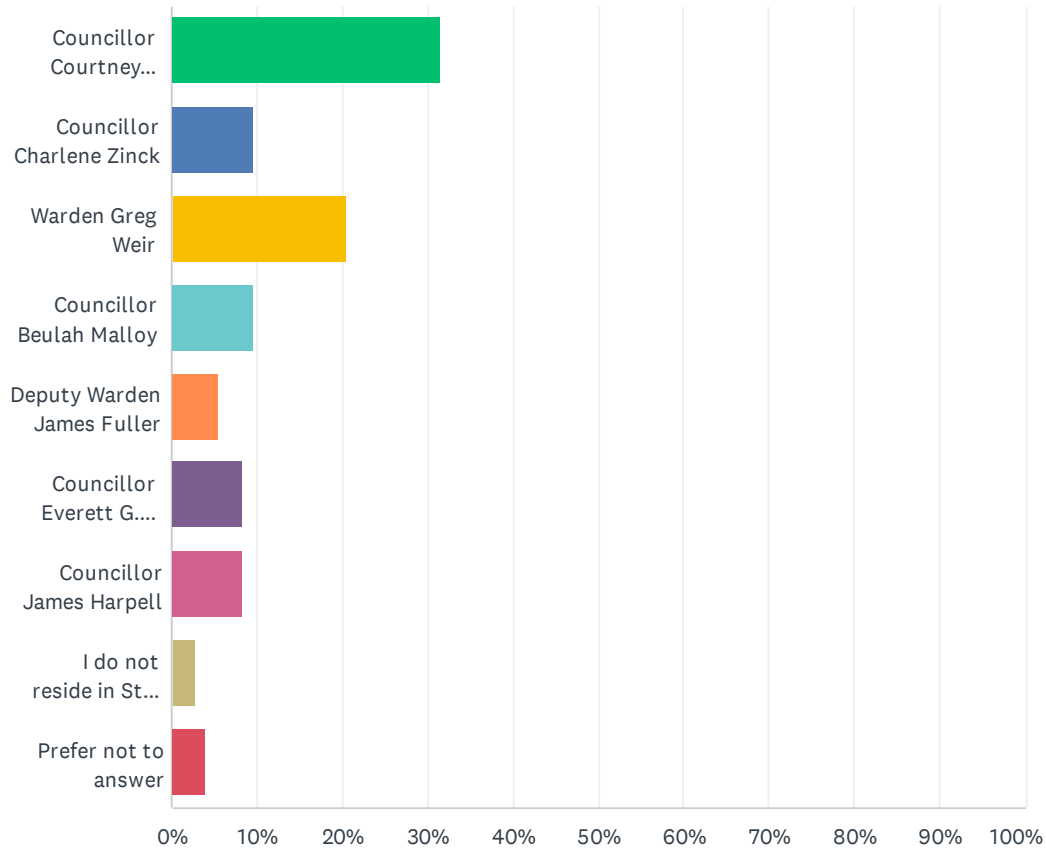
Answered: 73 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
District 1: Sherbrooke	32.88%	24
District 2: Ecum Secum / Marie Joseph	10.96%	8
District 3/5: Aspen & Caledonia	20.55%	15
District 4: Indian Harbour Lake / Sonora	9.59%	7
District 6: Goshen	5.48%	4
District 7: Liscomb & Area	6.85%	5
District 8: Port Bickerton / Port Hilford & Fisherman's Harbour	9.59%	7
I do not reside in St. Mary's	2.74%	2
Prefer not to answer	1.37%	1
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>73</b>

