

Committee of the Whole (Working Session) Report

DATE: Wednesday, May 3, 2023

WARD(S): ALL

TITLE: DIRECTION FOR WARD BOUNDARY AND COUNCIL
COMPOSITION REVIEW 2023

FROM:

Wendy Law, Deputy City Manager, Legal and Administrative Services & City Solicitor

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

To provide committee with options for conducting a Ward Boundary and Council Composition Review.

Report Highlights

- The last Ward Boundary Review was conducted in 2020 and did not include a Council Composition Review. No changes were approved to the ward boundaries at the conclusion of that review.
- The City of Vaughan's current ward boundaries were imposed by order of the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) in 2009 and have not been updated since that time.
- As of the 2022 Municipal Election, each local councillor now represents approximately 44,904 electors.
- The electoral population of the city's present wards varies from 51,324 in Ward 1 to 35,314 in Ward 4. Council direction is being sought to consider whether to conduct a Ward Boundary and Council Composition Review to assess updates to the configuration and number of wards in the City of Vaughan.

Recommendations

1. That Committee provide direction on the follow options:
 - a. Conducting a Ward Boundary Review only;
 - b. Conducting a Ward Boundary Review together with a Council Composition Review; or
 - c. Not proceeding with a Ward Boundary or Council Composition Review at this time.

Background

In 2020, at the direction of Council, the City of Vaughan undertook a Ward Boundary Review to assess and report back on options to reconfigure the City's existing five wards to better reflect changes in population growth since the existing ward structure was adopted by order of the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) in 2009. The City retained Watson and Associates Economists Ltd. in association with ICA Associates, and Dr. Robert J. Williams and Dr. Zachary Spicer to serve as the consultant team to conduct an independent, comprehensive and expert-driven Ward Boundary Review.

The final report of the consultant team was received by Council at its meeting of June 22, 2021, with no changes made to the existing five ward structure in place today. Members of Council expressed an interest in re-exploring the matter in the new term, with a more comprehensive scope that would include a review of council composition following feedback received during the ward boundary consultations that indicated a growing desire from members of the community for additional local ward representation on council.

Previous Reports/Authority

[2020 Ward Boundary Review Final Report](#). (June 22, 2021)

Analysis and Options

Ward Boundary Review

The City of Vaughan's current ward boundaries were established by order of the OMB in 2009, using 2006 Census data which was considered during the 2009 Ward Boundary Review. These ward boundaries were presumed to ensure adequate representation through the 2010, 2014 and 2018 Municipal Election at the latest. The 2020 Ward Boundary Review provided the following on future population growth:

Ward	2021 Population	2030 Population	2021-2030 Population Growth	2021-2030 Population Growth Share
Ward 1	77,420	110,300	32,880	48%
Ward 2	56,200	61,570	5,370	8%
Ward 3	69,910	77,860	7,950	12%
Ward 4	67,850	88,220	20,370	30%
Ward 5	68,660	70,950	2,290	3%
City-wide	340,000	408,900	68,900	100%
Ward Average	68,010	81,780	-	-

Table 1. City of Vaughan Population Growth, 2021 to 2030 (Source: 2020 Ward Boundary Review Final Report, Watson & Associates Economists Ltd. 2021.)

Data on electors from the 2018 and 2022 elections are as follows:

Ward	2018 Electors	2022 Electors	Growth	2022 Total Electors Represented	2022 Deviation from Average
Ward 1	45,439	51,324	12.95%	22.86%	+13.34%
Ward 2	38,890	41,769	7.40%	18.6%	-7.23%
Ward 3	42,522	47,171	10.93%	21%	+4.92%
Ward 4	28,580	35,314	23.56%	15.72%	-23.91%
Ward 5	46,823	48,943	4.53%	21.8%	+8.61%
Average	40,451	44,904	11.01%	20%	-

Table 2. VoterView Elector Data 2018 and 2022 Municipal Elections

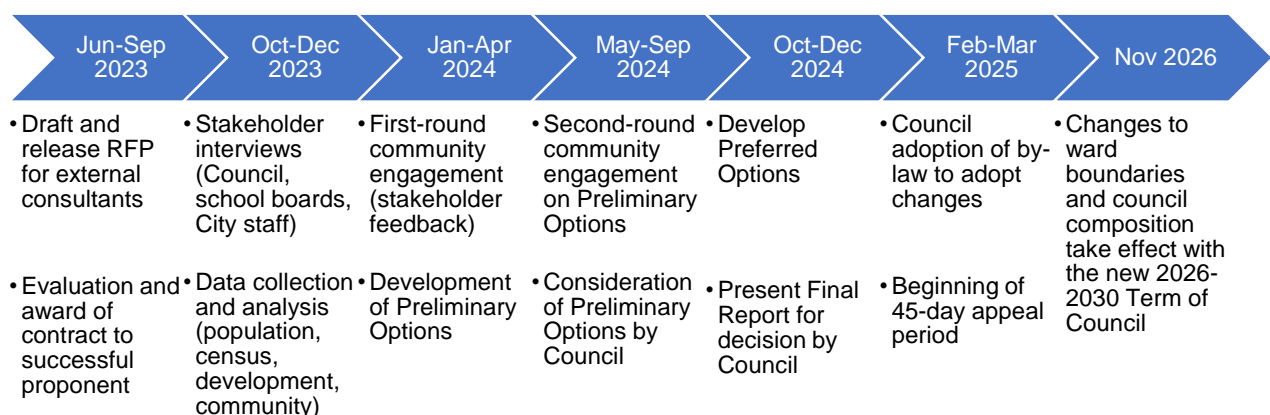
Currently, local councillors for the City of Vaughan, on average, represent 44,904 electors. However, as outlined in Table 1 and Table 2, there is a growing deviation from that average amongst multiple wards. The accepted standard for representation by population in an urban environment is a +/-25% deviation. In Vaughan, Ward 4 currently has the highest deviation at -23.91%. However, based on the longer-term population growth estimates as shown in Table 1, with the existing five wards, by the 2030 Municipal Election, Ward 1 will be 29.7% above the average ward population. It is important to note also that any decision to add local councillors to Vaughan Council would necessitate a Ward Boundary Review to redraw ward boundaries to account for additional wards.

