



Ward Boundary Review 2020
Examen des limites de quartiers 2020



OPTIONS REPORT

July 2020

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1 Introduction

In January 2020, Ottawa Council launched the Ottawa Ward Boundary Review 2020 (OWBR 2020), a comprehensive review of Ottawa's existing wards. The review's approach includes wide-ranging input on the current ward alignment, the development of a series of ward boundary options and broad consultation on the options prior to a recommendation to City Council in December 2020.

To date, the OWBR 2020 has completed background research¹ and conducted an initial round of consultation. Round One of the consultation process included public meetings, interviews with Members of Council and a public survey. The project was advertised extensively online, via bus ads and in community newspapers.

During Round One of the OWBR 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic arrived. Public and stakeholder meetings had to be cancelled after the first two public meetings. However, the online survey continued and meetings with Members of Council were completed via telephone.

The analyses from the background research and the Round One consultation process have informed the options presented in this report. This Options Report outlines five discrete options for new ward boundaries. All the options achieve "effective representation," establishing clear ward boundaries within the context of Ottawa's unique geography. The degree of change to the current ward boundaries varies with the options and, in some options, alterations to current ward boundaries are considerable.

Change is never easy and is particularly disruptive to long-established municipal systems. All participants, residents, businesses, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), Members of Council, civic staff, etc., will have to adjust to new geographic environments. This is the reason discussion of the Options Report and feedback on the individual options from the public, stakeholders and Members of Council is so important. That feedback is the focus of Round Two of the OWBR 2020's consultation process.

The Options Report contains eight sections. Following this Introduction, **Section 2** describes why a ward boundary review is necessary at this time, discusses the key concept of effective representation and outlines ward boundary issues that stem from the unique nature and geography of the City of Ottawa. **Section 3** gives an overview of the Round One consultation process and its results.

Section 4 details the methodology used to develop the options, while **Section 5** summarizes the options and links them to Appendix A, the "Options Workbook." Appendix A includes a description of each option along with detailed maps showing the current and new ward boundaries and a table with voter parity figures for the municipal elections of 2022, 2026, 2030 and 2034. **Section 6** explores the feasibility of using the federal/provincial riding boundaries as the basis for new wards in Ottawa.

¹ See the [OWBR Backgrounder](#).

Section 7 provides a tool for comparing the merits of each option with the components of effective representation. Finally, **Section 8** outlines the road map for public discussion and feedback on the Options Report through to the OWBR 2020 Final Report and recommendation to Ottawa City Council at the end of the year.

In addition to Appendix A, the “Options Workbook,” Appendix B summarizes other comments on wards and ward boundaries from the survey, public meetings and online submissions, and from Members of Council respectively.

2 Context

2.1 Why a Review

Ward boundary reviews are complex undertakings and need to consider numerous variables. In a “representative democracy,” such as ours, the right to vote is a foundational principle. This is not just important at election time, but every time a Councillor votes. However, once a Councillor is elected, their ability to represent all their residents, not just voters, and the city at-large becomes of major importance and often threatens to overshadow the fundamental right to vote in a discussion of the size and shape of wards.

The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* guarantees citizens the “right to vote.” Part and parcel of this right is the assurance that votes are of equal weight. When this voting weight, termed “voter parity,” gets too far out of balance at any level of government, adjustments are required. This is true of federal electoral districts, provincial ridings and municipal wards. The federal and provincial governments adjust their ridings every 10 years based on the Census. Municipalities adjust their wards whenever Council deems it necessary.

The City of Ottawa has reached the point where its ward boundaries need to be adjusted for future elections. The voter parity discrepancy amongst wards has become too great and the status quo is no longer an option. As part of the OWBR 2020, background research was conducted on current voter parity in Ottawa². A wide gap in the population size has emerged since the present 23 wards were drawn for the 2006 election. Currently, the population of the largest ward is double the size of the smallest ward. In between are several wards that are considerably larger or smaller than the average of all wards (43,804) in the 2018 election³. Based on this situation, Ottawa City Council launched a ward boundary review to be in place for the next election in 2022.

² Ibid.

³ Overall population figures for the City of Ottawa are derived from the medium scenario population projections provided in Appendix 1 (Page 38) of the “Growth Projections for the New Official Plan: Methods and Assumptions for Population, Housing and Employment 2018 to 2046.”

2.2 Effective Representation

The overriding goal of any ward boundary review is to achieve “effective representation,” a term used to summarize all the items that must be balanced when drawing ward boundaries. It is a term coined by the Supreme Court of Canada and followed by lower courts and, in Ontario, by the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal (LPAT) – formerly the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB).

Briefly, here are the components of effective representation that need to be balanced:

Voter Parity: Although the term appears to refer only to ‘voters’, it includes the whole population living in an area. Voter parity speaks to the variance between an individual ward’s population and the average ward population of all municipal wards. To achieve parity, ward populations need to be similar but not identical. Voter parity is assessed in terms of a percentage, either above or below the average ward population. If the variation becomes too large, effective representation is lost.

Natural/Physical Boundaries: Ward boundaries should be clear and easily recognized by residents. Natural boundaries such as rivers, creeks and in Ottawa, the Greenbelt, often become ward boundaries. Similarly, major infrastructure such as expressways, railways and arterial roads create physical barriers and are used as ward boundaries, such as Highway 417 or 416.

