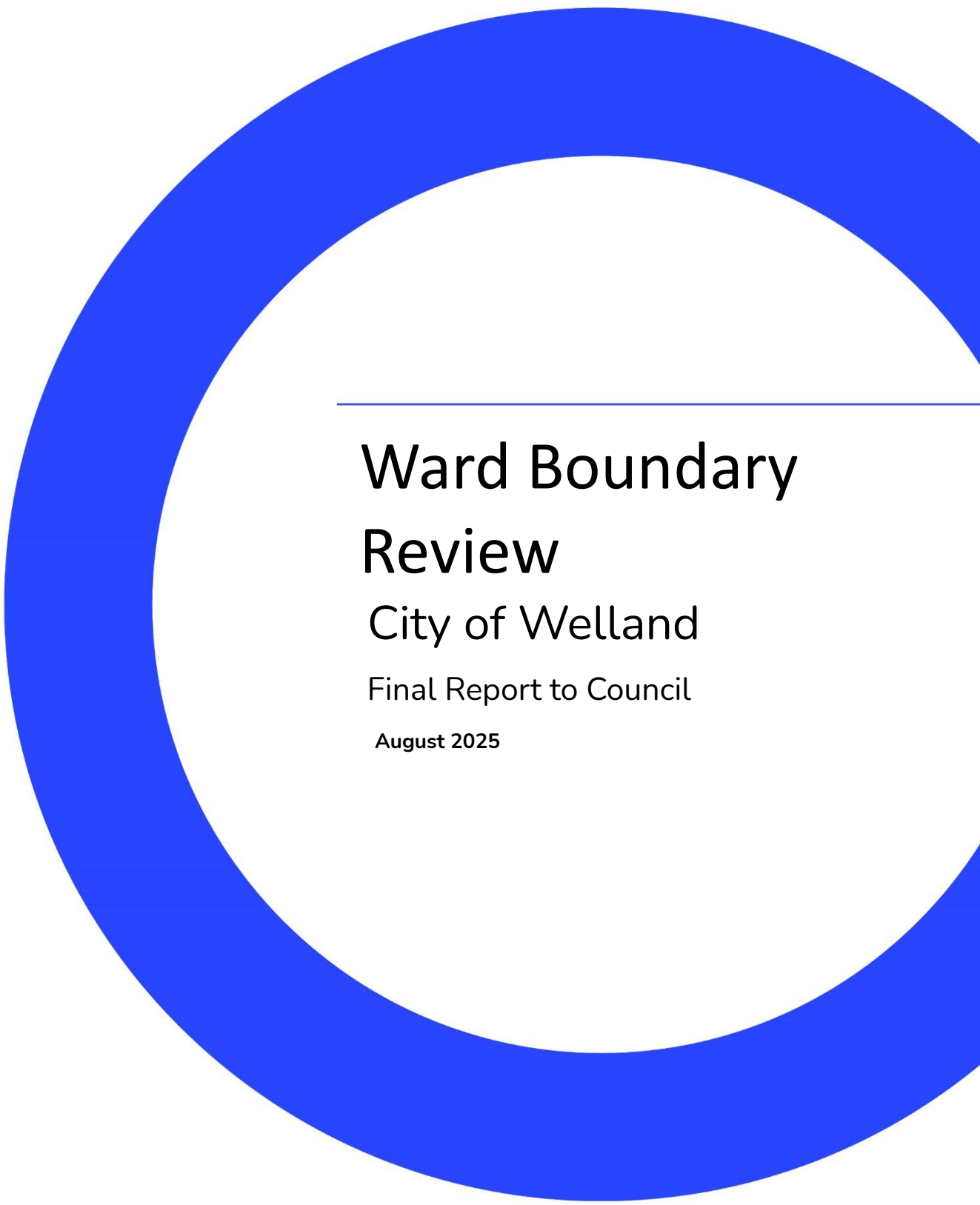


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Ward Boundary Review

City of Welland

Final Report to Council

August 2025



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Executive Summary

In April 2025, the City of Welland retained StrategyCorp to conduct a Ward Boundary Review.

The purpose of the Review is to ensure that the City's ward boundaries provide effective and equitable representation for residents by developing and recommending ward boundary options that accommodate projected growth through the 2026, 2030 and 2034 municipal elections. By our terms of reference, we were instructed to design wards suitable for a council of 13 members, with a Mayor and two councillors for each of the six wards.

Ontario law gives municipalities a significant degree of flexibility to pick their own ward and council structure. In the case of Welland, the challenge is finding a model that can deliver effective representation given the rapid and concentrated growth that is currently forecast for Welland.

Ward boundary design and evaluation process:

In our Interim Report to Council, we proposed an evaluative framework based on the Supreme Court of Canada's principles of effective representation.¹

We applied these principles to the current ward boundaries. We concluded that the current boundaries are no longer suitable. The uneven distribution of population growth since the wards were first drawn means that they no longer deliver acceptable parity by population.

Based on our own analysis and suggestions from stakeholders, we then modelled and tested over a dozen draft concepts. Through this process we prepared **four options** that:

- Meet the test for "effective representation."
- Deliver improved parity of population for the period of 2025 to 2030 compared to existing ward boundaries. Whether these options will continue to deliver acceptable parity by 2034 will depend on Welland's actual rate of growth.

