



Counter-intuitive changes proposed for Canada's fastest growing community

By: Vivien Fleisher

Milton council, in a six to five vote last year, opted to go with a smaller council ahead of the 2018 election. After requesting and finally getting two more regional councillors, the decision was made to decrease council from eleven to nine: four local and four regional councillors plus the mayor, along with a plan to reduce the number of wards from eight to four, with the final configuration voted on at the December 12 meeting.

The option chosen would add a portion of the rapidly growing urban area of Milton to the predominantly rural part of the town. For Ward 3 residents, which is comprised of a uniquely rural and culturally distinct area formerly known as Nassagaweya Township, there are concerns that sharing just one local councillor and a regional councillor with a considerably denser chunk of the urban area threatens to not merely water down the rural voice, but potentially drown it out completely.

Ward 3 councillor Cindy Lunau said the six who voted in favor of 'option B' cited cost savings as

a reason, along with a simplification of ward boundaries. But out of four possible schemes presented by consultants hired by the town, Dr. Robert Williams of Watson/Williams recommended the one that would best preserve the rural area.

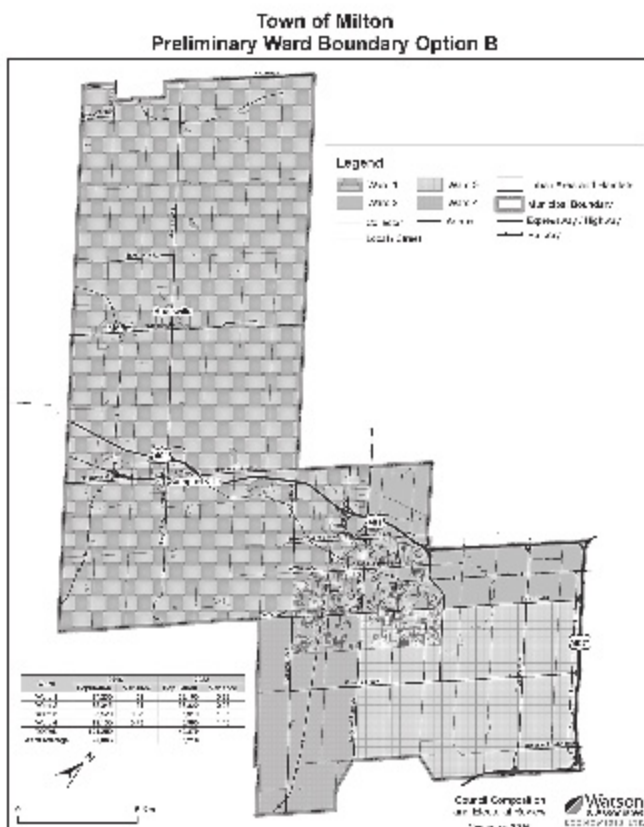
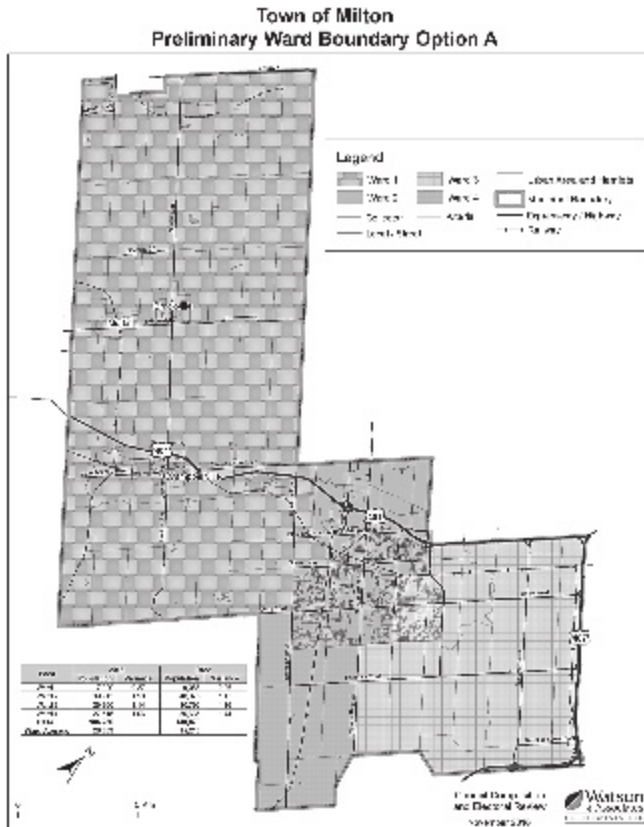
"Council went against the consultant's recommendation," Lunau said. Despite over 110 responses wanting anything but option B. "It splits the downtown area, and splits a neighborhood. And the population will overwhelm the rural voice." Those in favour say splitting it into four quadrants makes it easy to understand, but in Lunau's opinion, it totally ignores com-

munities of interest, and within this decision she sees four risks. First, that multiple viewpoints and access to an overburdened councillor will be jeopardized. Second, that the rural voice will be diluted. Third, that both diverse and new voices won't be heard, and fourth, that full-time politicians will be the result. The commitment required for the latter will potentially turn good candidates off.

She also pointed out that since amalgamation, Nassagaweya has always been Ward 3, but will now get changed to Ward 1, "splitting communities of interest with the only goal of convenient boundaries"

in the process. The obvious upshot is that by 2018, while all councillors must vie for re-election—just like a bad game of musical chairs—there will be four less chairs to have a shot at.

The decision is a done deal unless appealed to the OMB by the January 26 deadline. This decision compounds the already declining goodwill of rural residents toward council after last year's decision to even up the tax rate between urban and rural residents. As the rural voice loses value, Lunau recalls the town's old motto, "best of town and country," noting wryly, "it's quickly becoming best of town only."



MEETING DATES FOR 2017 BUDGET

Guelph/Eramosa taxpayers are invited to attend upcoming meetings regarding the 2017 Proposed Budget:

Date and Time	Purpose
Wednesday, January 11, 2017 at 9:00 a.m. in Council Chambers	Staff Presentation of 2017 Proposed Budget to Council
Wednesday, January 18, 2017 at 9:00 a.m. in Council Chambers	Continued Staff Presentation of 2017 Proposed Budget to Committee of Council
Thursday, February 2, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. in Council Chambers	Public input on the 2017 Proposed Budget
Friday, February 10, 2017	Deadline to submit comments for Council's consideration
Tuesday, February 21, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. in Council Chambers	Council consideration of the 2017 Budget

All meetings are open to the public and will be held at the Municipal Office in Council Chambers, 8348 Wellington Road 124, Rockwood. The public is encouraged to attend meetings and provide feedback on the Proposed 2017 Budget.

Comments can also be submitted by contacting a Member of Council:

Mayor Chris White
519-856-0450
chriswhite1@cogeco.ca

Councillor David Wolk Ward 1
519-836-0743
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Councillor Corey Woods Ward 2
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