## Q4 To the best of your knowledge, who is the councillor representing your district?

Answered: 73 Skipped: 0

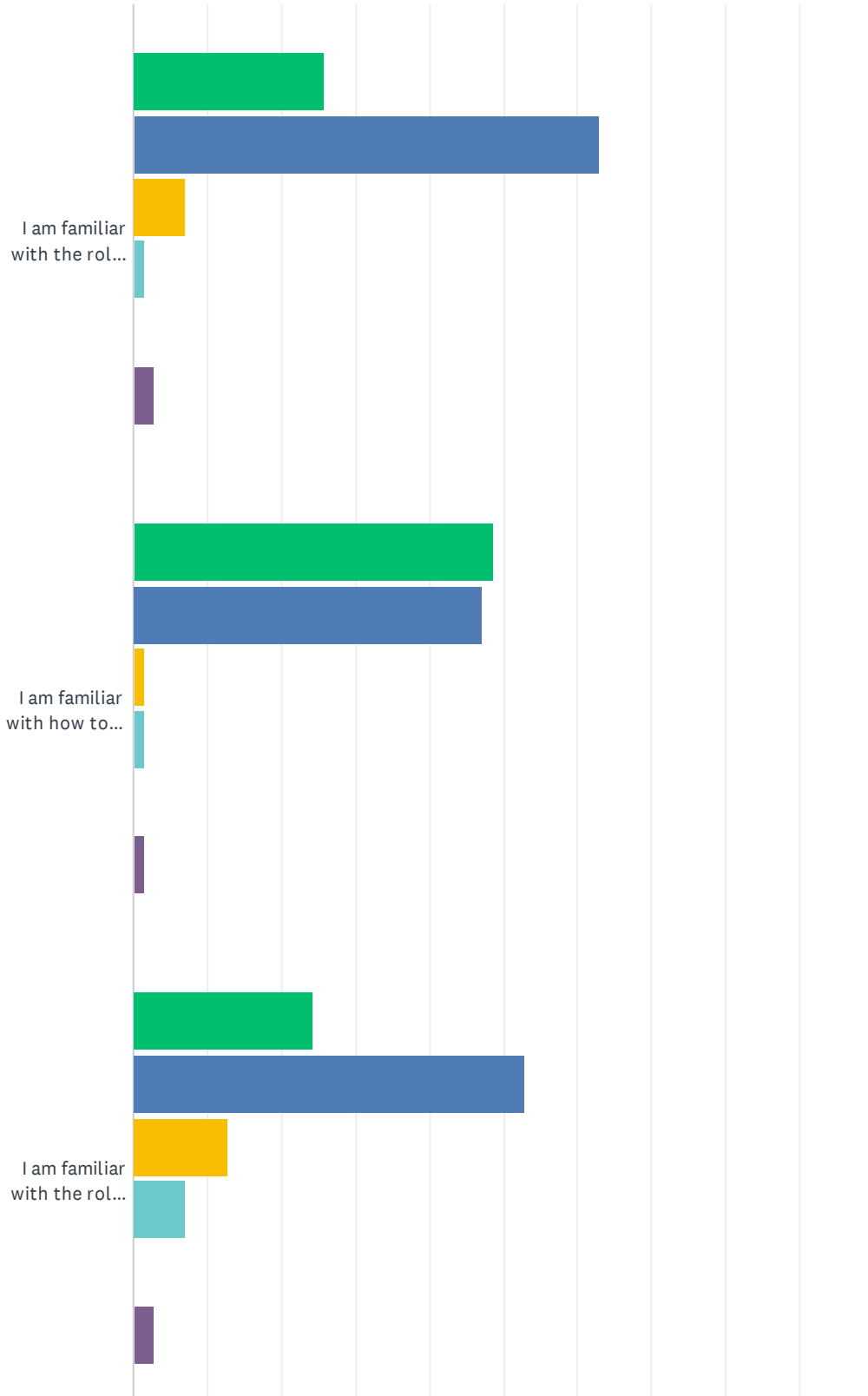


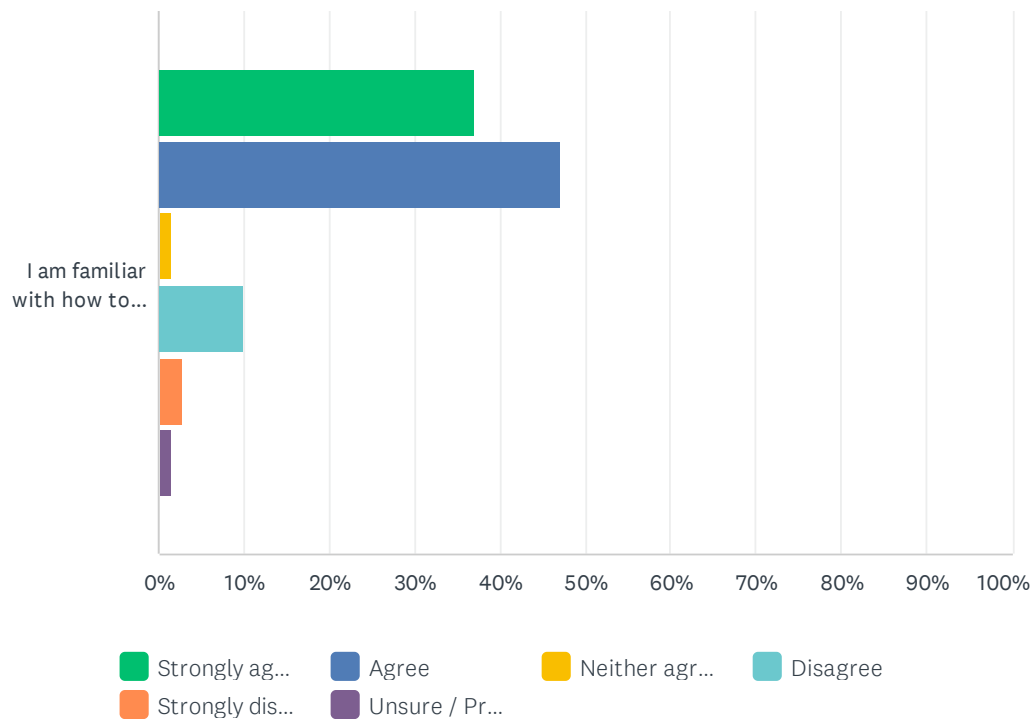
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Councillor Courtney Mailman	31.51%	23
Councillor Charlene Zinck	9.59%	7
Warden Greg Weir	20.55%	15
Councillor Beulah Malloy	9.59%	7
Deputy Warden James Fuller	5.48%	4
Councillor Everett G. Baker	8.22%	6
Councillor James Harpell	8.22%	6
I do not reside in St. Mary's	2.74%	2
Prefer not to answer	4.11%	3
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>73</b>