Geographic Communities of Interest: The term “communities of interest” refers to neighbourhoods such as Barrhaven, the Glebe or Westboro Village and commercial areas such as BIAs. The term also refers to different types of communities such as rural, suburban and urban. Communities of interest have different needs and perspectives that need to be respected when drawing ward boundaries. To form a basis for determining ward boundaries, communities of interest must be geographically contiguous.

Where possible, geographic communities of interest and/or neighbourhoods should not be divided. However, sometimes a community is so large that, to respect voter parity, it must be split among more than one ward, such as Kanata or Barrhaven. Also, it is quite common for wards to contain several communities of interest.

Minority Interests: Minority interests should be considered, if they are geographically based.

Ward History: Ward design should, where possible, consider the history of a ward. However, in Ottawa many ward boundaries are currently based on the boundaries of pre-amalgamation municipalities and are not easy to recognize. They should be changed, if at all possible. Ward history by itself cannot override other major criteria such as voter parity, strong natural/physical boundaries and keeping communities of interest together.

Capacity to Represent: Capacity to represent is often equated with Councillors’ workload and the range of issues within a ward. It encompasses ward size, types and breadth of concerns, ongoing growth and development, complexity of issues, etc. For example, wards with high employment, social issues, major infrastructure facilities, tourism attractions or special areas, such as the Parliament district, generate a host of

issues a Councillor has to deal with, in addition to the concerns of local residents within the ward and City-wide policies.

Geographic Size and Shape of a Ward: All wards cannot be the same geographic size. Some areas are more densely populated than others and some wards have more open space. Ottawa is especially unique with respect to this component of effective representation because of its large rural area and the Greenbelt.

Population Growth: Ottawa's population growth has to be taken into consideration, if the OWBR 2020 is going to work for multiple elections.

Balancing the Components of Effective Representation: While all the components of effective representation need to be taken into consideration, they are not all equal. Voter parity is a key determinant of effective representation, as is keeping communities of interest together and drawing well-defined, coherent ward boundaries.

A voter parity variance of +/25 per cent is often suggested and used as a standard when establishing ward boundaries, which can result in a difference of 50 per cent between the largest and smallest ward in terms of ward population. The evolving standard from recent ward boundary reviews is +/-10 to +/-15 per cent in more densely populated urban and suburban areas. Larger variances may be appropriate under certain special circumstances, such as respecting communities of interest, factoring in rapid growth, accounting for the capacity to represent or achieving clearly defined ward boundaries. Ottawa's geographically large rural area and its communities need to be respected and will have larger voter parity variances, as will some suburban areas, due to their rapid growth.

During Round One of the OWBR 2020's public consultation process, numerous respondents flagged unequal representation amongst wards as a major concern. At the same time, a common response was that ward population numbers are not that significant and that geographic size, workload, number of households, range of issues, and communities of interest are more important. It was also suggested that if some wards grow too large, the Councillors' office budgets could be increased. All these factors, save budgetary ones, are taken into account when balancing the components of effective representation. However, as the *Charter's* right to vote is a legal right of all Canadian citizens, it cannot be negated.

2.3 Multiple Elections

Any new ward structure should last for multiple elections. Ward boundary reviews are time consuming, costly and disruptive. The OWBR 2020 is designed to last for three and possibly four municipal elections – that is, the elections of 2022, 2026, 2030, and possibly 2034. The previous review, in fact, did last for four elections. Since ward boundary reviews are future oriented, population growth and its specific location within the city are key components in establishing new wards.

2.4 Unique Nature of Ottawa

Ottawa's present ward structure is based on three major geographic communities:

- **Rural** community: includes the rural area outside the urban growth boundary;

- **Suburban** community: includes the area generally located outside the Greenbelt and inside the urban growth boundary; and,
- **Urban** community: includes the area generally located inside the Greenbelt. The urban area can be further subdivided into the downtown wards and the wards that cover the older, inner suburbs, which are often referred to as the “bungalow belt”.

The 2004-2005 Ottawa Ward Boundary Review established this ward system, which reflected several factors:

- The geography of Ottawa;
- A strong public response against mixing suburban and rural communities, as the result was seen to jeopardize the voice and representation of rural communities;
- The professional opinion of the consultant team, which supported keeping suburban and rural communities of interest separate for effective representation; and
- A 2003 OMB decision that struck down a ward pattern which mixed suburban and rural populations.

A 2005 OMB decision supported using the three major geographic areas as the basis for determining Ottawa’s ward structure.

During Round One of the OWBR 2020 numerous survey responses, online submissions and input from Members of Council urged that rural and suburban wards not be combined. This sentiment came from all wards, but especially from rural and suburban wards and focused on two points. First, there is a major difference in the interests and activities of the rural and suburban communities. Second, combining suburban and rural populations leads to the loss of the rural communities’ voice, as the suburban population will dominate the ward. The current situation in Cumberland (Ward 19) is often cited as an example.

The OWBR 2020 continues to use the three main geographic areas in developing options for new ward boundaries. Specifically:

Rural wards are rural areas and their villages. They do not include areas of suburban development or proposed expansions to the urban growth boundary. This area now encompasses current wards 5, 21, 20 and the rural portion of Ward 19.

