

EVANSDALE COMMUNITY LEAGUE
SERVING EAUX CLAIRES, BELLE RIVE AND EVANSDALE COMMUNITIES

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February 18, 2009

Mayor Stephen Mandel & City Council
City of Edmonton
via email:

Dear Mr. Mandel and City Councillors:

RE: **New Ward Structure Proposal:**

Two Councillor Wards Good for Communities:

Just like the City Wards, communities, community groups and other public service organizations operate using boundaries which have a long history in Edmonton.

We are writing to support the retention of the 2 councillor per ward structure. We do support the creation of a new ward to accommodate growth, but we do not support creating wards with only one councilor.

The reasons are based on our many years of experience of working with the City:

- **Representation on issues that count:** we are much better represented on the issues that really count by a two councillor system (*it's not how many BBQs a councilor can attend that is the measure of a good councilor, but how well they perform on the important issues that really matter to citizens*);
- **Balanced government:** we get better balanced representation by having two councillors (they do not always agree, but two councillors tend to moderate each others views and produce better decisions). Consider a ward with a fresh new councilor who is too cozy with campaign funders mixed with a seasoned veteran who has experience. Alone the new councilor might be very frustrating. On the plus side rookies bring fresh energy to council while the veterans temper things. Or consider another ward with a very socially conscious councilor paired with an business oriented councilor. Once again together you get good balanced representation, alone you get limited depth and no competition from another councilor to perform well. In a one councilor system you run a much higher risk of having a councilor that will not represent your issues because they simply not sensitive to your concerns;
- **Competition is good for you:** what can you say? Councillors competing with each other is not such a bad thing;
- **Keener factor:** on issues that really matter one councillor who really digs into the issue will inform his or her colleague of their learnings in ways that do not happen in council chambers (again citizens get better quality decision making);

- **Mentoring:** novice councillors get a certain amount of mentoring from more experienced councillors—and they in turn bring fresh ideas to some of the experienced councillors. Some of the learning comes from the struggle, but we can say without hesitation that citizens are better represented with two councillors;
- **Citizen representation:** there are many occasions when the ward or citizens in the ward would not get representation if not for the two councillor system (while the two may not always get along, citizens appreciate that one councillor will listen and act on a concern while another may not—**this happens all the time on issues** in my experience with a diversity of community issues.) ;
- **Community organization’s existing boundaries** (sports organizations, community leagues and others) are well established and the system seems to work well with the existing divisions of the wards. A 7 ward system could probably accommodate similar boundaries resulting in less change. A 6 or 7 ward system (instead of 12) only tinkers with this structure and does not throw the baby out with the bathwater ;
- **Teamwork:** even though councillors may not always feel like members of the same team, they are and we clearly see the benefits of shared wards and the teamwork that results;

Some councillors may like smaller wards, but there will **never be fewer meetings to go to.** Councillors will always have to pick and choose what’s really important to attend and whether they get a night off or not for their relatively low pay.

Evansdale Community League is presently located on the edge of a ward and through our work in our region with Area 17 we wind up working with at least four councillors at this end of town. They are a diverse mix of councillors! But taken together we usually get diverse and balanced representation as a consequence. This is a good system and we have experienced the benefits of the system and foresee few advantages and some significant disadvantages from smaller one-councillor wards.

Edmonton is growing and we recognize that it’s probably time to add a couple of councillors. But please hold on the 2 councillor ward system. Citizens will benefit from better government and Edmonton will continue to be a better City for it.

Sincerely,



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