These four options were presented in the second round of public consultation.

Our final recommendations are based on our application of the "Effective Representation" test, as well as feedback received through both rounds of public consultation.

Recommendation #1: Prioritize options that deliver parity for 2026 and 2030.

- Welland's forecast growth is concentrated in north end of the city. As a result, **there is no ward boundary model that can deliver acceptable parity of representation today and when expected growth is complete** – be it in 2034 as contemplated by current forecasts, or later if takes longer to materialize. Whichever ward boundaries Council adopts for the 2026 election, those **boundaries will need to be reviewed in advance of the 2034 election** to see if they still deliver effective parity based on the actual population growth at that time.

Recommendation #2: In our opinion, Option B has the preferred ward boundaries for the City of Welland. All the presented options would result in the necessary improvements to the status quo to deliver effective representation,

- Option B provides the best overall mix of favourable parity outcomes while respecting the

¹ These principles are described at page 42

overall character and features of the community.

- Option C delivers marginally better parity, but at the cost of undesirable trade-offs in terms of boundaries that respect community character and geographic features.
- Option A delivers marginally better respect for community character and features, but delivers the poorest parity outcomes of the four options.

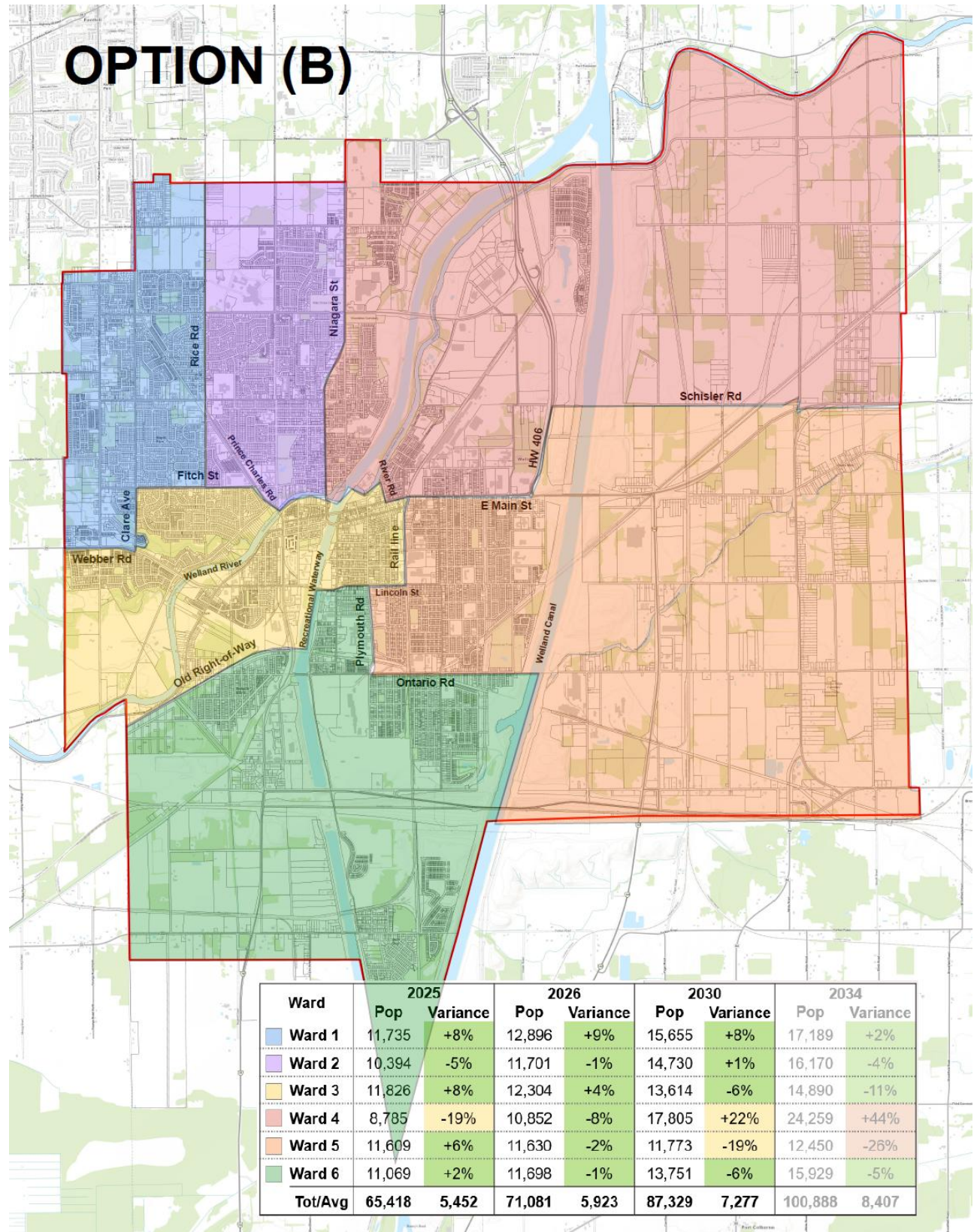
Details of our analysis is outlined in the table below.