Suburban wards include Ottawa’s growing areas, generally outside the Greenbelt and inside the urban growth boundary that now may be partially in rural wards. These areas encompass current wards 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 22, 23 and the suburban part of Ward 19 inside the urban growth boundary. There are three groupings of non-contiguous suburban wards, which are termed:

- Ottawa East which includes wards 1, 2 and the suburban portion of Ward 19 that is inside the urban growth boundary;
- Ottawa South which includes wards 3 and 22, plus previous small extensions to the urban growth boundary in wards 20 and 21; and
- Ottawa West which includes wards 4, 6 and 23, plus previous small extensions to the urban growth boundary in wards 5 and 21.

Urban wards are located inside the Greenbelt. There are 12 wards in the urban area that encompass current wards 7 through 18. The urban wards can be grouped as the downtown or “core” wards (wards 12, 13, 14, 15, and 17) and the older inner-suburban wards (wards 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 16 and 18).

These three main areas, and their sub-areas, have been employed as building blocks to create the options for re-aligning ward boundaries. While the building blocks represent the general pattern of the options, the detailed boundaries within them are based on the principles of effective representation and informed by numerous suggestions and input from the public and Members of Council.

3 Round One Public Consultation (Input Round)

The purpose of the OWBR 2020 Round One public consultation was to collect comments and suggestions about the way Ottawa’s wards are currently aligned. Specifically, the process explored questions around boundaries that need to be fine-tuned, communities that need to be united and the desired number and average populations of Ottawa’s wards.

3.1 What We Did

Advertising and promotion for Round One of the OWBR 2020 was extensive in both English and French. It included the following:

- Project webpage on the City of Ottawa website with:
 - Project overview
 - Relevant reports and other documents
 - Opportunities to get involved
 - Key dates
 - Frequently Asked Questions
 - Important links
 - Contact information
- Ads in community newspapers, online and in Ottawa’s buses
- Social media posts and media releases
- Digital displays in Ottawa’s public library branches
- Posters in recreation centres
- Direct e-mails to Ottawa’s community associations
- Project information packages for Members of Council

Vehicles for collecting input during Round One of the public consultation process included:

- Online survey March 4 to April 3; the survey offered participants the opportunity to join the OWBR 2020 mailing list
- Project e-mail account through Engage Ottawa
- Public and stakeholder meetings; nine public meetings and three stakeholder group meetings were planned; due to COVID-19, seven of the public meetings and the stakeholder meetings had to be cancelled
- Interviews with all Members of Council

3.2 What We Heard

In total, 483 individuals and groups participated in Round One of OWBR 2020. Based on our experience, this is a significant number, especially during Round One of a ward boundary review, when there are no proposals yet on how to redraw any ward boundaries. In addition, part of Round One overlapped with the onslaught of COVID-19, which required cancellation of several public meetings and stakeholder meetings.

All comments on potential changes to ward boundaries received at public meetings, through online submissions and the survey were assigned to the specific ward(s) they refer to and have been taken into consideration during the design of the various options for re-aligning Ottawa’s wards.

3.2.1 Distribution of Round One Participants

Not everyone who responded to the online survey and submitted comments identified the ward they live in. However, people who did identify their ward live in all parts of the City of Ottawa and are distributed as follows:

Table 1: Number of Round One Participants by Ward*

Ward #	Ward Name	Number of Responses
1	Orléans	12
2	Innes	8
3	Barrhaven	35
4	Kanata North	9
5	West Carleton-March	9
6	Stittsville	8
7	Bay	18
8	College	17
9	Knoxdale-Merivale	23
10	Gloucester-Southgate	11
11	Beacon Hill-Cyrville	12
12	Rideau-Vanier	22
13	Rideau-Rockcliffe	28
14	Somerset	27

15	Kitchissippi	27
16	River	22
17	Capital	39
18	Alta Vista	15
19	Cumberland	24
20	Osgoode	28
21	Rideau-Goulbourn	18
22	Gloucester-South Nepean	26
23	Kanata South	12

*Does not include Members of Council

3.2.2 Public Meetings/Online Submissions

As mentioned, only two of the planned nine public meetings were held (March 10 and 11 in Nepean and Vanier respectively). Nineteen people attended. Both meetings were bilingual and held at night in accessible locations. Hard copies of the survey were available, as were a table of population projections by ward and a set of maps showing Ottawa’s current ward alignment. A presentation was followed by extensive and detailed discussion of the OWBR 2020 approach and suggestions regarding altering specific ward boundaries.

In addition, the project received 13 online submissions. These range from very specific suggestions for changing the boundaries of a particular ward to comments on the existing uneven populations among wards to thoughtful discussion of the legal parameters of ward boundary reviews. There was one detailed proposal for a complete redesign of all wards.

3.2.3 Survey

A total of 448 people responded to the public survey, 447 online and one by mail. Their suggestions for adjusting ward boundaries and uniting communities have been taken into account during the design of the options for re-aligning Ottawa’s wards.

To provide a flavour of respondents’ thinking, general comments are included in Part A of Appendix B to this report, titled, “Other Comments on Wards and Ward Boundaries – Online Survey, Public Meetings and Online Submissions.”

3.2.4 Members of Council

All Members of Council were interviewed in person or by telephone. Paralleling the public survey questions, Councillors were asked to comment on: issues, if any, with the current alignment of their ward and other wards they are familiar with; whether their current ward population is appropriate for representing their constituents; what the average population for Ottawa’s wards should be; and how many wards would be optimal for the City of Ottawa.