# Q5 What is your level of agreement with the following statements? Please select one option for each statement.

Answered: 70 Skipped: 3

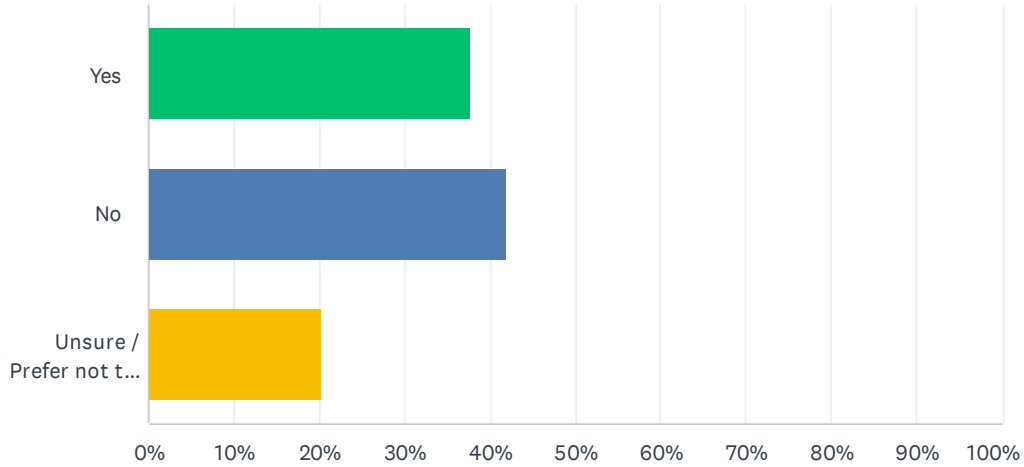




	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	UNSURE / PREFER NOT TO ANSWER	TOTAL
I am familiar with the role and responsibilities of the Municipality.	25.71% 18	62.86% 44	7.14% 5	1.43% 1	0.00% 0	2.86% 2	70
I am familiar with how to contact my Municipality should the need arise	48.57% 34	47.14% 33	1.43% 1	1.43% 1	0.00% 0	1.43% 1	70
I am familiar with the role and responsibilities of my councillor	24.29% 17	52.86% 37	12.86% 9	7.14% 5	0.00% 0	2.86% 2	70
I am familiar with how to contact my councillor should the need arise	37.14% 26	47.14% 33	1.43% 1	10.00% 7	2.86% 2	1.43% 1	70