Relative parity outcomes	Relative respect for community character & features
Option C has the most favourable parity. ▶ Two wards fall in the sub-optimal range in 2025 and one sub-optimal ward in 2030. ▶ Ward variances are primarily well within the optimal range, never exceeding +/-18% from the quotient, and have the least spread from 2025-2030.	Option A delivers the most favourable character and features outcomes. ▶ Retains the existing number of representatives for Cooks Mills as in the status quo. ▶ Retains the overall shape and size of wards reflective of the status quo.
Option B has the second most favourable parity. ▶ One ward falls in the sub-optimal range in 2025 and two sub-optimal wards in 2030. ▶ Sub-optimal wards have variances over +/-19% and more significant spread from 2025-2030 than Option C.	Option B delivers the second most favourable character and features outcomes. ▶ Cooks Mills has two fewer representatives relative to the status quo, which is justifiable given the size of the population. It is affiliated with Welland “proper”, as in the status quo. ▶ Optimizes ward geography so wards are relatively equal in geographic size and regularly shaped.
Options D has the third most favourable parity. ▶ One ward falls in the sub-optimal range in 2025 and three sub-optimal wards in 2030. ▶ Sub-optimal wards have variances over +/-19% and has the most spread from 2025-2030.	Option D delivers the third most favourable character and features outcomes. ▶ The number of Cooks Mills’ representatives is the same as Option B, but its affiliation with Dain City is less favourable than with Welland “proper”. ▶ One ward is disproportionately large and irregularly shaped.
Option A has the least favourable parity. ▶ Two sub-optimal wards in 2025, and three sub-optimal wards in 2030. ▶ Sub-optimal wards have variances over +/-19% and similar spread from 2025-2030 as Option B.	Option C delivers the least favourable character and features outcomes. ▶ Wards have very disproportionate geographic area and are generally irregularly shaped. ▶ Cooks Mills has four fewer representatives than the status quo and is affiliated with Dain City.

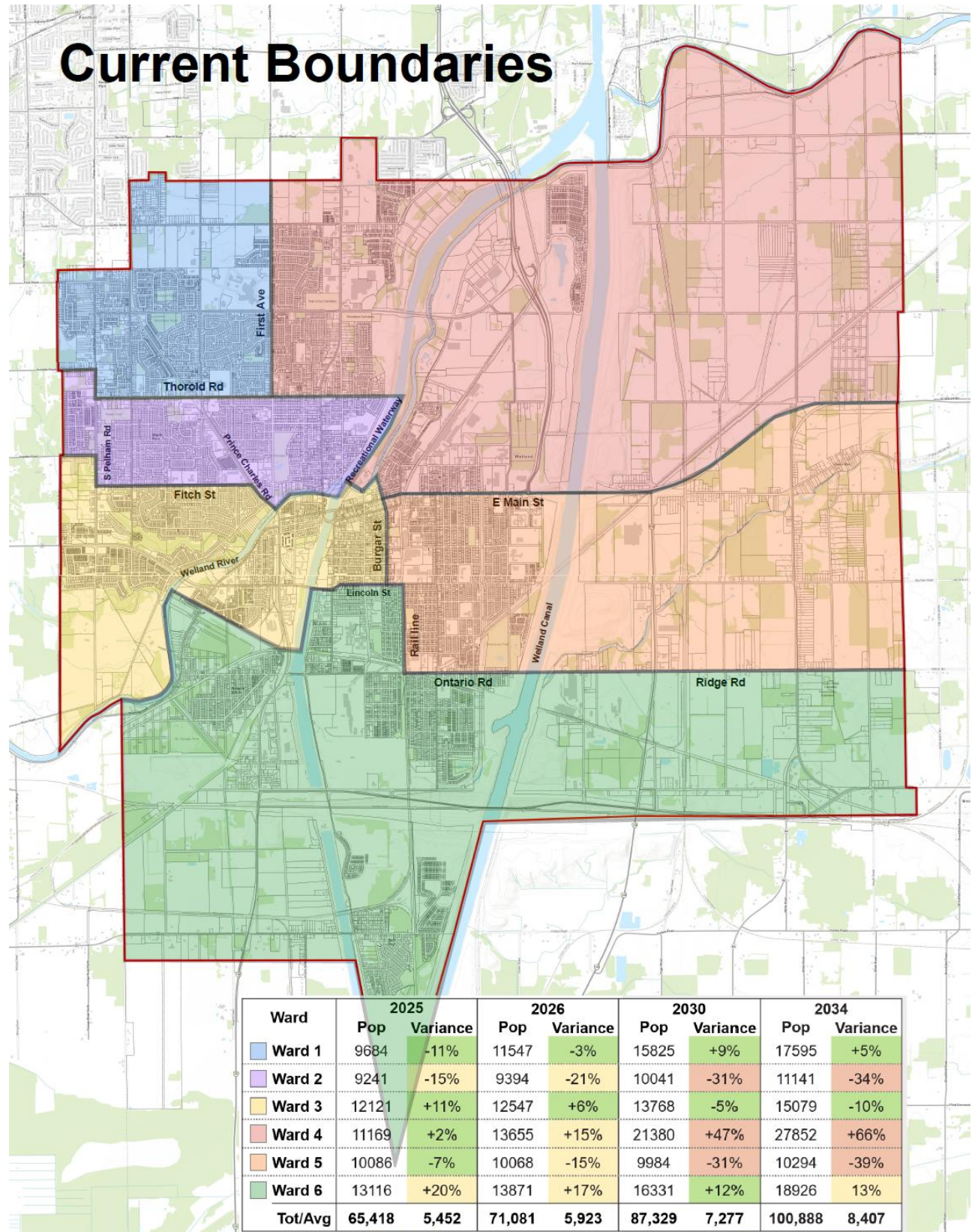
This Report includes the following:

- **Section 1:** Provides an overview of the review and activities undertaken since the Interim Report.
- **Section 2:** Describes the various conditions considered in ward boundary design for Welland.
- **Section 3:** Applies the conditions in a comparative analysis of the four options.
- **Schedule I:** Provides a detailed description and evaluation for each of the four options.
- **Appendix II:** Reviews council composition (for information) as required by the terms of reference.

Recommended ward boundary map:



Current ward boundary map:



Section 1 | Project Overview

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this Ward Boundary Review is to ensure that the City's ward boundaries provide a system of effective and equitable representation for all residents. The Review will develop and recommend ward boundary options that accommodate projected growth through the 2026, 2030 and 2034 municipal elections.

Accordingly, this **Recommendations Report** includes:

- An overview of the review, including activities undertaken since the Interim Report;
- A description of the various conditions considered in ward boundary design for Welland;
- A comparative analysis of the four final ward boundary options and final recommendations;
- A detailed description and evaluation for each of the four options; and
- An appended council composition review for information (see *Appendix I*) as required by the terms of reference.

The complete motion from Council approving this Review, the complete scope of work defined in the Request for Proposal, and a full description of the guiding principles of this Review can be found in Appendix II.

1.2 Review Process

This project has two phases:

- **Phase One:** Preliminary Evaluation and Report to Council.
- **Phase Two:** Develop Options and Report to Council with Recommendations

Phase One: Preliminary Evaluation

Interim Report: On June 3, 2025, StrategyCorp concluded Phase 1 by presenting its first Interim Report to Council, which it received. The Report included:

- An update on progress so far;
- Summarized the feedback from the first round of consultations; and
- Outlined preliminary findings on the existing ward boundaries.

The full Interim Report can be accessed on the Municipality's EngageWelland site [here](#).

Phase Two: Develop Options and Recommendations

Ward Boundary Options Development: StrategyCorp designed and tested over a dozen draft ward boundary options to identify four final draft options for consideration.

Second Round of Public Consultation: StrategyCorp facilitated public consultations on the amended draft ward boundary map options presented in the Draft Ward Boundary Options Report. This included:

- **Council interviews:** One-on-one interviews with Welland's Mayor and Council.²
- **Digital information resources:** Information about the Review was posted on Welland's, "Engage Welland" website.
- **In-Person Public Meetings:** Two public meetings were scheduled for July 15th (Virtual) and July 16th (in-person) at the Welland City Hall. Advance public notice was provided to the public via the normal communications channels of the City.³ There were two participants.
- **Online Public Survey:** A public engagement survey was posted on the City's, "Engage Welland" Website from July 14th to July 18th.⁴ The survey received fifteen completed responses. A summary of the participation through the survey is available in Appendix IV.

A Note on Online Public Surveys:

An Online Public Survey should **NOT** be mistaken for a Scientific Opinion Poll. Given that respondents were self-selecting, the online public survey results should not be misconstrued as a representative sample of the public or a quantitative public opinion poll of the population of Welland. Such a poll would have been different in that it would have required a randomly selected group of participants, chosen using methods to model Welland demographics.

As a result, where we have reported on the numerical outcomes, it should be taken as a report on the opinions of those who participated but **NOT** as statistically representative of broader public opinion.

Feedback collected through these events, and the survey provided qualitative insights into the opinions of participants, which were very helpful in identifying issues for us to consider in the preparation of the Interim Report.

Final Report: This Final Recommendations Report marks the conclusion of Phase 2. StrategyCorp will present this second and Final Report to Council for review and to inform its final decision regarding Welland's ward boundaries.

² Throughout, anonymous quotations from stakeholder interviews faithfully record the meaning they wanted to convey but may have been edited for brevity and content.

³ To support public awareness and participation in the Ward Boundary Review, the City of Welland implemented a multi-channel communications strategy utilizing the following channels: Facebook posts (5 posts for the public meetings and 6 posts for the survey between July 11th and July 28th, 2025), the city website and the city's engagewelland.com platform. A formal news release announcing the project was published on the City's website and covered by several local media outlets, broadening its reach.

⁴ The same channels were used to promote both the survey and the public meetings.

Section 2 | Ward Boundary Design Process and Considerations

All boundaries should be designed to reflect the principles of Effective Representation.

Throughout consultations, improved **current and future parity** among wards was the clear priority for participants. Specifically, there is clear consensus that Welland's boundaries need to be re-drawn to better account for recent population changes that have already occurred, as well as in anticipation of rapid and concentrated growth.

A number of additional possible design priorities emerged through the first round of consultations aimed at designing boundaries that would better respect the remaining individual principles of effective representation around **community character and features** (i.e., community or diversity of interests; physical features as natural boundaries; and means of communication and accessibility). Some frequently raised suggestions included:

- Including keeping historic communities together;
- Consolidating "rural" perspectives into a single ward; and
- Respecting Welland's waterways as significant boundaries.