Like the suggestions from the survey, public meetings and online submissions, Councillors’ comments on potential changes to ward boundaries were assigned to the specific ward(s) they referred to and have been taken into consideration during the

design of the options for re-aligning Ottawa’s wards. Councillors’ suggestions regarding future growth in their ward(s) were checked to ensure that this growth has been included in the project’s population projections. Other comments have been grouped in Part B of Appendix B to this report, titled, “Other Comments on Wards and Ward Boundaries – Members of Council.”

3.2.5 Average Ward Populations and Number of Wards

In addition to specific suggestions for adjusting ward boundaries, Round One of the OWBR 2020 also collected opinions on average ward population and number of wards. The tables below summarize responses from the survey, Members of Council interviews and online submissions.

Most respondents did not make a direct connection between the average ward population they suggested for Ottawa’s wards and the number of wards that would result. Table 2 demonstrates those implications at a general level, in the absence of any detailed ward design.

Table 2: Average Ward Population

Average ward population	Number of respondents – Survey/Online Submissions*	Number of respondents - Members of Council*	Resulting number of wards for 2026 Ottawa population (1.15 million)
40,000 or less	67	3	29 wards or more
40,001 - 43,999	3	0	25 - 28 wards
44,000 (current)	61	1	25 wards
44,001 - 49,999	37	2	22 - 25 wards
50,000 - 55,000	84	10	20 - 22 wards
55,001 or more	17	1	21 wards or less

* Not everyone responded to this question

The largest number of respondents (94) thought that an average population of 50,000 to 55,000 would be appropriate, resulting in 20 to 22 wards. However, 101 respondents suggested 44,000 to 50,000 (22 to 25 wards).

At the same time, a sizeable number of people, 73, were in favour of smaller ward populations suggesting an average of less than 40,000 to 44,000 and resulting in 25 to 29 or more wards. A small number of respondents (18) were in favour of much larger wards exceeding an average ward population of 55,000, resulting in 21 wards or less. A few among those respondents would like to see wards as large as 100,000.

The reasons for suggesting certain average ward populations were varied, but clustered around a number of themes:

- The current population distribution among wards is unfair, Councillors should represent equal numbers of people, with small variances;
- All urban/suburban wards should have similar populations, rural wards can have smaller populations due to their large geography;

- Do not reduce the number of wards, City Councillors serve the City as a whole, as well as their constituents;
- The current average seems to work;
- Need smaller ward populations for better access and direct communication with Councillors as well as accountability;
- Larger ward populations are appropriate in homogeneous, stable wards, ward populations can be smaller in wards with diverse populations and multiple, complex issues; and
- Increase the ward populations to limit number of Councillors, reduce costs and make Council more efficient.

Table 3 shows responses regarding the number of wards that were considered appropriate for the City of Ottawa.

Table 3: Number of Wards

Number of wards	Number of respondents - Survey/Online Submissions*	Number of respondents - Members of Council*
19 or less	39	2
19 or 20	37	0
21 or 22	5	1
23 (current)	69	10
24 or 25	107	8
26 - 30	92	0
31 or more	55	0

*Not everyone responded to this question

The largest number of respondents (115) suggested 24 or 25 wards and 147 suggested between 26 and 31 or more wards. Seventy-eight respondents thought that less than 20 wards would be appropriate, some suggesting Ottawa's wards should be reduced to as few as seven or eight. Another 79 respondents wanted to maintain the current 23 wards and six responses suggested 21 or 22 wards.

Respondents offered reasons for their suggested number of wards for Ottawa under the following themes:

- The number of wards has to reflect Ottawa's growth;
- Divide the wards that are too large now;
- A few more Councillors is a good idea;
- Don't decrease the number of wards;
- Reduce number of rural wards, retain current number of rural wards;
- Better representation with more, smaller wards;
- Add wards in the core to increase representation of diverse neighbourhoods, have been historically under-represented;
- If keeping 23 wards means reducing the number of wards inside the Greenbelt, it's better to add a few more wards;

- Current number of wards can accommodate growth, but boundaries will need to shift;
- Keep current number of wards so that Council doesn't get bigger and makes the city ungovernable;
- Fewer wards means less government, fewer politicians, reducing the number of wards reduces costs; and
- Establish "mega" wards with increase in office staff.

Based on the responses to questions regarding the desired average ward population and an optimal number of wards for the City of Ottawa, it appears that most respondents are in favour of ward populations between 44,000 and 55,000. A considerable number of people favoured even smaller populations. Most respondents suggested somewhere between 23 to 25 wards, although a sizeable number thought that 26 to 31 or more wards would be appropriate. Another distinct grouping suggested 20 or fewer wards for Ottawa.

4 Methodology

Developing options for new ward boundaries follows a series of specific steps. These steps ensure that effective representation is achieved and include the input from Round One of public consultation. All options presented in this Options Report achieve effective representation.

4.1 Selecting a Target Year

Since the population of Ottawa changes every year, a specific year must be chosen to calculate voter parity. This is referred to as the "target year."

Because the OWBR 2020 is designed to develop a ward structure that will last for three elections, the middle election, 2026, is selected as the target year around which wards are designed. Generally, if a new ward structure lasts to 2030, it will likely work in 2034. However, the City of Ottawa may have to conduct a limited ward boundary review after 2030, due to the explosive growth expected in its suburban areas.