## Q6 Taking the above into consideration, would you support the change to a mayoral system?

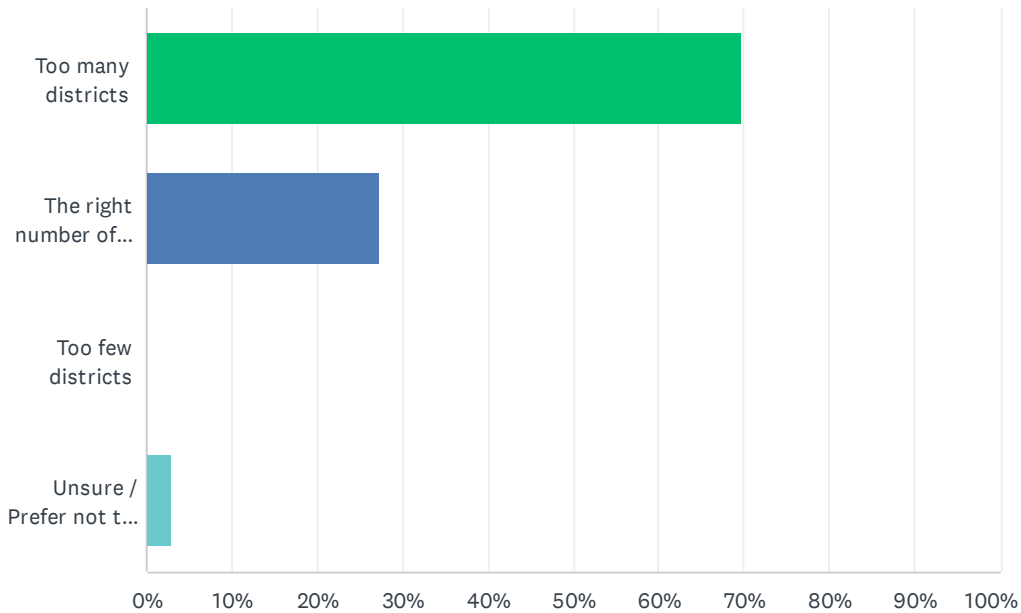
Answered: 69 Skipped: 4



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	37.68%	26
No	42.03%	29
Unsure / Prefer not to answer	20.29%	14
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>69</b>

### Q7 Seeing the above comparison, with regards to the number of polling districts in the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's, in your opinion there are:

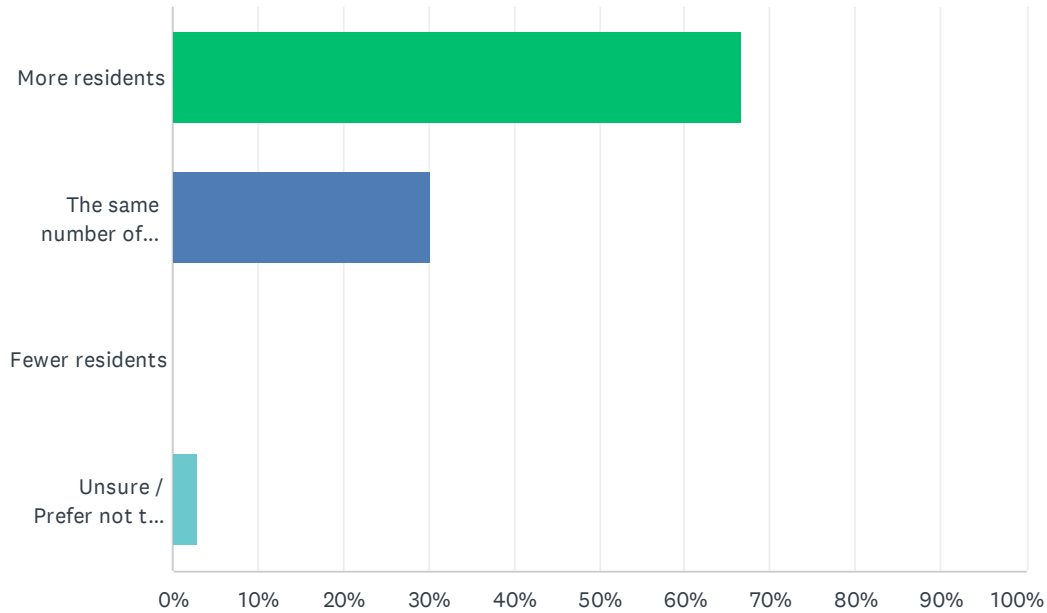
Answered: 66 Skipped: 7



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Too many districts	69.70%	46
The right number of districts	27.27%	18
Too few districts	0.00%	0
Unsure / Prefer not to answer	3.03%	2
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>66</b>

Q8 With regards to the number of residents that councillors represent in the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's, councillors should represent:

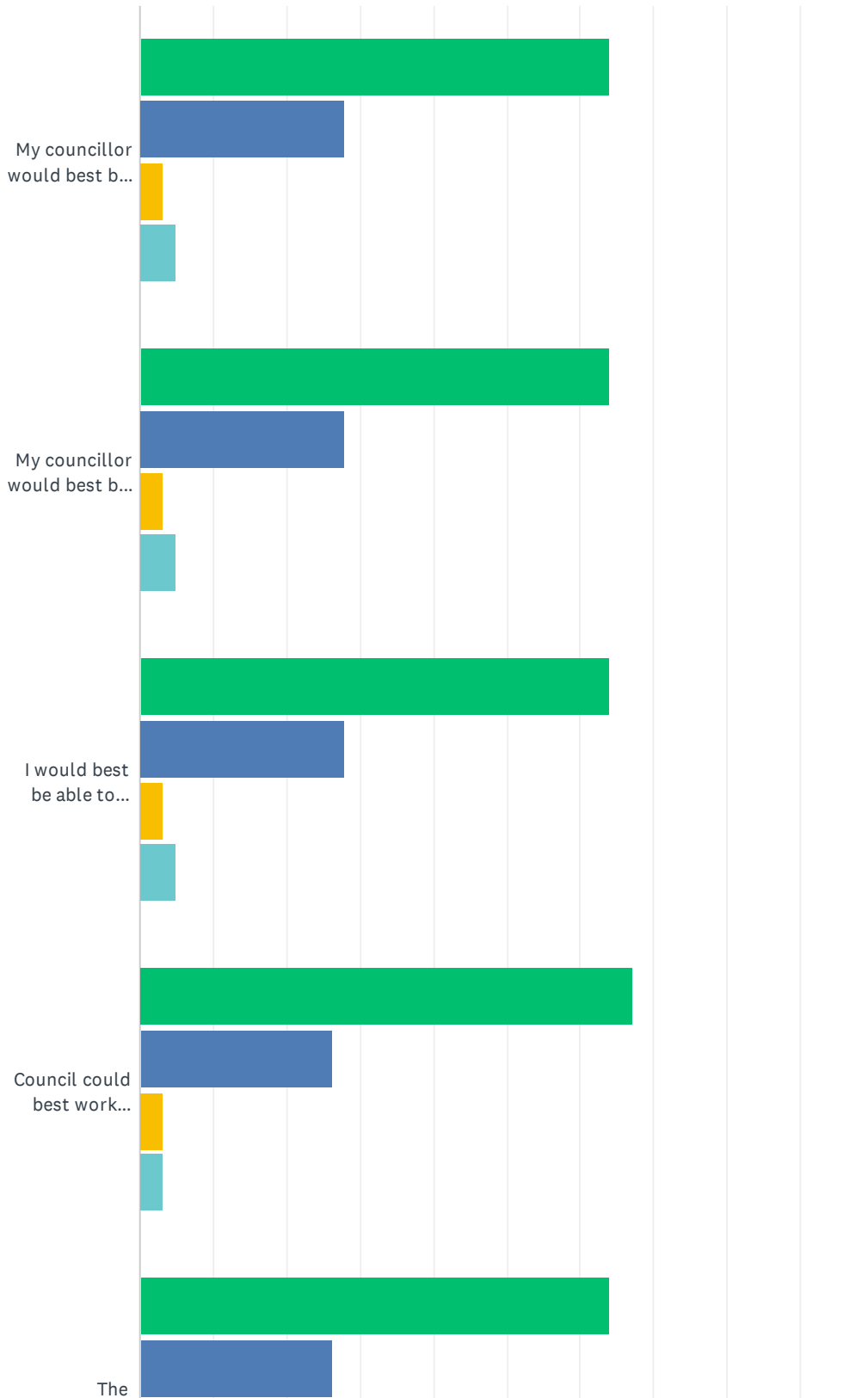
Answered: 66 Skipped: 7

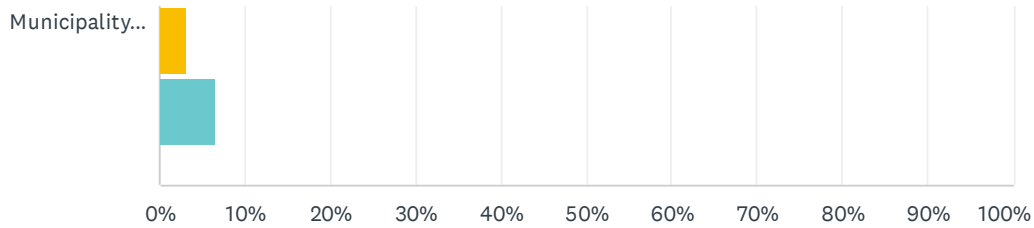


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
More residents	66.67%	44
The same number of residents	30.30%	20
Fewer residents	0.00%	0
Unsure / Prefer not to answer	3.03%	2
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>66</b>

