



**Special Committee of the Whole
Report No. 21-016**

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Electoral Zone Boundary Review

Key Contact: Michele Giroux, Executive Officer, 613-596-8211 ext. 8310

PURPOSE:

1. To present the plan for the comprehensive review of electoral zone boundaries to align with the City of Ottawa’s revised ward boundaries.

SUPPORTING OUR STRATEGIC PLAN:

2. Conducting an electoral zone boundary review is consistent with the Culture of Social Responsibility objective of the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan by modelling responsible and ethical leadership and accountability. Decisions related to the composition and area of jurisdiction are a part of the Board’s legislative requirements. Through analysis and revision to the zone structure, the Board will support effective governance practices and decision making by ensuring effective representation for its school populations and communities.

CONTEXT:

3. City of Ottawa Ward Boundary Review
In 2020 the City of Ottawa conducted a comprehensive ward boundary review. The purpose of the review was to enable the City to establish boundaries for at least three future municipal elections (2022, 2026 and 2030). The last major review of Ottawa’s ward boundaries occurred in 2004-2005.

The City of Ottawa’s population has grown significantly since the last ward boundary review – particularly in Barrhaven (Ward 3/Zone 3), where the City has permitted the expansion of residential communities. The population in Gloucester-South Nepean (Ward 22/Zone 7) and Cumberland (Ward 19/Zone 8) has also increased, with numbers expected to grow in the coming years.

In December of 2020, the City of Ottawa voted to increase the number of electoral wards from 23 to 24 wards. A copy of the [recommended boundaries final report](#) is available on the public engagement section of the City of Ottawa’s website.

4. The Education Act

Under the *Education Act*, Regulation 412/00, the following must occur in an election year:

- The Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) must forward the population of electoral groupings report (PEG) to school boards by 15 February 2022 (Section 2);
- School boards must complete the determination and distribution members of the board (Section 9); and
- Not later than 31 March 2022 in each election year, every board shall determine the number of members to be elected to the Board (Section 3).

While this process is mandated during an election year, the six-week timeline between the February 15 receipt of the PEG Report and the March 31 deadline for submitting the Trustee Distribution Report to the Minister of Education does not allow for reviewing zone boundaries following a comprehensive ward boundary review.

5. OCDSB Electoral Zone Boundary Review

The last comprehensive electoral zone boundary review for the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board was conducted in 2006. The Board has continued to delay a comprehensive review to focus on other matters of importance, but in advance of the 2018 elections, approved a partial study of the boundaries of electoral zones 7 and 11, which resulted in changes to those zones to rebalance the electoral quotient.

There is no requirement for a change in the number of trustees on the Board due to the ward boundary review. Ontario Regulation 412/00 establishes the maximum number of trustees for the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board at 12. The Board may, at its discretion, reduce this number. Such a reduction must be made by way of Board resolution. It is important to note that trustees are elected by public school supporters only. Therefore, trustee zone boundary reviews focus on electors and not the general population when determining voter parity.

It will be necessary to review the existing electoral zone boundaries to ensure that they align with the City's new ward boundaries and that the electoral zones continue to respect the general principles of electoral representation including:

- a) Protect communities of interest;
- b) Recognize present and future population trends;
- c) Recognize physical/geographic features as natural boundaries; and
- d) Respect the principle of representation by population.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

6. Trustee Distribution

The PEG report establishes the population of the board's electoral group by municipal ward, effective January 1 of the election year and is used to calculate the elector quotient for each ward and zone. Ideally, the electoral quotient should be 1.0 with a variance of not more than +/- 25 percent.

The 2018-2022 Trustee Determination and Distribution (Appendix A) indicates the electoral quotient by zone for the 2018 municipal election. A review of the population projections in the City's report suggests the electoral quotient will be impacted by growth.

7. Zone Boundary Reviews

A zone boundary review is a significant undertaking. It touches on the very foundation of democracy and is naturally a sensitive and complex subject. An effective review requires research and legislative analysis, population analysis and projections, the development of a series of models/options, cartographic support, and public consultation and related implementation. Given the complexity involved in undertaking a zone boundary review, there needs to be a common understanding within the Board that a review would only be initiated if there was a clear and collective will to make changes to the electoral structure.

Municipal ward boundaries establish the framework for determining electoral zone boundaries for school boards. The District must adapt to the City's change and adjust the zone boundaries to match the twelve trustee members to the City's 24 wards. The even number may provide a unique opportunity to reconsider the zone map with the understanding that trustee zones can be comprised of one or more municipal wards, but the combined wards must be contiguous (zones can combine adjacent wards but cannot sever or intersect municipal ward boundaries). A review of electoral zones is generally undertaken in a period of stability with municipal ward boundaries. With the City having just revised their ward boundaries to anticipate future growth, the timing is appropriate for the District to evaluate and make changes to its electoral zones.

8. The Impact of the Revised City Ward Boundaries on the District

To better understand the impact of the City's recent ward boundary changes on the current electoral zone structure, planning staff has created a composite map of the trustee zones across the District with the approved City ward changes superimposed on top (Appendix B).