4.2 Population Growth

To examine Ottawa's growth, population projections have been developed for very small areas throughout the entire city. These small areas are called traffic zones or "TZs." There are 513 TZs in Ottawa. The purpose of the growth projections is not to determine a ward structure, but to test the population of any proposed ward in terms of voter parity. The overall population projection for the City of Ottawa for 2026 used in developing the options is 1,141,815 which has been rounded up to 1.15 million for the various calculations used in option development⁴.

⁴ Ibid.

4.3 Round One Input

There are two critical factors in designing a new ward structure: average ward population and number of wards. The two are obviously related. A ward boundary review can commence from either factor, although average ward population is normally employed to start the ward design process.

The first round of consultation sought input on both average ward population and number of wards. There was a considerable range of opinion and tables 2 and 3 in Section 3 show the variety of input. Suggestions can be grouped into various themes. Regarding average ward population, they are:

- Maintain the current average ward population of approximately 44,000, as “things” seem to be working fine;
- Reduce average ward population to 40,000 or less to allow for better local representation and Councillor access; and
- Increase average ward population to 55,000 or more to reduce the size of government.

Similar groupings can be observed regarding the desired number of wards:

- Increase the number of wards in order to accommodate growth, while maintaining current average ward population. This represents those who suggest a small increase in the number of wards would be acceptable (24 to 26);
- Increase the number of wards substantially to around 38 to improve local representation;
- Maintain the current 23 wards, as “things” seem to be working fine and the size of government should not be increased; and
- Decrease the number of wards. There was a cluster around the idea of 20 wards. Those suggesting fewer wards want to decrease the size of government.

4.4 Designing Options

The next step in options development is to apply the parameters discussed above to the particular geography of Ottawa to determine an appropriate number of options, their average ward populations and detailed ward boundaries.

Options based on either substantially increasing or decreasing the average ward population or the number of wards were tested to determine if they would be viable. Reducing the average ward population to approximately 30,000, to improve local representation, would lead to 38 wards. In the context of Ontario, such small ward populations are not consistent with having full-time Councillors. Decreasing the number of wards to approximately 20 does not work when applied to Ottawa’s geography. However, a 17-ward option is viable.

Increasing the number of wards to account for population growth, while generally maintaining current ward populations, works best at 24 or 25 wards with an average

ward population of 46,000 to 48,000 in 2026⁵. Maintaining the current number of wards at 23 increases the average ward population to 50,000, an approach that was supported during Round One. A 23-ward configuration also represents the status quo.

Hence, a 25-ward option, a 24-ward option, two 23-ward options and a 17-ward option have been developed. These five options provide an adequate range for discussion during the OWBR 2020's Round Two of public consultation:

- With 25 and 24 wards respectively, two options show a small increase in the number of wards;
- Two options have 23 wards. In a 23-ward option one ward needs to be redistributed in the urban area inside the Greenbelt. To achieve this, one option starts drawing boundaries from the western end of the urban area and the other from the eastern end. While this difference may not seem important, the starting point determines the locale of the ward that is redistributed; and
- One option reduces the number of wards to 17.

The range of options presented does not include the use of the federal/provincial ridings as potential wards. A detailed discussion of the reasons for this can be found in Section 6 of this report.

To draw detailed ward boundaries, it is necessary to balance all the components of effective representation. The first round of consultation provided detailed information on communities of interest, suggested changes to existing ward boundaries, capacity to represent, ward history, ward geography and expected areas of future growth in the wards. All this information was analyzed and has become input into ward design in each of the options.

One of the important components of effective representation is the creation of wards with clear natural/physical boundaries. In many instances, Ottawa's current ward alignment uses the boundaries of its pre-amalgamation municipalities, which means that ward boundaries sometimes run through backyards or separate neighbourhoods. All options attempt to rectify this.

The wards in any option need to fit into a voter parity range, which is determined by the average ward population of the option. The goal is to achieve wards that are within plus or minus 10 or 15 per cent of the average ward population, with +/-10 per cent being ideal and +/-15 per cent acceptable. The +/-15 per cent range may be increased in urban and suburban areas to accommodate rapidly growing wards, respect communities of interest or to accommodate special circumstances related to capacity to represent, employ recognizable ward boundaries or address unique geographical features.

Due to Ottawa's unique geography and the significant population growth projected for its suburban areas, voter parity ranges in Ottawa West, Ottawa South and Ottawa East

⁵ Average ward population calculations are based on a projected 2026 population for Ottawa of approximately 1.15 million.

will have to exceed +/- 15 per cent in some of the options for the project target year of 2026 and beyond.

To achieve effective representation, especially the recognition of the rural community, any ward structure will contain rural wards with small populations and large areas. In rural areas the voter parity range can exceed 25 per cent below the average ward population to respect the rural community of interest.

5 Options

5.1 Overview

This section presents a summary of the five options. Detailed maps illustrating each option and population tables for each proposed ward for 2022, 2026, 2030 and 2034 – along with their variances from the ward average for the respective option – are included in Appendix A of this report, the “Options Workbook.”

Eight maps illustrate each option:

1. A general “context map” shows the entire city and all the wards that make up the option. This map provides a general overview, but is not at a scale that all individual boundaries are clearly recognizable;
2. A general map showing the current wards;
3. A map showing the proposed urban wards;
4. A map showing the current urban wards;
5. A map showing the proposed wards in the three suburban areas (Ottawa East, South and West);
6. A map showing the current suburban wards;
7. A map showing the proposed rural wards; and
8. A map showing the current rural wards

Although some maps are the same in some options, each option includes a complete set of maps to facilitate examination and understanding of the option.

