

Ward Boundary Review Policy

References: Municipal Government Act, RSA 2000, c M-26 (MGA), s. 89(3)(a)
MGA s. 148
Strathcona County Bylaw 59-2006: Municipal Ward Boundaries

Cross-reference:

Policy Statement

Equal and effective representation is fundamental to any democratic electoral system and is the primary goal of a ward boundary review. Equal representation is the principle that all votes should have equal weight and therefore the number of people living in each ward should be similar. Effective representation ensures that voters have the ability to access their elected representative equal in strength to the rest of the population.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the criteria to be used when developing options for ward boundary changes. The policy will establish responsibilities in the ward boundary review process and define the framework of the review including timing and stakeholder involvement.

Definitions

Electors – persons eligible to vote in an election.

Population – the number of people who live in an area.

Urban/Rural Wards – The urban wards are 1, 2, 3, 4, 8. The rural wards are 5, 6 and 7.

Ward – division of the municipal boundaries into areas to achieve equal and effective representation.

Guidelines

1) CRITERIA

Municipal ward boundaries will be established based on the following criteria:

- a) Population/Number of Electors – the primary factor in designing ward boundaries will be total population; attempting to ensure that population is relatively equal between urban wards and relatively equal between rural wards. Maintaining a relatively equal number of Electors in each ward will also be considered, but the primary factor in

designing ward boundaries will be population. Population and elector data will be taken from the most recent municipal census data.

- b) Deviation – the maximum allowed deviation from the mean population of the Urban Wards is +/- 25%. The maximum allowed deviation from the mean population of the Rural Wards is +/- 25%. If the deviation exceeds the +/- 25% threshold following the first completed census after a municipal election, a ward boundary review will take place prior to the next municipal election.
- c) Future Growth – ward boundaries will be designed with the intent of lasting a minimum of two municipal elections and therefore the potential for growth in each ward over the next ten years will be taken into consideration. The wards with more stable populations will have higher populations within the +/- 25% deviation and the wards containing future growth areas will have lower populations within the +/- 25% deviation.
- d) Communities of Interest – all efforts will be made to ensure that residential subdivisions are kept within the same ward. Considering Strathcona County's unique specialized municipality status, in order to ensure effective representation, urban and rural interests will be taken into consideration when developing ward boundaries.
- e) Geographical Features – wherever possible, ward boundaries will be readily identifiable to the public by using both natural and human-made geographical features including significant topography and major streets.
- f) Least Number of Changes – to provide stability in elected representation, ward boundary proposals should include the fewest changes possible to achieve the desired results.
- g) Block-Shaped Wards – ward boundaries are to be designed relatively block-shaped with straight sides insofar as possible.

2) RESPONSIBILITIES

- a) The Returning Officer will:
 - i) Following the first completed municipal census after a municipal election, provide Council with a summary of the census data which will include:
 - (1) A breakdown of the current population and eligible voters by ward and voting subdivision;
 - (2) Current levels of deviation from the mean population and eligible voters per ward; and
 - (3) Potential ward boundary adjustments required before the next municipal election.
 - ii) If the deviation exceeds the +/- 25% threshold or if directed by Council, develop ward boundary proposals based on the criteria contained in this policy or as agreed upon by Council.
 - iii) Work closely with internal and external stakeholders to understand the impact of any changes to the ward boundaries.
 - iv) Present to Council the ward boundary proposals.

- v) Bring forward a bylaw to Council to adopt the ward boundary changes.
- vi) Implement the approved ward boundaries.
- b) Council will:
 - i) Advise the Returning Officer of any recommendations or changes that are desired to the ward boundaries.
 - ii) Direct the Returning Officer to conduct a ward boundary review and prepare boundary proposals for Council's consideration;
 - iii) Decide on the manner in which the ward boundary review will be conducted;
 - iv) Provide direction on the proposals and recommendations presented by the Returning Officer.
 - v) Decide upon and adopt any changes to the ward boundaries by passing the required bylaw no later than October in the year prior to a general municipal election.

Policy Record

Date of Approval by Council: April 5, 2016

Resolution No: 2016/116

Next Review Date: January 14, 2025

Policy No: GOV-002-032

Last Review Date: January 14, 2022

Replaces: N/A

Administrative Review: Legislative and Legal Services