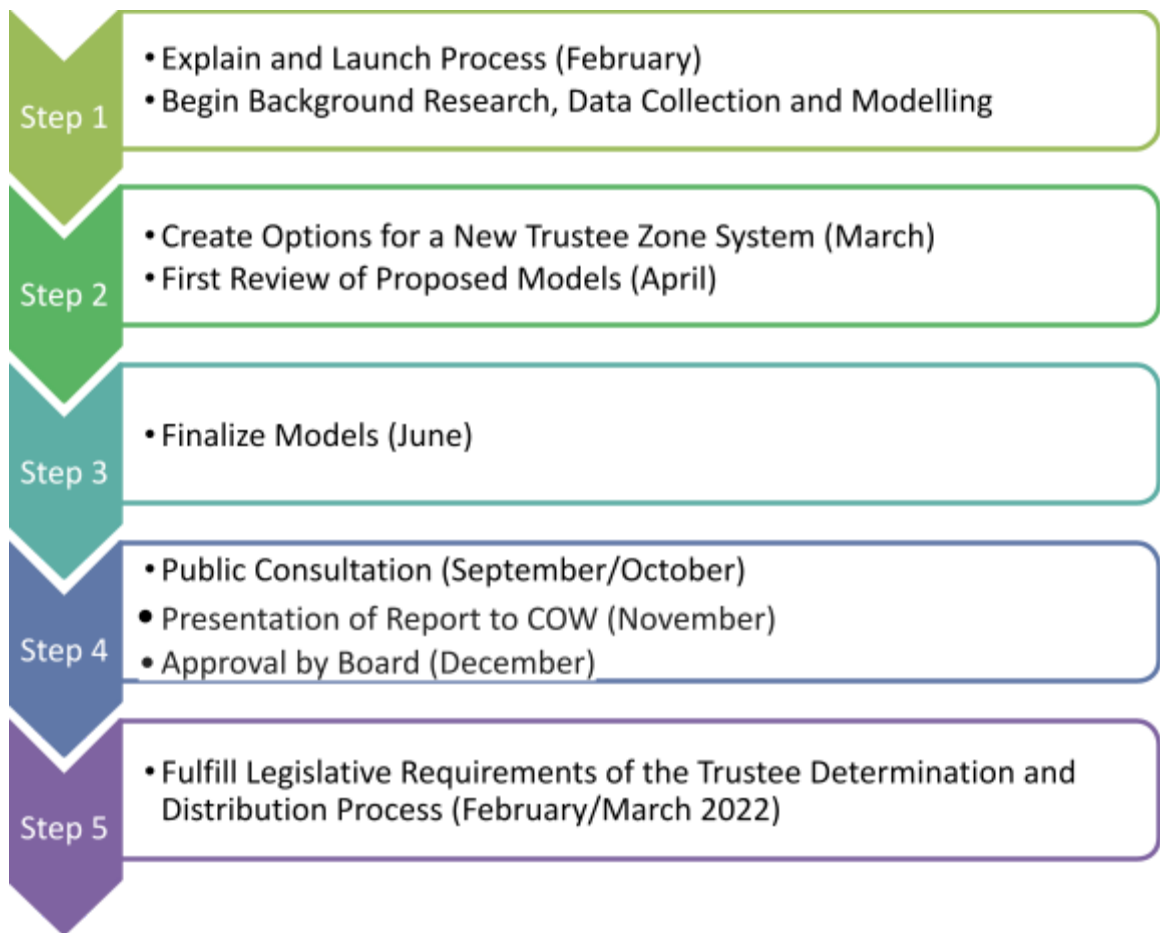
Additionally, a map of each zone has been provided, highlighting the areas of change in accordance with the approved ward changes and 'in red' the related areas of impact for that particular zone (Appendix C). Several zones have minor adjustments to the borders of the zone boundary.

Planning has identified that zones 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 10, 11 and 12 have significant line shifts, large landmass and development areas that should be considered in any zone change options that may be suggested in the course of the review. Staff plan to generate a series of options for consideration by the trustees and the community.

The District’s electoral base is the number of electors that support the public school system. MPAC provides information on the number of electors prior to each election and it is not anticipated that the material will be made available until early 2022. Planning staff will use population projections for each City ward, public school elector projections, enrollment projections, and the number of schools – current and planned, both elementary and secondary, within each City ward. The projections will enable staff to develop options for rearranging/aligning the zones.

9. Proposed Timeline

The following timeline for the comprehensive boundary review will allow time for research, consultation and deliberation.



RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

10. The primary costs associated with a comprehensive electoral zone boundary review include staff time, advertising, modelling, public consultation, and other related costs. Once the new boundaries are approved, there will be additional costs related to communications initiatives.

COMMUNICATION/CONSULTATION ISSUES:

11. Undertaking a comprehensive zone boundary review well in advance of the 2022 municipal election provides ample communication and consultation opportunities with stakeholder groups and the general public. Public meetings will be held to share information regarding the proposed zone boundary configuration options, the reason for the review, and to seek feedback for the Board to consider as it proceeds.

Superintendents of Instruction will also play a role in the consultation process through their conversations with principals. Principals can then ensure the item is added to school council agendas. Feedback from school councils will help inform the zone realignment options.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Does the proposed boundary review provide a comprehensive approach to examining ward boundaries?
- Are there particular areas or issues of concern that need to be reviewed for better alignment in the review process?
- What additional strategies or considerations might enhance the review process?

Michele Giroux
Executive Officer

Camille Williams-Taylor
Director of Education and
Secretary of the Board

APPENDICES

Appendix A: OCDSB Trustee Determination and Distribution, 2018-2022

Appendix B: Composite Map of Trustee Zones

Appendix C: Individual Zone Maps