At the end of each set of option maps is a table that shows, for each election year, the population for the proposed wards and the variance from the 2026 “target year” average ward population.

A common nomenclature is required to discuss and compare the five options. Ottawa’s current wards have both numbers and names. The options use only numbers and these numbers refer solely to the proposed wards in each option. This is necessary because options have different numbers of wards and different boundaries. In most cases, these differ substantially from those of the existing wards.

A proposed ward is designated in a manner that signifies both the option and the individual ward within the option. The reference to W1-1, for example, indicates Option 1 and Ward 1. Likewise, W3-14 indicates Option 3 and Ward 14 and W5-10 indicates

Option 5 and Ward 10. Once Ottawa City Council approves any new ward structure, they will assign both ward names and ward numbers that are appropriate.

The City of Ottawa is in the process of considering possible expansions to the urban growth boundary in conjunction with the preparation of a new Official Plan. All areas of expansion of the urban growth boundary should be added to their adjacent suburban ward in any new ward structure. Development in those expanded areas is not anticipated to alter the population projections created for the OWBR 2020 for 2026 and 2030, but may by 2034.

Ottawa's suburban communities are in some respect 'sandwiched' between the Greenbelt and the rural area. The City's development policies have assigned accelerating growth to these areas, especially after 2030. There are implications for the OWBR 2020. Generally, the five options show populations variances of +/- 15 per cent for the suburban wards in 2026, except in a few cases. However, in 2030 and beyond population growth will put several wards significantly above 15 per cent. It seems likely that a review of the suburban wards will be required for the 2034 election.

5.2 Option 1 – 25 Wards

This option has 13 urban wards, nine suburban wards and three rural wards and increases the size of Council by two members. The average ward population is 46,000 for the 2026 target year.

Option 1 adds one urban ward in the core area to improve voter parity and capacity to represent and adds two suburban wards, one in Ottawa East and one in Ottawa South, to improve voter parity in these areas. One ward is removed from the rural area, as a result of the suburban population of Cumberland Ward becoming a separate suburban ward in Ottawa East.

As shown in Section 3.2.5 of this report, the largest number of respondents (115) during Round One of the OWBR 2020's public process suggested 24 or 25 wards and 147 suggested between 26 and 31 or more wards. Option 1 responds to the sentiment that, as Ottawa is growing, more wards are needed. It also accounts for the complexity of issues in the urban core wards, the 'capacity to represent' component of effective representation.

In general terms, for the 2026 target year, the urban core wards are slightly below the general average ward population and the inner suburbs are slightly above average, although all parity ranges are within +/-15 per cent of the average ward population. Three wards (W1-17, W1-18 and W-19) have variances in excess of -15 per cent in 2022. However, by 2026, growth in these wards has brought them within the 15 per cent variance range. All urban wards stay within the +/-15 per cent variance range throughout the remaining years, except W1-22, which will have grown to +15.3 per cent.

All urban wards are inside the Greenbelt in Option 1 and all other options. Ward boundaries in Option 1 follow major roads, such as Highway 416, Montreal Road or

Carling Avenue, natural boundaries such as the Rideau Canal and bring communities together, such as the communities south of Hunt Club in W1-15 or Carson Grove in W1-13. Minor boundary adjustments have been made in several wards, such as including the whole of the Unitarian Church Campus in W1-25.

The variance pattern in the suburban wards is challenging in Option 1, and in all options. This is due to the explosive growth in the suburban areas. In the OWBR 2020's target year 2026, three wards are slightly over 15 per cent, but from then on the three suburban areas grow rapidly. Option 1 boundaries use major roads such as Barnsdale, Rideau, Earl Armstrong and its planned extension and the Rideau River. The option creates separate wards for Barrhaven and Riverside South/Findlay Creek and unifies Orléans in W1-4. The Ottawa International Airport is now completely in W1-15.

The three rural wards have small populations and only W1-1 falls within the +/-15 per cent variance range. After 2026, the rural wards experience modest growth. The major change for the rural wards is the combining of Osgoode Ward and the rural portion of Cumberland Ward. The two other rural wards remain the same, except for some minor boundary adjustments. The Rideau River is a major natural boundary for the new W1-1.

Option 1 maps showing detailed ward boundaries and a table with ward populations and population variances are included in Appendix A, the "Options Workbook."

5.3 Option 2 – 24 Wards

This option has 12 urban wards, nine suburban wards and three rural wards and increases the size of Council by one. The average ward population is 47,900 for the 2026 target year.

Like Option 1, Option 2 responds to the support expressed for increasing the number of wards during the project's Round One process and the sentiment that Ottawa's growing population requires more wards.

Option 2 retains the 12 urban wards inside the Greenbelt. Various boundaries have been adjusted to improve the functioning of the wards and establish easily recognizable boundaries. Within the urban area, this option has the fewest boundary changes of any option. Option 2 can be considered as the option that requires the least boundary adjustments, while still addressing the growth in suburban Ottawa.

All the urban wards are within the +/-15 per cent variance range and only W2-24 is above 10 per cent. The variance ranges hold well through the four elections cycles, except for W2-20 which experiences considerable growth after 2030.

