



1593 Four Mile Creek Road
P.O. BOX 100, Virgil, ON L0S 1T0
905-468-3266 • FAX: 905-468-2959

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The Corporation of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake Information Report to Council

SUBJECT: Council Composition – Lower-Tier Municipalities within Niagara Region
DATE: 2026-03-24
REPORT #: CAO-26-015
PREPARED BY: Nick Ruller, Chief Administrative Officer
DEPARTMENT: CAO/Administration

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with information regarding the composition of municipal councils within the twelve lower-tier municipalities of the Niagara Region, including a comparison of council sizes and representation levels across municipalities.

At its meeting of March 3, 2026, Council directed Staff to return to the March Council meeting with an information report respecting Council composition across the region and outlining considerations associated with a potential reduction in Council size effective for the 2026 Municipal Election. This report responds to that direction by providing an overview of council composition across Niagara municipalities and identifying factors commonly considered when municipalities review council size.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The twelve municipalities within the Niagara Region are: Fort Erie, Grimsby, Lincoln, Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Pelham, Port Colborne, St. Catharines, Thorold, Wainfleet, Welland, and West Lincoln.

Each municipality is governed by a head of council and a number of councillors. Council composition and size are established by municipal by-law in accordance with the Municipal Act, 2001. Municipalities may elect councillors through either a ward-based system or an at-large representation model.

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake Council currently consists of the Lord Mayor and eight Councillors elected at-large.

ANALYSIS

Across the twelve municipalities in Niagara, there are over 100 elected lower-tier municipal-level officials serving on local councils. Council sizes vary based on population, historical governance structures, and local representation models.

Municipality	Council Composition
Fort Erie	Mayor + 6 Councillors
Grimsby	Mayor + 8 Councillors
Lincoln	Mayor + 8* Councillors
Niagara Falls	Mayor + 8 Councillors
Niagara-on-the-Lake	Lord Mayor + 8 Councillors
Pelham	Mayor + 6 Councillors
Port Colborne	Mayor + 8** Councillors
St. Catharines	Mayor + 12 Councillors
Thorold	Mayor + 8 Councillors
Wainfleet	Mayor + 4 Councillors
Welland	Mayor + 12 Councillors
West Lincoln	Mayor + 6 Councillors

*In August 2025, Lincoln approved a reduction in Council size from 8 to 6 members, effective for the 2026 municipal election

**Port Colborne Council has indicated its support for a reduction from 8 to 6 members and has formally requested provincial approval to implement this change ahead of the 2026 municipal election.

Representation levels also vary across municipalities when considering the approximate number of residents represented by each Councillor.

Municipality	Estimated Population	Councillors	Approx. Residents per Councillor
Fort Erie	~34,000	6	~5,700
Grimsby	~30,000	8	~3,750
Lincoln	~25,000	8*	~3,100
Niagara Falls	~94,000	8	~11,750
Niagara-on-the-Lake	~19,000	8	~2,375
Pelham	~18,000	6	~3,000
Port Colborne	~19,000	8*	~2,375
St. Catharines	~136,000	12	~11,300
Thorold	~24,000	8	~3,000
Wainfleet	~7,000	4	~1,750
Welland	~56,000	12	~4,700
West Lincoln	~15,000	6	~2,500

NEXT STEP / CONCLUSION

Municipal councils across Niagara's twelve lower-tier municipalities vary in size and representation structure, reflecting differences in population, governance needs, and historical arrangements. Council sizes range from four councillors in smaller municipalities to twelve in larger ones.

This report provides Council with a regional overview of these variations in council composition and representation to support informed consideration of governance options within the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake. The information is intended to provide context as Council evaluates potential changes to its composition, including the option of a reduced council size for the 2026 Municipal Election, subject to any required provincial authorization.

This report is provided for Council's information in response to Council's direction.

ATTACHMENTS

- N/A