# Q9 What are your views on how council impact governance? Please select one option for each statement.

Answered: 61 Skipped: 12



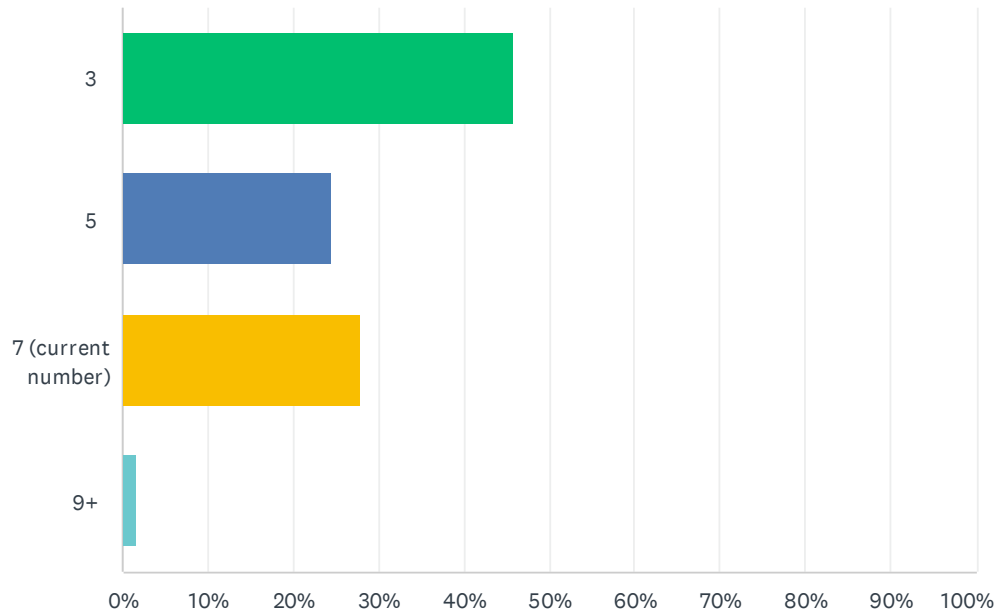


■ If Council si... 
 ■ If Council si... 
 ■ If Council si... 
 ■ Unsure / Pr...

	IF COUNCIL SIZE DECREASED	IF COUNCIL SIZE REMAINED AT 7	IF COUNCIL SIZE INCREASED	UNSURE / PREFER NOT TO ANSWER	TOTAL
My councillor would best be able to represent my interests and address my concerns	63.93% 39	27.87% 17	3.28% 2	4.92% 3	61
My councillor would best be able to represent the interests and concerns of my community	63.93% 39	27.87% 17	3.28% 2	4.92% 3	61
I would best be able to reach my councillor with relative ease	63.93% 39	27.87% 17	3.28% 2	4.92% 3	61
Council could best work efficiently	67.21% 41	26.23% 16	3.28% 2	3.28% 2	61
The Municipality could best save on expenses	63.93% 39	26.23% 16	3.28% 2	6.56% 4	61

# Q10 Changing the number of councillors means that the number of polling districts must also change. In your opinion, what would be the right number of councillors in the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's?

Answered: 61 Skipped: 12

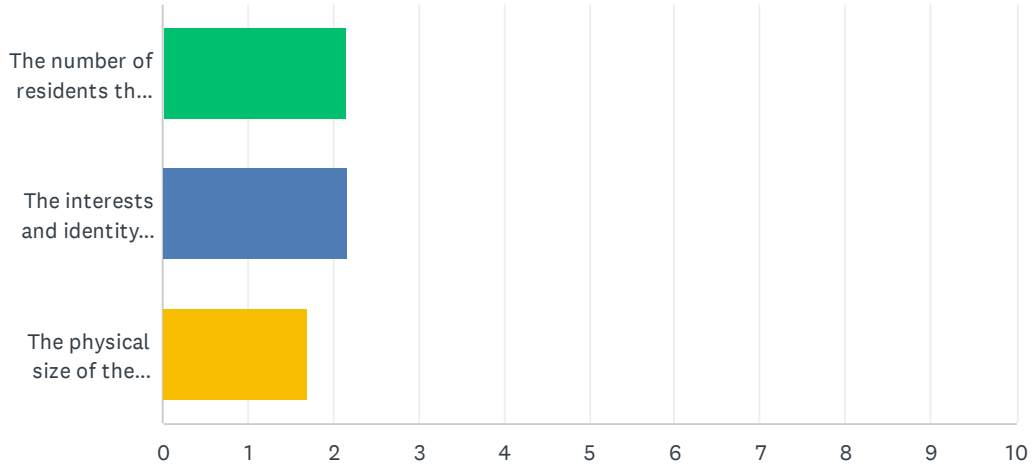


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
3	45.90%	28
5	24.59%	15
7 (current number)	27.87%	17
9+	1.64%	1
TOTAL		61



**Q11 To understand what is most important to the community, please rank these factors from 1 to 3 in order of importance, with 1 being the most important factor.**