With these considerations in mind, StrategyCorp designed and tested over a dozen ward boundary concepts prioritizing the various design priorities to identify how these priorities interact in Welland's context to impact overall effective representation.

We considered:

- The impact of population growth and distribution on ward boundaries overall;
- Design that accommodates growth;
- Design that accommodates Welland's communities of interest; and
- Design that accommodates Welland's geography.

This section outlines each of these potential design priorities, the key findings that emerged from the evaluation of these concepts, and how they guided the development of the ward boundary map options presented for consideration by the public and in this Report.

2.1 Impact of Growth on Welland's Ward Boundaries

Welland's forecast rapid and concentrated growth is the biggest factor in designing appropriate ward boundary options.

It is typical for a ward boundary review to account for growth through 2-3 election cycles. In the terms of reference, we were directed to design wards that could accommodate projected growth through the 2026, 2030, and 2034 municipal elections.

Welland is a very fast-growing community. The 2034 population is expected to be approximately 100,888 people, an increase of 54% from 2025, or approximately 35,469 people. This represents an average annual growth rate of ~6% from 2025 to 2034.⁵

⁵ StrategyCorp worked with Welland's planning staff to estimate expected population growth up to the 2034 election. On a ward-by-ward basis, StrategyCorp used the City's future development projections to map exactly where growth is anticipated to occur. Further details on the methodology and reference studies used are outlined in the Interim Report.

70% of Welland's forecast growth is concentrated in the north. Approximately 85% of growth is forecast to occur within the three concentrated areas outlined on the graphic on the following page. The majority of this growth – almost 70% - will occur in the north-west corner of the City.

A key finding of our evaluations is that by the time all the growth Welland is forecasting in these high-growth areas occurs, underpopulated wards today would become the most overpopulated. This is due to the way the concentration of growth in the north will distort population distribution over time. As a result, **there is no ward boundary model that can deliver acceptable parity of representation today and when expected growth is complete** – be it in 2034 as contemplated by current forecasts, or later if it takes longer to materialize.

A ward boundary review must rely on forecasts. Forecasts rely on the best information available at the time of the review. However, forecasts change. Welland's land use plans provide a level of certainty with respect to **where** growth will happen, but in the current economic uncertainty can influence **when** or how fast growth will happen. With such a wide variance between population today and forecast for 2034, we believe it is best practice to put the emphasis on population "today." However, if Welland does not grow at the pace currently forecast, the options presented here would continue to be acceptable.

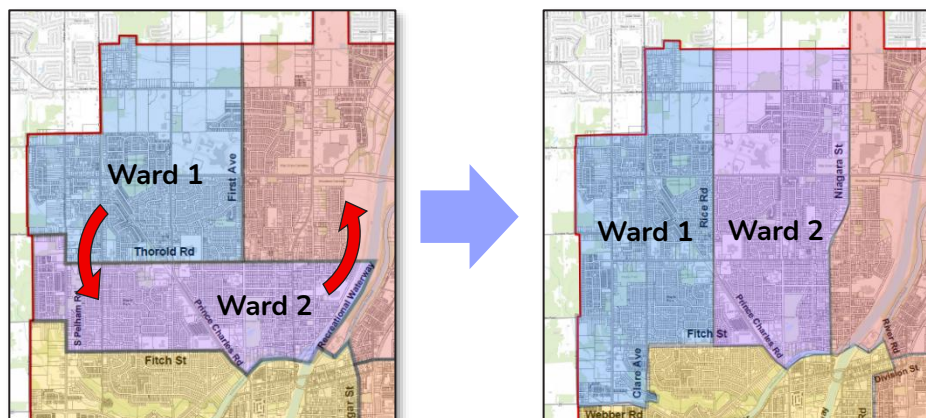
Therefore, we have prioritized options that deliver parity for 2026 and 2030.

Whichever ward boundaries Council elects to adopt for the 2026 election, those boundaries will need to be reviewed following the 2030 election to see if they still provide effective representation based on realized and anticipated growth.

2.2 Designing Ward Boundaries to Accommodate Growth

Compared to its current 2025 population, Welland is anticipated to grow over 30% by 2030. To achieve parity requires two design features:

1. **Dividing areas of concentrated growth across multiple wards** and combining them with areas of lower growth. To achieve this, we divide the northern high-growth area of the city among at least three wards and reorient wards 1 and 2 to each run from the City's northern boundary southward, as opposed to along the western boundary eastward in all the options presented in this Report. *One example of this is illustrated in the graphic below.*



2. **Accepting allowable departures from optimal parity in some wards today** to ensure they do not

exceed allowable ranges of parity by 2030. Each of the options in this Report have one or more high-growth wards which start out under populated in 2025, trend toward parity in 2026, and become overpopulated by 2030. The opposite is true for low-growth wards.

2.3 Designing Ward Boundaries to Accommodate Communities of Interest

The City of Welland is divided into three primary communities with distinct identities:

- **Cooks Mills** – encompassing the entire area east of the Welland Canal.
- **Dain City** – encompassing the area south of Townline Tunnel Rd between the Canal and the Recreational Waterway.
- **Welland “proper”** - encompassing all the remaining areas of the municipality.

