

Guiding Principles of Ward Boundary Reviews

Alberta legislation does not outline specific criteria for conducting a ward boundary review at the municipal level. However, there are certain generally accepted principles that should be considered when creating municipal ward boundaries. Specifically, that ward boundaries should be created to ensure both equal and effective representation of electors.

In 1991, the ruling of the Supreme Court of Canada in the Carter Case (*Reference re Provincial Electoral Boundaries (Sask)*, [1991] 2 SCR 158) highlighted the importance of not only considering the equality of voting power but also taking into account factors such as geography, community history, community interests and minority representation to ensure effective representation when creating ward boundaries.

While not binding on this process, consideration should be given to the *Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act*, RSC 1985, c E-3 (federal legislation). This Act sets out rules for boundary commissions which take into account population, communities of interest, community identity, historical patterns and geographical size for districts in sparsely populated or rural regions.

When developing electoral boundaries at the provincial level in Alberta, under the *Electoral Boundaries Commission Act*, RSA 2000, c E-3 (Alberta legislation) the Commission will take into consideration: effective representation, the sparsity and density of population, common community interests, existing municipal boundaries, geographical features and the desirability of understandable and clear boundaries.

The table on the following page shows a comparison of the guiding principles used by five Alberta municipalities who have completed recent ward boundary reviews.

Guiding Principles from other Municipal Ward Boundary Reviews in Alberta

Municipality	Year Completed	Population	Effective Representation	Communities of Interest	Representation by Population	Population trends	Natural and Physical Features	Other Principles Used
Parkland County	2015	30,568		√	√		√	
Mountain View County	2009	12,359	√	√	√	√	√	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural interest: ensure different types of economic interests are represented on in rural jurisdictions.
Clearwater County	2012	12,278			√		√	
City of Edmonton	2010	877,926	√	√	√	√	√	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respecting Community League boundaries • Least number of changes • Block Shaped wards
City of Calgary	2015	1,195,194	√	√	√	√	√	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Block shaped wards • Environmental mix: wherever possible try to equalize distribution of commercial, rural, industrial and green space • historical ward boundaries

Ward Boundary Objectives and Guiding Principles

Approved by Council in 2003

WARD BOUNDARY OBJECTIVES

- To provide effective representation;
- To balance the workloads of the elected officials;
- To recognize the unique blend of urban and rural lifestyles;
- To establish municipal ward boundaries that are consistent with municipal plans including plans for growth;
- To streamline election processes and reduce voter confusion through boundaries that are coterminous, where possible, with Elk Island Public and Elk Island Separate School Divisions;
- To establish municipal ward boundaries that will serve residents for the next two elections (2004 and 2007);
- To provide stability in elected representation by retaining as much of the current electoral boundary structure as possible.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Municipal ward boundaries will be established based on the following key guiding principles:

- To meet all statutory and legal requirements;
- To provide effective representation for all residents of Strathcona County;
- To use demographic information based on the most recent official Census data available;
- To seek opportunities to establish common boundaries with other local authorities within Strathcona County;
- To consider opportunities to use geographical features as boundaries;
- To recognize and respect the importance of the urban and rural characteristics unique to this municipality;
- To preserve all communities of interest where possible;
- To respect municipal plans including plans for future growth;
- To provide a system that can adapt, without major adjustment and within reason, to plan for future growth.