Answered: 58 Skipped: 15



	1	2	3	TOTAL	SCORE
The number of residents that my councillor represents in my District.	29.09% 16	56.36% 31	14.55% 8	55	2.15
The interests and identity that I share with other residents in my District.	47.37% 27	22.81% 13	29.82% 17	57	2.18
The physical size of the District that my councillor represents.	23.21% 13	23.21% 13	53.57% 30	56	1.70

**Q12 Please use the field below if you have any general comments about the number of electoral districts in the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's.**

Answered: 30 Skipped: 43

Comments
<p>With such a large geographical area, districts should stay the same with the same number of councillors</p>
<p>I strongly believe we only need 3 councilors however I'd like the amount paid to our current council to remain the same but divided by 3 not 7 (so budget wise it stays the same). This would make the position of Councilor more appealing to potential candidates as well as make the Councilors more accountable. It would also make the position more of a "real" job instead of just a side job for retirees.</p>
<p>it is my belief, if the number of councilors were reduced to 3 that more could be accomplished within St. Mary's. If we took the budget of the current 7 councilors and divided that out to 3 we would create an opportunity. That being a pay scale that could entice people with education and experience to run for these positions. Currently with a pay rate of 12,000 or so there is no incentive for folks to run for these positions. I think this would create more opportunities for folks and perhaps more people could run for the positions. I'm not sure what the benefits vs drawbacks would be if we switched from a Warden to a Mayer system. Currently we operate from a ward-district system and I sure would like to see the newer and more modern system adopted. I would like to see a shift to an at-large system with 3 councilors.</p>
<p>Reduce to 3 at large and make them full time with reasonable salaries, so the work of a councilor becomes worth the time, they can be held more accountable, and we stop bickering among the small communities and work in a united way to improve this municipality.</p> <p>The current system is absolutely awful, with councilors not paid enough to care, too many of them, and an inability to attract enough quality people to the position.</p>

### Comments

Currently we have 7 seats, I believe this too many and would like to see the council size reduced to 3. I believe the work can be completed by three people, however, not under the conditions we currently ask councilors to operate. I am suggesting this reduction to three councilors not as a cost saving measure, but rather as providing the means and ability for a councilor to be able to perform their duties adequately. I would like to see the funds that are currently split between seven councilors divided amongst three. This would create a scenario where being a municipal councilor in St Mary's could be a full-time position and not something someone does in retirement or as a part-time gig. Based on the 2022-2023 municipal budget each of the seven municipal councilors receives remuneration of \$13,369, the deputy warden receives a further \$6076, and the warden \$8503. Needless to say, this amount does not create a scenario where a person could function with this as their sole income. Putting aside the additional funding for the warden or deputy warden, the seven councilors currently cost the municipality just over \$93,500, if we were to take those same funds and divide it by three councilors, they would then make just under \$31,200 a year. While this is still not an earth-shattering sum, it leads to a scenario where a citizen could see council as a viable career option. It also creates the environment where the expectation that councilors would work closer to full-time hours, compared to the current part-time hours expected of a councilor. With the expansion in our expectations for work it allows for a reduction of councilors at the table without a reduction in services or obligations associated with being a municipal councilor.

The second item I would like to consider concerns how we elect our representatives. We are currently in a ward-district system, which means the municipality is divided up into chunks and we elect a person from that specific area to represent those people. I would like to see a shift to an at-large system. The outdated view of requiring a representative from each community is one of the, in my opinion, reasons small rural communities are dying. Instead of looking at something that is happening to your neighbor as something that you lost, we need to look at it as a gain for the collective. By continuing with the siloed style of elected representatives under the district system we're continuing to encourage this archaic view on local representation. I believe that in order to see significant growth in our area we need to disregard this siloed view and thinking; what's good for Goshen is good for Sherbrooke, what is good for Port Bickerton is good for Caledonia etc. Just because it does not happen directly in your community does not mean that your community will not benefit. When you are elected as a municipal representative it is explained that your job is to make decisions for the betterment of the municipality, that is the municipality as a whole and not for one singular area. Shifting to an at-large system of voting would go further to modernize the way our municipal government functions. It would also deepen the pool with which we as citizens could elect. We are seeing a significant number of acclaimed seats every election, and while this may happen occasionally it is part of the democratic process to earn your seat through an election. Having a larger pool to draw candidates from will lead to greater competition, higher quality candidates, and consequently stronger council for the Municipality of the District of St Mary's.