In the suburban area two wards have been added to improve voter parity. In 2026, all the suburban wards fall within the +/-15 per cent variance range and most are within the 10 per cent variance range. In 2022, W2-7 is small but grows rapidly and is within 10 per cent by 2026. All the suburban wards continue to experience rapid growth beyond 2026. The Option 2 boundaries are the same as in Option 1.

In Option 2 the three rural wards again have small populations, and only W2-1 falls within the +/-15 per cent variance range. The Option 2 boundaries are the same as in Option 1. The population variances continue to rise due to an increase in the average ward population in this option.

Option 2 maps showing detailed ward boundaries and a table with ward populations and population variances are included in Appendix A, the “Options Workbook.”

5.4 Option 3 – 23 Wards

This option has 11 urban wards, nine suburban wards and three rural wards and maintains the size of Council. As shown in Section 3.2.5 of this report, a sizeable number of respondents during Round One of the project’s public process (79) wanted to maintain the current number of wards. Option 3 responds to the comments that either “things seem to be working fine” or “there should be no increase in the size of Council”. The average ward population is 50,000 for the 2026 target year.

In order to maintain 23 wards, one ward has to be redistributed in the urban area. There are two reasons for this. First, two wards need to be added to the suburban area to improve voter parity and second, the rural population is too large to be reduced to two wards. This requires major changes to virtually all ward boundaries due to the “domino effect” of removing a ward.

The 11 urban wards are within the +/-15 per cent variance range, with most within 10 per cent for 2022 and 2026. In 2030, W3-13 is above 15 per cent and continues to grow. All other urban wards have acceptable variances through the entire time frame of the OWBR 2020. As in options 1 and 2, ward boundaries follow major roads and highways, main streets and railway tracks and attempt to keep communities together (an example is Carleton Heights in W3-21).

As in options 1 and 2, two wards have been added in the suburban area to improve voter parity. In 2026 all the suburban wards fall within the +/-15 per cent variance range and most are within the 10 per cent variance range. In 2022, W3-6, W3-7 and W3-11 are small, but grow rapidly to within 15 per cent by 2026. All the suburban wards continue to experience rapid growth beyond 2030.

In Option 3 the three rural wards have again small populations and only W3-1 falls within the +/-15 per cent variance range. The Option 3 boundaries are the same as in options 1 and 2. The population variances continue to rise due to an increase in the average ward population in this Option.

The major implication of this option is the loss of one ward within the urban area. This leads to adjustments to the majority of ward boundaries inside the Greenbelt, as all current 12 urban wards have sizeable populations, which vary across the city. There is no cluster of a few small wards that can easily be combined.

Option 3 maps showing detailed ward boundaries and a table with ward populations and population variances are included in Appendix A, the “Options Workbook.”

5.5 Option 4 – 23 Wards

Like Option 3, this option also has 11 urban wards, nine suburban wards and three rural wards and maintains the size of Council. The average ward population is 50,000 for the 2026 target year.

Like Option 3, Option 4 responds to the support for maintaining the current number of wards expressed during Round One of the project’s public process. Option 4 also redistributes one ward in the urban area inside the Greenbelt. While Option 3 starts the design of new ward boundaries from the west of the urban area, Option 4 begins in the east. This results in very different boundaries in Option 4 than in Option 3. Option 4 is a distinctly different option.

The 11 urban wards are all within the +/-15 per cent variance range, with most within 10 per cent. The exception is W4-23, which is slightly over 15 per cent. This variance pattern holds generally for the election years within the time frame of the OWBR 2020, except for Wards W4-22 and W4-23, which grow faster than the other urban wards.

As in options 1, 2 and 3, ward boundaries follow major roads and highways, main streets and railway tracks and attempt to keep communities together. As an example, this has been achieved by re-aligning W4-16 and W4-13 north-south, rather than east-west.

Like in options 1, 2, and 3, two wards have been added in the suburban area to improve voter parity. In 2026 all the suburban wards fall within the +/-15 per cent variance range and most are within the 10 per cent variance range. In 2022, W4-6, W4-7 and W4-11 are small but grow rapidly and are within 15 per cent by 2026. All the suburban wards continue to experience rapid growth beyond 2030.

In Option 4 the three rural wards maintain their small populations and only W4-1 falls within the +/-15 per cent variance range. The Option 4 boundaries are the same as in options 1, 2 and 3. The population variances continue to rise due to an increase in the average ward population in this Option.

Like in Option 3, the major implication of Option 4 is the loss of one ward within the urban area. This leads to adjustments to the majority of wards boundaries inside the Greenbelt.

Option 4 maps showing detailed ward boundaries and a table with ward populations and population variances are included in Appendix A, the “Options Workbook.”

5.6 Option 5 – 17 Wards

This Option has nine urban wards, six suburban wards and two rural wards. During the project’s public process another sizeable group of respondents (78) thought that less

than 20 wards would be appropriate for Ottawa, some suggesting wards should be reduced to as few as seven or eight. Option 5 responds to the sentiment that government should be smaller and wards should be larger. The average ward population is 67,600 for the 2026 target year.

This option represents a major departure from the current situation. It reduces the number of wards significantly, which leads to major ward boundary adjustments for all wards. In this option the rural wards are reduced to two, and one suburban ward and three urban wards are redistributed.

