

Municipality Of Chatham-Kent

Corporate Services

Municipal Governance

To: Mayor and Members of Council
From: Judy Smith, Director, Municipal Governance/Clerk
Date: December 16, 2024
Subject: Ward Boundary and Council Composition Review – Final Report

Recommendation

It is recommended that:

1. Council choose an option and direct administration to bring a by-law of that option to the January 27, 2025 Council meeting for voting.

Table of Recommendations				
Council Size	Recommended Ward Boundaries	Passes the “Effective Representation” Test	For Map See Page	StrategyCorp Recommendation
13 (12 + 1)	Option 13B-V2 (revised)	Yes	20	Preferred
15 (14 + 1)	Option 15C-V2 (revised)	Yes	22	Acceptable
18 (17 + 1)	Option 18A	Yes	24	Acceptable

Background

On May 27th, 2024, Council approved a third-party review of the Municipality of Chatham-Kent’s Council composition and ward boundaries to ensure the Municipality can provide an effective and equitable system of representation for all residents. StrategyCorp was selected as the lead consultant through an open and competitive procurement process.

The Council Composition and Ward Boundary Review examines:

1. the size and structure of Council;
2. how councillors are elected; and
3. the electoral ward boundaries for the Municipality.

The review aimed to generate recommendations on a Council and ward boundary structure that considered the Chatham-Kent of today and expected population growth through the 2026 and 2030 elections.

A preliminary report prepared by StrategyCorp outlining their findings to date and providing options regarding the size of structure of Council moving forward was presented to Council on October 7, 2024. At that time, Council passed a motion to bring back options for Council composition of 13-15 (inclusive of the Mayor) and to include the option of keeping the Council number status quo.

On November 4, 2024, Council approved the motion that “StrategyCorp be directed to present options of ward boundaries (Maps 1-7) for public consultation on Thursday, November 14, 2024 and Monday, November 25, 2024 and report back to Council on Monday, December 16th with a final proposal.”

Comments

StrategyCorp has been actively engaged on the ward boundary and council composition review over the past 6 months. The two public meetings (noted in the motion) for final input regarding the options provided were held. Advertisement in local papers were issued and several social media posts were also displayed. In addition, a Let’s Talk survey was prepared seeking input on the seven options proposed.

StrategyCorp prepared a final document summarizing the feedback received and provided recommendations for Council consideration moving forward (Appendix A).

Council members have raised items such as committees of council/ local boards and council compensation that are outside the scope of this ward boundary and council composition review.

Council Committees and Local Boards

In the final year of a term of Council, administration conducts a review of the current committees of council and local boards. Administration identifies if there are any updates or changes required to the committee and/or their terms of reference. Conducting this review allows for the committees to be as up to date as possible when recruitment of new members takes place for the next term of Council. It would be at this time Council can address the potential changes required to the terms of reference relating to Council membership. Appendix B outlines the current list of Chatham-Kent Committees, Local Boards and Corporations and their Council membership. There are 28 committees/boards with 58 council appointments currently.

Council Remuneration

A Citizen Review Committee for Council Remuneration was established in 2016. In the final year of a term of Council, the compensation of Council members for the next upcoming term is reviewed. This committee can reconvene in 2025, once Council

provides direction on ward boundaries and council composition. This can be done prior to the next term of Council.

Overall, the total councillor budget is \$796,217. On average, the current expense for each councillor is \$46,836. If the direction of Council is to lower the number of councillors, the Citizen Review Committee for Council Remuneration could consider options such as increasing councillor wages with no budget impact, a cost savings or other options.

Here are some figures for Council’s information.

Options	Amount	Number of Councillors
Increase wages with no budget impact	\$56,873/councillor/year	From 17 to 14 councillors
Increase wages with no budget impact	\$66,351/councillor/year	From 17 to 12 councillors
Savings	\$140,509/year	Removal of 3 councillors
Savings	\$234,181/year	Removal of 5 councillors

Next Steps

Once Council provides direction with regard to ward boundaries and council composition, administration will return to the January 27, 2025 Council meeting with a by-law for Council approval. Section 222 of the Municipal Act, 2001 outlines the specific process requirements regarding establishment of wards. The process is outlined in Appendix C.

Council Term Priorities

This report supports the following Council Term Priorities:

			
Deliver Excellent Service	Promote Safety & Well-Being	Grow Our Community	Ensure Environmental Sustainability
2, 3			

Consultation

Members of Council have been engaged in this process through 1:1 interviews in August and September.

There were three planned reports to Council by the consultant. First, recommendations on the size and election method of Council (October 2024); second, draft ward boundaries for consideration (November 2024); and finally, full recommendations on new ward boundaries (this report). Council has final authority over the implementation of any recommendations.

The public had opportunities to provide input and feedback on the proposed options through two public meetings on November 14 and 25, 2024 at the John D. Bradley Centre starting at 6:00 p.m. These public meetings were live streamed. Deputations were permitted at the public meetings and according to the Chatham-Kent Procedure By-law, no deputations will be received on December 16, 2024 for this report.

In addition, the proposed options were on the Let's Talk Chatham-Kent webpage. Public engagement was encouraged on this site and all public comments are reported back in the final report of StrategyCorp.

The public meeting on November 14th had 12 people attending in person, while up to 15 people watched online. The public meeting on November 25th, had 23 people attending in person, while up to 30 people were watching online. The survey results indicated 286 individual people responded to this round of the survey.

Communication

A project page on the Municipality's *Let's Talk Chatham-Kent* page has been launched to keep residents informed throughout the project. [Council Composition & Ward Boundary Review | Let's Talk Chatham-Kent \(letstalkchatham-kent.ca\)](https://letstalkchatham-kent.ca)

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice (DEIJ)

While the Municipal Act, 2001, does not speak to the criteria and scope of a ward boundary review, the common law in Canada requires that the principle of “effective representation” be applied when reviewing ward boundaries. This is to ensure that the notion of “representation by population” is balanced by other important factors such as geography, communities of interest, community history and minority representation.

Financial Implications

The Citizen Review Committee for Council Remuneration will meet prior to the next municipal election in order to review and propose recommendations to Council on the remuneration for council members.

Should Council pass a motion to change ward boundaries and/or council composition much work is required to prepare for the 2026 municipal election. The Lifeamp Election Reserve may be used to cover any costs necessary to implement these changes.

Prepared by: Judy Smith, Director, Municipal Governance/Clerk

Reviewed by: Cathy Hoffman, General Manager, Corporate Services

Consulted and confirmed the content of the consultation section of the report by:

None

Attachments:

Appendix A – StrategyCorp Final Report

Appendix B – Chatham-Kent Committees of Council, Local Board and Corporations – Council Membership

Appendix C – Section 222, Municipal Act – Next Steps