<b>Comments</b>
<p>Too many councillors make for inefficiencies. Less councillors paid more (equaling same amount as paid for 7) will justify councillors to do more work as they may be able to work less and more for the municipality. Hence resulting in more work done for residents,</p>
<p>Too many councillors, too little election competition &amp; acclaimed candidates. Reducing expenses shouldn't be the goal, it should be to have more engaged council that cares and wants to put out the effort and looks out for entire municipality instead of geographic bickering and posturing.</p> <p>Maybe dividing into East, West and North, each having a stake in the main hub of Sherbrooke? Or not representing any geographic area? Or 2 councillors + a mayor to break ties.</p> <p>Things NEED to change, this municipality will continue to degrade if things don't.</p>
<p>I strongly believe there needs to be a shift in the number of municipal councillors. The municipal needs across each current districts are the SAME; same school, same hospital, same solid waste management and protective services requirements, same access to recreational activities. Individual community silos no longer serve us as a smaller population. Especially as the population is so spread out geographically. Council representation at large is the best option here, they are currently expected to make decision based on what's best for the Municipality as a whole, but with elected (acclaimed and incumbents) officials in each community they tend to serve personal interests instead. There is no need to pay 7 people to represent such a small population. The districts are currently divided by community (with exception of the last review - including the maple manor residents in sherbrooke with the liscomb district - only to even out the # of electors, not to serve any other purpose). The 1852 electors means each councillor has approx. 265 people compared to the next lowest population of 3756 electors in Guysborough where they have double the amount of electors per district. There has a struggle at election time the last 10 years or more with people putting their name on a ballot and it has caused many acclamations. By decreasing the # of councillors at the table, it would decrease the amount of acclamations. The increase in staffing costs comparative over the last 10 years has increased significantly. I see no reason to continue to have high cost, unqualified, councillors at the table when mostly the municipal elections do not give people the option to vote. If good-intentioned, qualified, passionate people become part of council the work can be done with a smaller number of them.</p>
<p>As far as a councillor address a issue, we'll that doesn't happen, they sweep things u see the rug or say that is policy, whether it is policy or not.</p>
<p>Less councillors, paid fulltime salaries - more responsibility and accountability</p>

<b>Comments</b>
Too many councillor's waste , Of money what can they really do.
Leave as is.
Too big an area to cut back on councillors
7 is the right number for this big area. I want my councillor in my area not an hour or more away from the area they represent.
A smaller council would not work for this area. Pay is not high enough, it would be too much of a time commitment alongside a day job and not enough to cover a full time pay. Leave at 7 please.
It's a shame some residents want to downsize our council size because they don't personally get along. We need 7 councillors.
We do not need 7 districts or 7 councillors to operate our small municipality. 3 councillors would be plenty and could possibly be 3 full time jobs
I do not believe this should be a cost saving measure, rather a different way to use the budget for less councillors to allow a larger stipend to help free more of their time to work for their constituents
Thank you for giving the public a chance to have their say . As you have indicated in this review the number of residents of just over 1800 and the number of councillors of 7 it is clear that there are way too many councillors representing out municipality . For example . The village of Sherbrooke has aprox 150 ish residents and has currently 3 ccouncillors depending in what part of the village one resides . This is not acceptable . I encourage you to take the time and listen to the audio of a couple of council meetings and you will see the current system is not working . In my opinion a group of three councillors would be able to much better represent the municipality as a whole . Since 2015 the municipality changed to the CAO system . Now when a issue is brought forth to a councillor they press forward and most questions are now answered by the CAO further indicating that the need for less councillors in the area . I am asking that you take these comments with merit and reduce the number of councillors to a number where these people could actually work together for the better of the municipality . 3 councillors is or would be a acceptable number of councillors for the District of St Marys . For Your consideration .
If council is made smaller we would lose diversity in the representation and identity of communities.
Far too many councillors, most of them are useless and do nothing.

<b>Comments</b>
We can't seem to attract good candidates, no one qualified wants to do this for the pay, so many acclaimed candidates, councillors don't respond to residents, don't read or get informed about anything and spend time arguing about stupid things instead of doing important things like opposing the mine that no one wants.
Maybe Amalgamation the whole of Guysborough County with Antigonish Town & Country would be a much better option than having 3 Councillors to represent 1,800 residents.
My concern is that our representative listens to our concerns and considers the whole of the district when making decisions. This is not happening at this time
St. Marys is very small in population. No need for so many councilors/districts. Can easily be done with less. Each community is no more important than the next and focus needs to shift to a municipality as a whole and with less - but more equipped councilors.
much more efficient with 3 districts
considering the population of the District of St. Mary's I feel there are too many Councilors
3
So many
TO MANY!

UPL▲ND