Because of the large average ward population, smaller population variances are evident in all wards. Variances are within the +/- 15 per cent range in the urban area for 2022, 2026 and 2030. The one exception is W5-16, which is smaller than the average at -17.2 per cent in 2022. However, it is growing and by 2026 is within the 15 per cent variance range. By 2034 all urban wards are within the +/-15 per cent variance range, with the exception of W5-14, which is at 17.6 per cent above average.

As in options 1 to 4, Option 5 keeps neighbourhoods together and ward boundaries run along the 416 and 417 highways as well as major streets like Carling and Woodroffe.

Option 5 maintains the current wards in Ottawa South. However, the new W5-7 and W5-8 absorb the current three wards in Ottawa West, with Hazeldean becoming the boundary between the two wards. In Ottawa East W5-3 and W5-4 combine the current two wards with the suburban Cumberland population with boundaries along Innes and St. Joseph Boulevard.

The suburban wards are within the +/-15 per cent variance range in 2022 and 2026, except for W5-8, which has risen to 17.3 per cent in 2026. Rapid growth beyond 2026 increases those variances significantly. This situation reflects the accelerating growth in the suburban areas and is present in all options.

The two rural wards continue to be below the average ward population, just not as much as in options 1 to 4. The boundary between the two rural wards is Highway 416, an easily recognizable physical boundary.

Option 5 maps showing detailed ward boundaries and a table with ward populations and population variances are included in Appendix A, the "Options Workbook."

6 Federal/Provincial Ridings

During the Round One input phase of the OWBR 2020 some members of the public and some Councillors expressed concern that the Province may unilaterally impose the federal/provincial riding boundaries as Ottawa's new wards. Although there was no support for this approach, their apprehension reflects the situation in the City of Toronto, where the Province did impose the 25 federal/provincial riding boundaries as Toronto's

new wards for the 2018 election. Therefore, the consultant team investigated this possibility.

Currently, Ottawa has eight and a half federal/provincial ridings within its municipal boundaries. A large part of Ward 19 (Cumberland) is in the federal/provincial riding of Glengarry-Prescott-Russell. Based on the 2016 Census, the populations of these ridings range from 100,846 (Kanata-Carleton) to 128,280 (Orléans) with an average population of approximately 114,200.

In the Toronto case, one of the stated reasons for using the federal/provincial riding boundaries as wards was that the federal MP, provincial MPP and Ward Councillor would all cover the same area. This, it was argued, would make it easier for residents. However, in Ottawa this would only work for eight ridings – Cumberland would not be the same as its federal/provincial riding.

A larger issue revolves around voter parity. Eight of the wards would have an average population of approximately 144,000 in 2026, while Cumberland would have a population of less than half that. Any attempt to adjust ward boundaries to equalize voter parity would defeat the idea of using federal/provincial boundaries as ward boundaries, as they would no longer be the same.

There is one final consideration. If Ottawa kept their current one Councillor per ward system, Council would be reduced to nine or 10 members and may not be able to provide sustainable municipal governance with so few members covering such a large area.

For these reasons using federal/provincial riding boundaries as ward boundaries was not pursued as an option for the OWBR 2020.

7 Ranking the Options

This Options Report puts forward five distinct ways to achieve a re-aligned ward system for the City of Ottawa. All meet the test of effective representation, as laid out by the courts and the OMB (now LPAT). There is no “best option.” All options have their strengths and weaknesses and individuals will have differing opinions as to which option they prefer. During Round Two of the OWBR 2020’s consultation process residents, stakeholders and Members of Council will have the opportunity to consider the five options, rank them in order of preference and choose a preferred option from a city-wide and local perspective.

As outlined earlier, effective representation has several components: voter parity, natural/physical boundaries, geographic communities of interest, minority interests, ward history, capacity to represent, geographic size and shape of the ward and population growth. All these components need to be balanced in choosing a preferred option to be recommended to City Council.

To assist residents, stakeholders and Members of Council in ranking the options, a **Ranking Tool** has been developed. It allows assessment of each option based on the components of effective representation and then a ranking of each option in order of preference.

More information on each component of effective representation can be found in Section 2 of this report.

Ranking Tool

COMPONENTS OF EFFECTIVE REPRESENTATION	OPTION 1	OPTION 2	OPTION 3	OPTION 4	OPTION 5
	25 WARDS	24 WARDS	23 WARDS	23 WARDS	17 WARDS
Voter Parity					
Natural/Physical Boundaries					
Geographic Communities of Interest					
Minority Interests					
Ward History					
Capacity to Represent					
Geographic Size & Shape of the Ward					
Population Growth					
RANKING (1 to 5)					

8 Next Steps

The options presented in this report will be discussed during Round Two of the OWBR 2020’s consultation process. Members of the public, stakeholders and Council Members will have the opportunity to weigh each option, rank the five options and suggest refinements to their preferred option or options.

The Options Report will be posted on the project website along with an online survey requesting feedback. If public meetings can be held in September, three stakeholder meetings will be scheduled as well as nine public meetings across the city. If the COVID-19 pandemic precludes in-person public and stakeholder meetings, virtual

alternatives will be employed, such as webinars and Zoom meetings. Members of Council will be asked to comment through individual interviews.

Following this broad consultation, a Final Report will be drafted with a recommended alignment of the City's ward boundaries for the 2022 Municipal Elections. This Final Report is scheduled to go to the Finance and Economic Development Committee and City Council in December 2020, so that any decision can be implemented for the 2022 Municipal Elections.