Ward Boundary Reviews are guided by a set of common and established legal principles emanating from the Carter Case before the Supreme Court of Canada. These guiding principles include:

- **Representation by population**, ensuring electors are comparatively represented on Council giving an equal voice, which is understood to be generally within +/-25% maximum deviation for the average ward population in urban areas;
- **Consideration of current and future population trends**, including changes in population from growth and development, aging communities, etc.;
- **Consideration of physical and natural boundaries**, including the way in which manmade and natural features such as highways, railways, river valleys, and farmland shape the community;
- **Consideration of communities of interest**, including settlement patterns and existing historical communities in the context of the broader municipality; and
- **Effective representation**, the overall objective of a ward boundary review, which seeks to establish fair and equitable representation based on the principles outlined above.

Proposed Ward Boundary Review Schedule

If approved, the Ward Boundary and Council Composition Review would be initiated in late 2023, with a target end-date of fall 2024 to present the final option recommendations for committee and council consideration and approval. This timeline ensures that all decisions of Council respecting changes to both ward boundaries and council composition are made in time to take effect with the 2026-2030 Term of Council.



Options for Ward Boundary and Council Composition Review

The options available to Committee, for the Conduct of the Ward Boundary Review include:

1. **Conduct a Ward Boundary Review.** Contracting consultants with expertise in electoral boundaries and council composition to review population data, local circumstances, geography, etc. and consult with the electorate to develop recommendations for revisions and changes to the existing ward boundaries, and potential alterations to the size and structure of Vaughan Council. This approach would allow for an impartial third-party review of the existing ward boundaries and provide independent recommendations for Council's consideration. External consultants also provide the necessary qualifications and experience to conduct this work, which is absent amongst city staff due to the extremely specific nature of ward boundary and council composition work.
2. **Conduct a Ward Boundary and Council Composition Review.** Given concerns raised about workload, Council may wish to direct that a council composition review be conducted at the same time as a Ward Boundary Review. In addition to reviewing the existing electoral boundaries of the City as detailed in Option 1, such a review would provide a more thorough and detailed assessment of the appropriate number of local councillors for the City, giving consideration for the local needs and best practices established amongst comparator municipalities. A Council Composition Review would allow for a review of the current composition in light of potential ward boundary changes, consider the addition of further local councillors into a revised ward and council structure. Review of the election process for Local and Regional Councillors, whether through at-large elections or ward-based elections, can also be conducted.
3. **Not proceeding with a Ward Boundary Review at this time.** The existing five wards would be retained with the ward boundaries as established in the 2009 Board Order. The current ten-member Council would be retained in its current state.

Financial Impact

A capital budget of \$250,000.00 has been provided for in the 2023 Budget to support the completion of a Ward Boundary and Council Composition Review. The cost impact per additional local councillor would be approximately \$344,786.00 annually, which includes costs associated with the salary for the Councillor, their staff and office budget. Additional costs would be incurred to construct or renovate existing spaces to accommodate offices for any new members of council beyond the present complement on Vaughan Council.

Operational Impact

Corporate and Strategic Communications staff will be engaged to support the consultant team in project communications, stakeholder and community engagement. Planning and Growth Management will be engaged to support the consultant team in reviewing and analyzing population growth metrics, planning documents and development applications.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

Alterations to the City of Vaughan's ward boundaries would impact existing school board trustee boundaries for the York Region District School Board and the York Catholic District School Board. Stakeholder consultations in respect to a Ward Boundary and Council Composition Review would include the respective boards and their trustees.

Conclusion

The City's existing five-ward boundary structure was established with the intent to ensure effective representation through the 2018 Municipal Election. Population growth trends for the City of Vaughan forecast a widening gap between the largest ward (Ward 1) and the other four wards, a gap which has been evident in the 2018 and 2022 election cycles. A Ward Boundary and Council Composition Review would provide the opportunity for a comprehensive and fulsome assessment of the present electoral boundaries for the city and expert-driven recommendations for revisions to the existing wards, including both ward boundaries and the number of wards for the city.

Staff are seeking direction on whether to conduct a Ward Boundary Review with a limited scope to revise the boundaries of the existing five-ward structure, a Ward Boundary and Council Composition Review which would entertain changes to the number of wards and their boundaries, or not to conduct any review at this time.

For more information, please contact: Evan Read, Manager, Elections and Special Projects, x8241.

Attachments

N/A

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