
HALDIMAND COUNTY

Report CLE-02-2025 Ward Boundary Review Options for Council For Consideration by Council in Committee on February 4, 2025



OBJECTIVE:

Council to approve one of the two ward boundary options provided by the consultants from Watson & Associates Economists Ltd.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT Report CLE-02-2025 Ward Boundary Review Options for Council be received;
2. AND THAT Council adopt Option ____ as the new ward boundaries for Haldimand County, to be in effect for the 2026 Municipal Election;
3. AND THAT a by-law be approved at a future Council meeting.

Prepared and Respectfully Submitted by: Chad Curtis, Municipal Clerk

Approved: Cathy Case, Chief Administrative Officer

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report seeks Council's consideration for the Final Report of the Ward Boundary Review, prepared by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd. Staff is seeking direction from Council with respect to the ward boundary structure based on the consultant's report, attached. Council has the following options to consider with respect to this report:

- Adopt one of the two Final Options and pass a by-law at a future Council meeting to adjust the ward boundaries. While this by-law could be appealed to the Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT), the Consultant Team believes either option would withstand such scrutiny.
- Take no action, effectively endorsing the current ward system by default. This decision would signal to residents that the existing system remains suitable, it being noted that the Consultant Team has reached a different conclusion.

BACKGROUND:

The Haldimand Act, 1999 established Haldimand County with six wards with a Mayor elected at large. Outside of some minor boundary adjustments made to reflect changes related to urban boundary modifications, the six wards are largely unchanged. Due to changes in population demographics since 2001, the current ward boundaries have not provided effective representation for a large number of residents in Haldimand County.

In 2018 and again in 2022, Council identified a ward boundary review as a Term of Council priority and directed that options and potential changes to current ward boundaries should be examined to address population growth and to consider communities of interest geographically.

At the May 28, 2024 Committee of the Whole meeting, consultants from Watson & Associates Economists Ltd. held an Introductory Council Workshop. This workshop introduced the guiding principles of the ward boundary review, discussed the current ward structure, and provided information on the next steps in the process. The Ward Boundary Review project included several phases of public engagement:

Project Initiation – included interviews with Mayor, Councillors and key members of municipal staff, preparation of Backgrounder Reports, and the launch of a dedicated webpage.

Phase One – included the first round of public engagement. In addition to contacting key stakeholders in the community, various public engagement tools were used throughout the course of Phase One of the project, including social media, newspaper, two in-person open houses and one virtual open house. An online survey, which yielded 177 responses, was also used to collect feedback from the community.

Phase Two – included the second round of public engagement beginning with the release of the Preliminary Ward Boundary Options and a review of the preliminary options at the November 4, 2025 Council meeting. Various public engagement tools were used in addition to the Council meeting including direct emails to key stakeholders, social media, newspaper ads, two in-person open houses and one virtual open house. An online survey, which yielded 140 responses, asked participants to identify their preferred preliminary option.

ANALYSIS:

Watson & Associates Economists Ltd. Provided four preliminary ward boundary options in Phase Two. The public offered insightful feedback on all options, suggesting ways to refine specific elements of each map. The consultants returned to the November 4, 2024 Council meeting to further solicit feedback from Council on revised preliminary options.

As a result of this discourse, further revision took place and two final options have been developed by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd. And are indicated in their final report as follows:

1. Final Option 1 (6 Ward Option)
2. Final Option 2 (7 Ward Option)

These recommendations are a result of feedback received through Phase Two public consultations evaluated with professional assessment by the consultants. A full analysis of the recommendations, including, the expert opinion of the consulting team and community engagement results, can be found in their report attached to this agenda.

Should Council endorse one of the Final Options in the consultant's report, it is requested that direction be provided to staff on the preferred option to bring forward a by-law at the February 10, 2025 meeting of Council. As per section 222 (8) of the Municipal Act, in the event of an appeal and where the Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT) upholds or amends the by-law prior to January 1, 2026, or if there is no appeal, the revised ward boundaries would be in effect for the 2026 municipal election. If an appeal is received and no decision is issued by the OLT prior to January 1, 2026, then the current ward boundaries will remain in effect for the 2026 election.

It should be noted that the ward boundary review will have no impact on the 2025 by-elections in Ward 1 and Ward 4.

FINANCIAL/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

Not applicable.

STAKEHOLDER IMPACTS:

Changes to ward boundaries could have wide-ranging impacts. While some of the impacts would be administrative, the majority would relate to political representation within Haldimand – whether that be a readjustment in geographic area represented, or a change in the number of representatives.

REPORT IMPACTS:

Agreement: No

By-law: Yes

Budget Amendment: No

Policy: No

REFERENCES:

1. [Municipal Act, 2001](#)

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Final Recommended Options to Council
2. Consultant Final Report