

History of Ward Boundaries in the Post-Amalgamation City of Ottawa

The amalgamated City of Ottawa's ward boundaries and composition of its Council were first established on December 22, 1999, when the Province of Ontario passed the *City of Ottawa Act, 1999*. As such, the first post-amalgamation Ottawa City Council would be composed of the Mayor and 20 Councillors.

On June 8, 2000, the *City of Ottawa Act, 1999*, was amended to add an additional Councillor, for a total of 21 Councillors. On June 30, 2000, *Ontario Regulation 407/00* established the ward boundaries for the new City of Ottawa. As a result, when amalgamation took effect on January 1, 2001, the City had 21 wards, and Ottawa City Council was comprised of the Mayor and 21 Councillors.

Since amalgamation, there have been three reviews of ward boundaries in the City of Ottawa. This includes two major reviews in 2001-2002 and 2004-2005, and a minor adjustment of ward boundaries in 2009.

2001-2002

The first major ward boundary review process began in 2001. The origins of that review were described in the final report of the Citizens' Task Force on Ward Boundaries for the City of Ottawa, as follows:

“After working with the new system for close to a year and a half, the new Council, at a meeting on 13 June 2001, adopted a motion with respect to a review of the ward boundaries. The motion stated that the wards structure had been quickly drafted by the Province without due consideration for two longstanding principles fundamental to democracy in Canadian municipalities – representation by population and public consultation.”¹

City Council established the Citizens' Task Force on Ward Boundaries for the City of Ottawa, consisting of David Bartlett, Pierre de Blois and Katherine Graham, to conduct the review, with City staff support. Following three months of public consultation and working within the parameters established by Council to maintain the existing number of wards (21) and adapt the existing structure to meet representation objectives rather than start over with a whole new ward system, the Task Force recommended, and City Council approved, significant adjustments to the ward boundaries. Following Council

¹ *Report of the Citizens' Task Force on Ward Boundaries for the City of Ottawa*, June 10, 2002, p. 6.

approval, the resulting by-law to establish the new ward boundaries was appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB). After considering the matter, the Board repealed Council's by-law in a decision issued on May 8, 2003.

In part, the Board was of the opinion that Council did not give sufficient weight to communities of interest and, in particular, rural communities of interest. The OMB also objected to the fact that Council constrained the review by establishing particular parameters for the review. As a result of the Board's decision, none of the Council-approved changes were made to the ward boundaries for the 2003 municipal elections.

2004-2005

The City's second major ward boundary review occurred in 2004-2005. The Terms of Reference established by Council for the 2004-2005 Ward Boundary Review reflected the lessons learned from the failure of the 2001-2002 Ward Boundary Review. As such, the consultants undertook a comprehensive review with no preconditions. In addition, the review included ample public consultation and was undertaken with respect for the principle of "effective representation" as it had been defined by the courts in such cases as the *Carter* decision by the Supreme Court of Canada. The 2004-2005 Ward Boundary Review was conducted by The Davidson Group, who were professionals with ward boundary review and OMB expertise, in association with Beate Bowron Etcetera.

After considering the [2005 Recommendations Report](#), City Council established new ward boundaries and created 23 wards. The ward boundary by-law resulting from this review was also appealed to the OMB, but the Board dismissed the appeals and affirmed the by-law in a decision issued orally on October 7, 2005, and followed up by way of memorandum on October 31, 2005.

These are largely the current ward boundaries (with the exception of the modest changes in 2009 described below). The boundaries established by the 2004-2005 Ward Boundary Review were anticipated to meet the test of effective representation until 2015.

2009

Ward boundaries were 'tweaked' in 2009, when Council approved a minor adjustment of ward boundaries that redistributed lands known as the "Fernbank Lands," which had been added to the Urban Growth Boundary in 2005, from a rural ward (Ward 21) to the adjacent suburban wards (Wards 6 and 23). This process involved consultation between Councillors for the affected wards and the public at a public meeting. There

were no appeals made to the OMB after Council approved the related by-law.

2012

Further to the above-noted reviews, on May 23, 2012, City Council considered (but did not approve) a motion directing the City Clerk and Solicitor to submit an Information Report to Committee and Council setting forth the various options for a Ward Boundary Review for consideration by the 2010-2014 Term of Council in advance of the 2014 municipal election. It was understood at that time that staff would be bringing forward a report on a review of ward boundaries in 2015.

2015

On July 8, 2015, Council considered the staff report titled, "[Ward Boundary Review – Information and Options \(2015\)](#)," which discussed the status of the City of Ottawa's ward boundaries and included four options with respect to a review of ward boundaries for Council's information. Those options were as follows:

- **Option 1:** Retaining the *status quo* for Ottawa's ward boundaries for the 2018 municipal election on the understanding that a comprehensive ward boundary review would be required to be undertaken in 2019;
- **Option 2:** Undertaking a "limited" ward boundary review in the 2014-2018 Term of Council, to be in effect for the 2018 Municipal Elections. This review would have incorporated only those lands that were added to the Urban Boundary through Official Plan Amendment 76;
- **Option 3:** Undertaking a "focused" ward boundary review in the 2014-2018 Term of Council, to be in effect for the 2018 Municipal Elections. This review would have been in keeping with the framework established in the 2005 Recommendations Report; and
- **Option 4:** Undertaking a "comprehensive" ward boundary review in the 2014-2018 Term of Council, to be in effect for the 2018 Municipal Elections.

Council received the above-noted report, which had the effect of selecting Option 1 – retaining the *status quo* for the 2014-2018 Term of Council, on the understanding that a comprehensive ward boundary review would be required in 2019.

2018

The 2018-2022 Council Governance Review report was considered by Council on

December 5, 2018. The Governance Review report reiterated that staff would bring forward a report in 2019 to outline next steps in the ward boundary review process, further to the 2015 staff report.