Within Welland “proper” there are a number of communities and neighbourhoods with their own unique heritage, character, and identity, but generally, their residents would typically all self-describe as “living in Welland.” We heard that residents of Dain City and Cooks Mills however, may consider themselves as residents of those places.

Representation for Cooks Mills

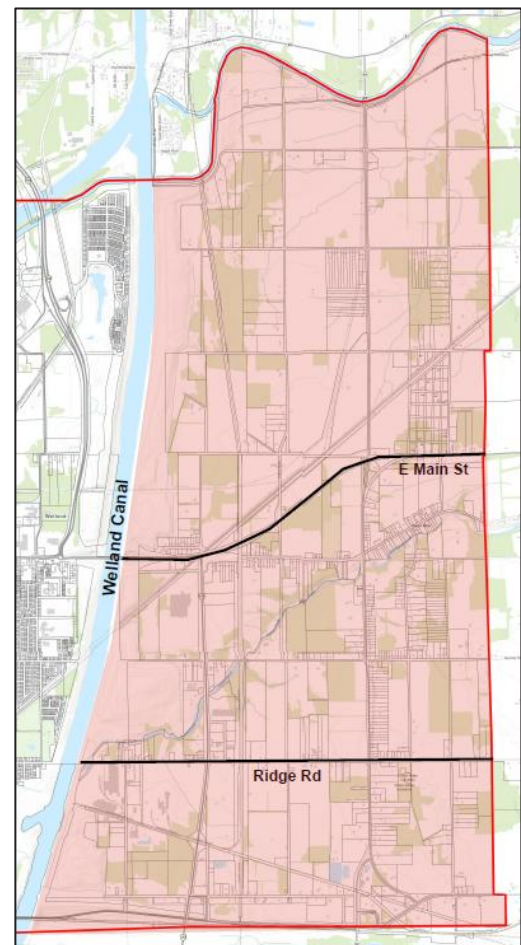
Cooks Mills is currently divided among three wards, each of which also represents a significant population west of the Canal.

We heard a diversity of opinions with respect to how best to provide effective representation for the community of Cooks Mills. Some preferred the existing structure which results in six councillors representing the Cooks Mills area, while others were interested in consolidating the community into a single ward to prevent the dilution of the electoral power of the residents among several wards.

Cooks Mills has a current population of approximately 1,900. The majority of the population (~1,060 people) live south of East Main St and north of Ridge Rd in the current ward 5. Cooks Mills is also a low growth area, only forecast to grow by 1-2% by 2034.

The acceptable range for parity in 2025 for a ward with two councillors is approximately 8,200-13,600 residents. This means that with less than 2,000 residents, **there is no possible ward boundary configuration that allows for Cooks Mills to be its “own” rural ward in a six-ward system.**

Any acceptable six-ward boundary configuration that included an undivided Cooks Mills would need to combine it with other communities or neighbourhoods west of the Canal.



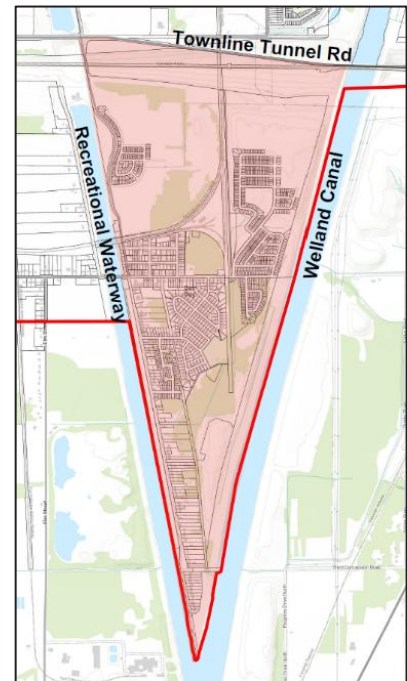
While keeping Cooks Mill undivided would concentrate the electoral influence of Cooks Mills residents in one ward, Cooks Mills residents would still only constitute a minority in any single ward model, no matter how it is drawn. As noted above, the trade-off for such concentration would be the loss of 4 of six current councillors currently representing Cooks Mills.

We have designed ward boundary options that divide Cooks Mills among one to three wards, with the major population in the current **affiliated with either Dain City and the south, or center part of “Welland proper”** as it is currently affiliated with in the status quo.

Representation for Dain City

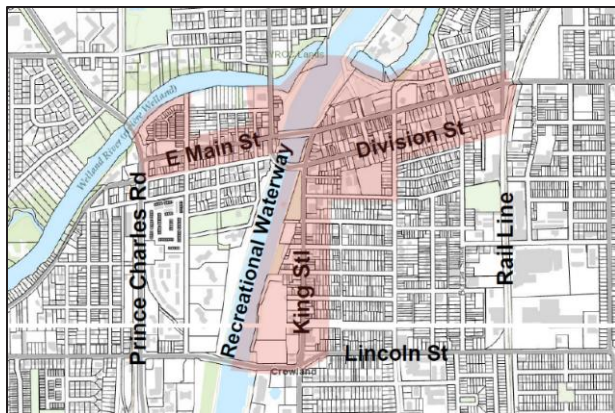
Dain City currently has a population of just under 2,800 but is anticipated to grow by more than 75% to 4,900 residents by 2030, and more than double to 6,100 residents by 2034. However, even with its expected growth, Dain City is not independently expected to exceed the acceptable population for ward parity by 2030. It also sits geographically in an area that would be difficult to divide along any practical or recognizable features. Therefore, we have only presented ward boundary options that do not divide Dain City.

