

How Many Councillors?

The Halifax Regional Municipality has a population of roughly 373,000, and is governed by a regional council consisting of 23 councillors plus a mayor.

Each councillor represents about 16,000 residents on average – from a low of 13,382 residents in District 15 (Fairview – Clayton Park) to a high of 19,657 in District 3 (Preston – Lawrencetown – Chezzetcook).

Many feel HRM has too many Councillors and too many districts. There have been suggestions that the Council's size has contributed to the questionable quality of debate at meetings; to time wasted discussing unimportant issues of little interest to the majority of residents;

and to the lack of major accomplishments by the Council. Commentators also point to a 'sense of entitlement' attitude on the part of some councillors: one of 'I can get what my constituents want' at the expense of the municipality at large. It appears they feel that they can vote for extensions of services or provision of new services in their areas because the costs will be distributed over so many other districts that the local higher 'price' for the increased services will be negligible.

Some larger Canadian cities have very few councillors compared to HRM. Calgary, for example, has only 14 councillors to serve 988,000 residents (an average of one councillor for every 71,000 residents), and Edmonton has only 12 to serve a population of 730,000 (an average of 61,000). The most extreme example of 'under-representation' appears to be in Mississauga, where only nine councillors represent 669,000 residents, for an average of one councillor for every 74,000 residents. Councillors in these three cities together represent roughly 68,000 residents each – over four times the HRM figure of 16,000.

**Population by Polling District, Halifax Regional Municipality
Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Population**

<u>District</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Pop'n</u>	<u>Type of District</u>
1	Eastern Shore - Musquodoboit Valley	13,655	Rural
2	Waverley - Fall River - Beaver Bank	18,547	Suburban
3	Preston - Lawrencetown - Chezzetcook	19,657	Suburban
4	Cole Harbour	19,096	Urban
5	Dartmouth Centre	14,764	Urban
6	East Dartmouth - The Lakes	16,642	Urban
7	Portland - East Woodlawn	17,448	Urban
8	Woodside - Eastern Passage	17,523	Suburban
9	Albro Lake - Harbourview	15,829	Urban
10	Clayton Park West	14,829	Urban
11	Halifax North End	14,893	Urban
12	Halifax Downtown	14,420	Urban
13	Northwest Arm - South End	14,867	Urban
14	Connaught - Quinpool	13,845	Urban
15	Fairview - Clayton Park	13,382	Urban
16	Rockingham - Wentworth	14,202	Urban
17	Purcell's Cove - Armdale	14,527	Urban
18	Spryfield - Herring Cove	15,165	Suburban
19	Middle & Upper Sackville - Lucasville	17,657	Suburban
20	Lower Sackville	16,126	Suburban
21	Bedford	16,780	Urban
22	Timberlea - Prospect	19,377	Suburban
23	Hammonds Plains - St. Margarets	19,627	Suburban
		372,858	
	Average	16,211	

But other Canadian cities have what might be called an overabundance of councillors. Saint John, for example, has ten for its population of 68,000, an average of one councillor for every 6,800 residents. Kingston has 12 councillors for 117,000 residents (an average of 9,800), and Quebec City has 39 councillors for its 491,000 residents, for an average of 12,600. Together, each councillor in these cities represents roughly 11,000 residents on average – a considerably lower figure than that in most cities, but within range of HRM’s figure of 16,000.

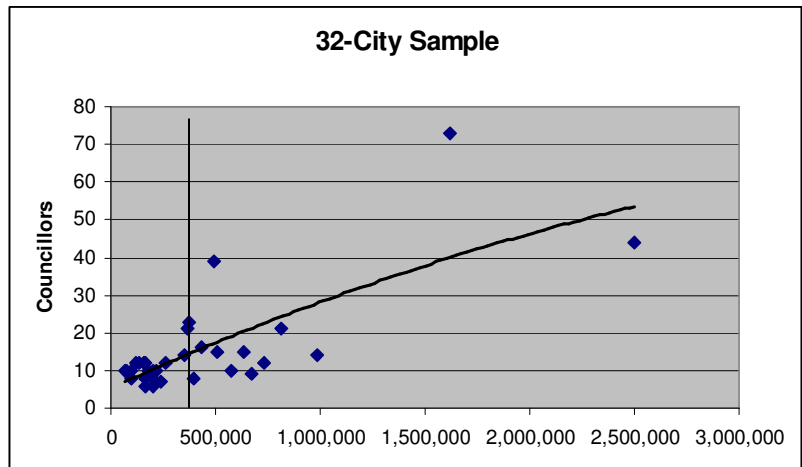
A comparison of the number of councillors in 32 Canadian cities and the populations they serve illustrates the differences between cities. To get a sense of the relationships inherent in the figures, it is instructive to plot the number of councillors in each city against the relevant populations.

The graph below to the right shows a cluster of cities (at the lower left), all of less than a million in population. They have a roster of councillors ranging from less than ten to roughly 20. There are three outlying cities – Montreal with 73 councillors, Toronto with 44, and Quebec with 39. A regression line (based on a two order polynomial for technically-inclined readers) shows the relationship between the populations and the number of councillors of each city in the 32-city sample.

