

**Priorities Committee Meeting\_Jan26\_2016**

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**STRATEGIC INITIATIVE AND UPDATE****GOV-002-032 Ward Boundary Review Policy  
Request for Additional Information****Report Purpose**

To provide additional information on electoral system options to assist the Committee in providing direction on GOV-002-032: Ward Boundary Review Policy.

**Council History**

October 13, 2015 – The Priorities Committee directed Administration to bring a report back to the Committee before the end of the Q1 2016 highlighting different electoral system options.

**Strategic Plan Priority Areas**

**Economy:** n/a

**Governance:** Voters have the right to both equal and effective representation. “Equal” representation requires that a single vote is equal to any other vote cast in the area regardless of location. “Effective” representation ensures that voters have the ability to access their elected representative equal in strength to the rest of the population. Recognizing that truly ‘equal’ and ‘effective’ representation is impossible to achieve, the Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that an allowable representation range of + or – 25% from the population mean is appropriate.

**Social:** Ward boundaries recognize and respect the importance of the urban and rural characteristics of Strathcona County and preserve communities of interest wherever possible.

**Culture:** n/a

**Environment:** n/a

**Other Impacts**

**Policy:** n/a

**Legislative/Legal:** The *Municipal Government Act* (MGA) and the *Local Authorities Election Act* (LAEA) govern processes associated with municipal elections. The legislation allows municipalities to establish electoral boundaries for municipal elections and to determine the number of councillors for each ward.

**Interdepartmental:** Information Technology Services, GIS Branch, Planning & Development Services, Communications

**Summary**

On October 13, 2015, Legislative and Legal Services presented the Draft Ward Boundary Review Policy at the Priorities Committee meeting for comment and direction, prior to bringing the revised policy forward to Council for approval. The Committee requested additional information on the different types of electoral systems to prepare them better for a discussion on the policy content.

There are three types of electoral systems used at the municipal level in North America: ward-based, at-large and a mixed system which incorporates both at-large and wards. Each system has its perceived advantages and disadvantages and municipalities’ experiences with the different systems have been highly varied. Enclosure 1 provides a comprehensive breakdown of the three types of electoral systems.

Strathcona County last revised its ward boundaries in 2006 when it increased its total number of wards to eight; five urban and three rural. The history of Strathcona County's ward boundaries is outlined in Enclosure 2.

As part of the research conducted by Legislative and Legal Services, 37 municipalities across Alberta and Canada were surveyed to gain an understanding of the types of electoral systems in use and how municipalities conduct their ward boundary reviews. The results of this survey can be found in Enclosure 3.

The next municipal election will be held on October 16, 2017. Should Council choose to make changes to the electoral system or the number of Councillors, the review must be completed in a timely manner to ensure that our Ward Boundary Bylaw is passed within the timelines set out in the *Municipal Government Act*. The legal time constraints and administrative considerations are outlined in Enclosure 4.

Enclosure 5 summarizes the case law and legislation that support generally accepted guiding principles used when conducting a ward boundary review. Also included is a table that identifies which guiding principles were used in recent ward boundary reviews completed by Alberta municipalities. For ease of reference, the 2003 Council approved ward boundary objectives and guiding principles also form part of Enclosure 5.

The City of Edmonton and the City of Calgary are the only two municipalities that were surveyed who have a Ward Boundary Policy. These policies are attached for reference in Enclosure 6.

#### **Enclosures**

- 1 Types of Electoral Systems
- 2 History of Strathcona County's Division/Ward Boundaries
- 3 Consultation with Other Municipalities
- 4 Legal Time Constraints and Administrative Considerations
- 5 Guiding Principles of Ward Boundary Reviews
- 6 City of Edmonton and City of Calgary Ward Boundary Policies
- 7 Ward Boundary Review PowerPoint Presentation