Additionally, we heard that a **strong affinity exists between Dain City and the area to its immediate west – often referred to as “South Welland”**. This alignment was identified as a strength of the existing ward boundary map and is **preserved in the all the options presented in this Report**.



Representation for Welland’s Downtown

Welland’s Downtown is generally considered in terms of east and west, divided along the Recreational Waterway, with the east side typically being considered the “primary” downtown area. The graphic (right) illustrates the community improvement zones for both the “Downtown East Area” and the “Downtown West Area”. They include East Main and Division Streets between Prince Charles Rd and the Rail line, and King St. between East Main St. and Lincoln St.



In all the ward boundary options presented in this Report, we have treated the Downtown as a distinct community of interest and have avoided – where possible – dividing it among wards. However, given its central location in the municipality, this area is often the final “puzzle piece” in optimizing parity, resulting in some ward boundary designs that continue to keep it divided among up to 2 wards.

2.4 Designing Wards to Accommodate Welland's Geography

Keeping Wards Compact

Ward design is primarily driven by population and the need to achieve acceptable parity among wards. Once that is achieved, the principles of effective representation also dictate that ward boundaries should if possible be designed to keep wards relatively compact.

Whether or not wards can be designed to be compact has everything to do with the relative population density of neighbourhoods. Welland has some areas with high population density, such as ward three. It also has areas of low population density, such as Cooks Mills. When we add these different neighbourhoods together to create wards, the result is that some places have to have a greater area to achieve the same population.

As a result, in any design of wards that succeeds in achieving population parity, there will be some variation in how “compact” they are.

Consultation participants frequently identified relative geographic ward size as an important consideration in boundary design. They also generally reflected satisfaction with the compactness of existing wards. We have therefore generally designed and prioritized ward with “compactness” in mind and used variance from the status quo as a benchmark for that analysis.

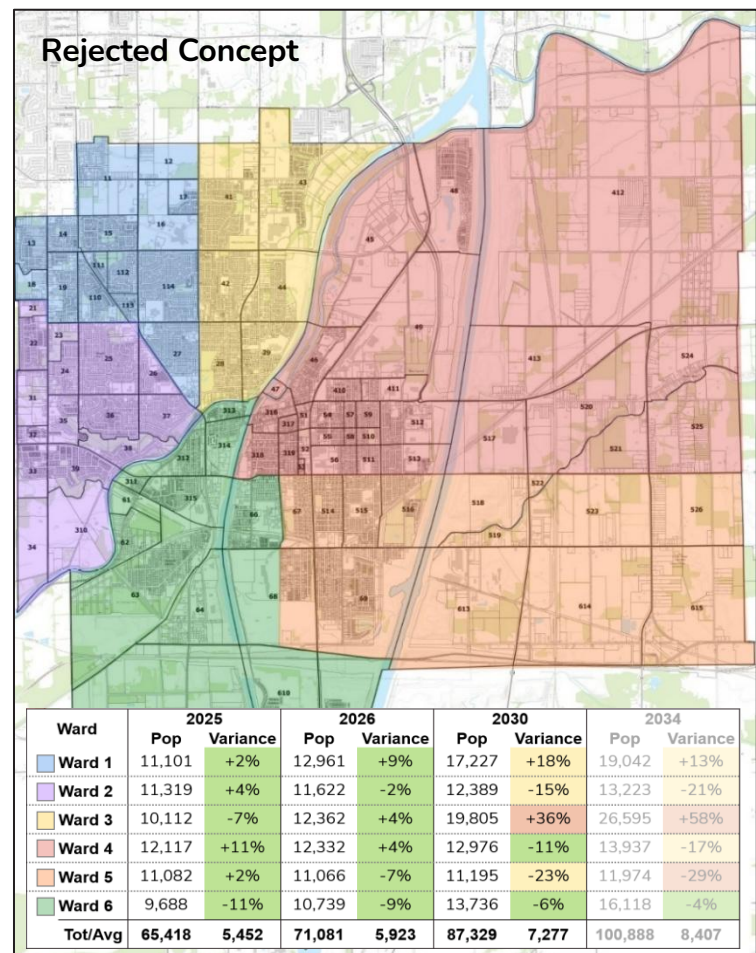
Waterways as Boundaries and Barriers to Accessibility

The principles of effective representation also dictate that ward boundaries should generally be designed to:

- rely on boundaries that are recognizable and easily understood by residents; and
- respect the way people live in and move about the community.

Welland's many waterways are the predominant feature of its geography. Through both phases of consultation, participants identified these as key features that would make ideal ward boundaries that were recognizable and practically divided up the community.

We gave that a try as illustrated by the “rejected concept” illustrated to the right. As you can see, it does not result in acceptable parity outcomes by 2030, and is trending worse by 2034. Thus, it is not a recommendable option.