To estimate the ‘appropriate’ number of councillors to serve the population of HRM using this approach, the figures for

Prov	City	Population	Council Size
ON	Toronto	2,503,281	44
QC	Montreal	1,620,693	73
AB	Calgary	988,193	14
ON	Ottawa	812,129	21
AB	Edmonton	730,372	12
ON	Mississauga	668,549	9
MB	Winnipeg	633,451	15
BC	Vancouver	578,041	10
ON	Hamilton	504,559	15
QC	Quebec	491,142	39
ON	Brampton	433,806	16
BC	Surrey	394,976	8
NS	Halifax	372,679	23
QC	Laval	368,709	21
ON	London	352,395	14
ON	Markham	261,573	12
ON	Vaughan	238,866	7
ON	Windsor	216,473	10
ON	Kitchener	204,668	6
BC	Burnaby	202,799	8
SK	Saskatoon	202,340	10
SK	Regina	179,246	10
ON	Oakville	165,613	12
ON	Burlington	164,415	6
ON	Richmond Hill	162,704	8
ON	Greater Sudbury	157,857	12
ON	St. Catharines	131,989	12
ON	Kingston	117,207	12
NL	St. John's	100,646	10
ON	Waterloo	97,475	8
ON	Peterborough	74,898	10
NB	Saint John	68,043	10

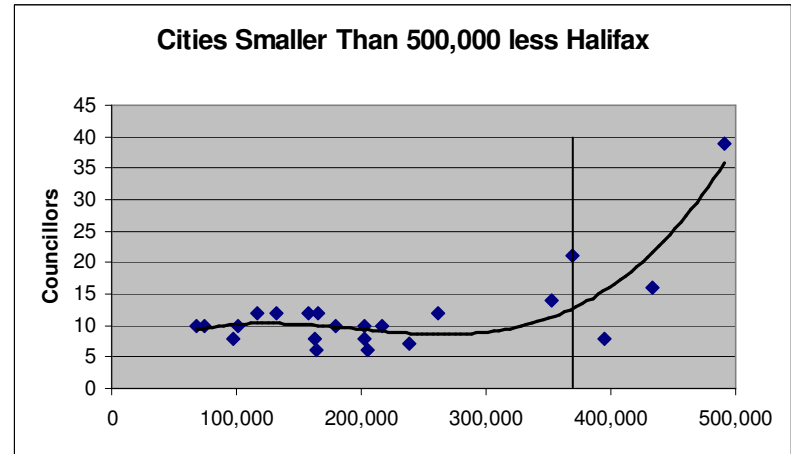
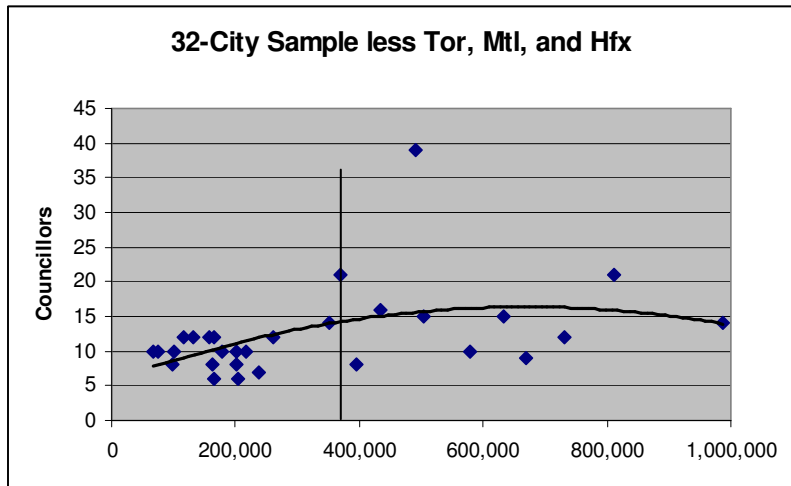
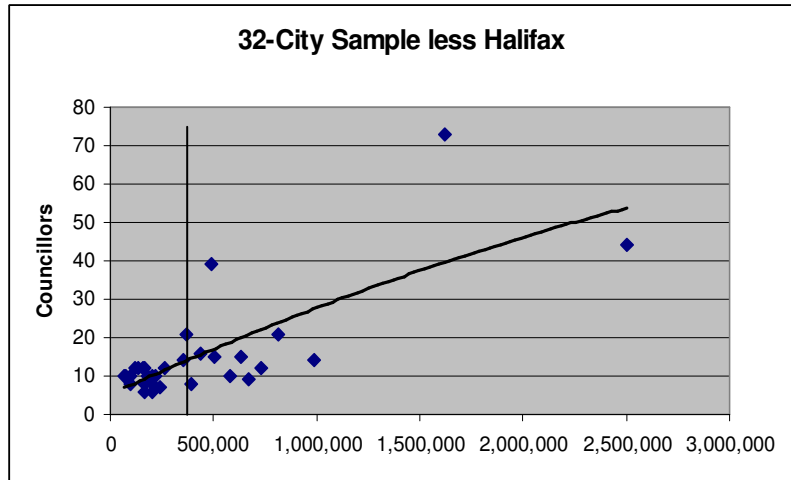
(Populations from Statistics Canada, 2006 Census)



HRM must be removed from the sample. The resulting graph is shown to the right. The vertical line at roughly 373,000 suggests that HRM 'should' have perhaps 14 councillors.

The two outlying cities of Toronto and Montreal may be sufficiently different from HRM, in terms of the number of councillors needed, that removing them from the sample could make sense. Removing them results in the graph to the right. Here, the regression line representing the relationship between population and number of councillors suggests again that HRM 'should' have 14 councillors for its 373,000 residents.

Even with Toronto and Montreal removed from the analysis, however, it could be argued that HRM falls in the low end of the population band, and perhaps conditions are different for smaller cities of less than, say, 500,000 residents. For very small cities, perhaps, residents might expect to know their councillors on a face-to-face basis. If cities larger than 500,000 are removed from the sample, the regression analysis suggests that HRM, with its 373,000 residents, 'should' have 12 or 13 councillors.



Based on this sample of other Canadian cities, it would appear that HRM 'should' have less than its current 23 councillors, and that the 'appropriate' number is from 12 to 14.