This is because:

- Areas west of the Canal, and even the Waterway, are expected to see significant growth,
- Areas east of the Canal will see very little growth.

As a result, in spite of the advantages that the canals offer as clear and understandable boundaries, they have not been used as “anchors” in the design of options in this Report.

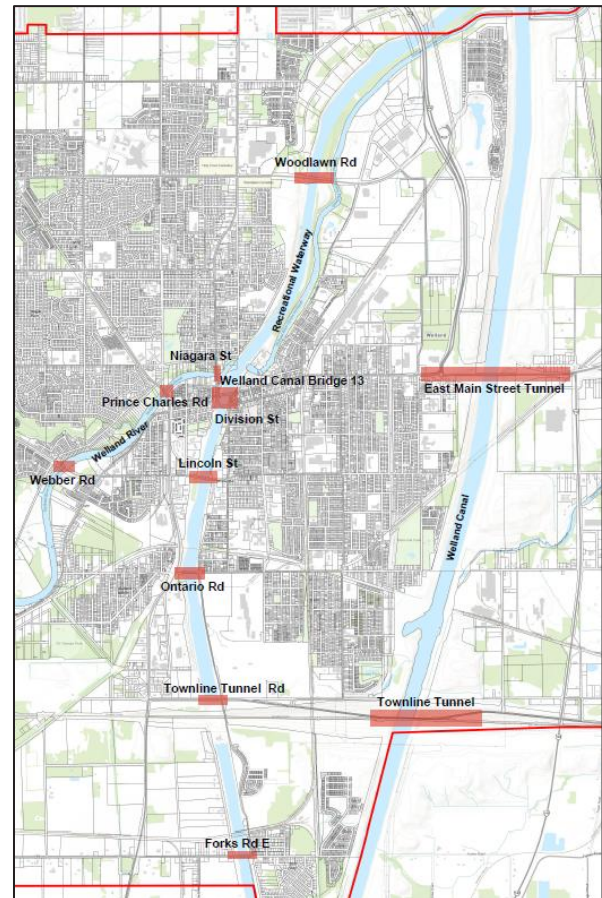
Waterways as Barriers to Accessibility

Not using Welland’s waterways as significant ward boundaries, necessarily creates wards that are bisected by those same waterways.

The Recreational Waterway and Welland River both have multiple available crossings along their paths through the City keeping both sides of Welland “proper” well-connected and accessible by vehicle and pedestrian traffic – especially in the core. However, the Welland Canal have only the East Main Street Tunnel and the Townline Tunnel as available crossings for vehicular traffic. *The City’s various waterway crossings are highlighted in red on the map right.*

Wherever possible, we have therefore **prioritized ward boundary maps that ensure all resulting wards include crossings for all waterways within their boundaries**, limiting the extent to which residents are required to leave a given ward to travel from one end of it to the other.

However, due to the limited number of existing Canal crossings, **some of the presented options in this Report include wards that do not include contiguous Canal crossing** where the resulting wards provide superior parity, and the overall length of time it takes to travel from one end of a given ward to the other is not significantly increased when compared to the status quo.



2.5 Key Findings on Necessary Conditions and Acceptable Trade-offs

The key disqualifying factor for the existing ward boundaries was the lack of parity expected in the 2026 election year.

Improved parity was a clear priority for participants during the first and second round of consultations. This is also a critical component of the Effective Representation test.

Sections 2.1-2.4 outline how ward boundary design decisions are driven and constrained by the needs of parity with due regard for community character and features.

Although we heard a handful of comments on possible improvements that might improve how ward boundaries respect Welland's community character and features, we generally heard that the status quo respects those characteristics *sufficiently*.

Based on this input, we adopted the **status quo as a useful point of reference for assessing trade-offs in ward boundary design related to community character and features**.

To assist in evaluating the four options, we have attempted to characterize the most relevant design conditions in selecting the preferred Option.

In our view, once adequate parity has been achieved, there are two main conditions that result in significant trade-offs related to parity or community character and features:

- i. The relative geographic size and shape of wards.
- ii. How Cooks Mills is represented.

There are several other conditions that are important design features, but they are less useful as point of differentiation among the options, either because they are common to all options, or because the result in only minor trade-offs relative to other goals. The include:

Conditions that are common to all options and needed to achieve acceptable parity:

- i. High growth areas in the northwest portion of the City have been divided among more wards than in the status quo. In particular, to achieve parity, wards 1 and 2 are now reoriented to be side-by-side east-west instead of stacked north-south, as they are today.
- ii. Welland's waterways are not used as ward boundaries.

Conditions that are common to all options, and respect community character without significant parity trade-offs:

- iii. Dain City is undivided and grouped with the community of "South Welland" with which it is strongly affiliated.

Conditions that are different among the options, but which based on our analysis, and feedback from the public, do not result in significant trade-offs:

- iv. In some options, the Downtown is divided among up to two wards. While some commenters would prefer the downtown be undivided, this area is divided among two wards in the status quo.
- v. In some options, there are wards that are bisected by major waterways do not contain crossings (e.g., bridges) within their boundaries. This is considered acceptable where travel times across the ward are not significantly increased from the status quo.

Section 3 | Ward Boundary Options & Recommendations

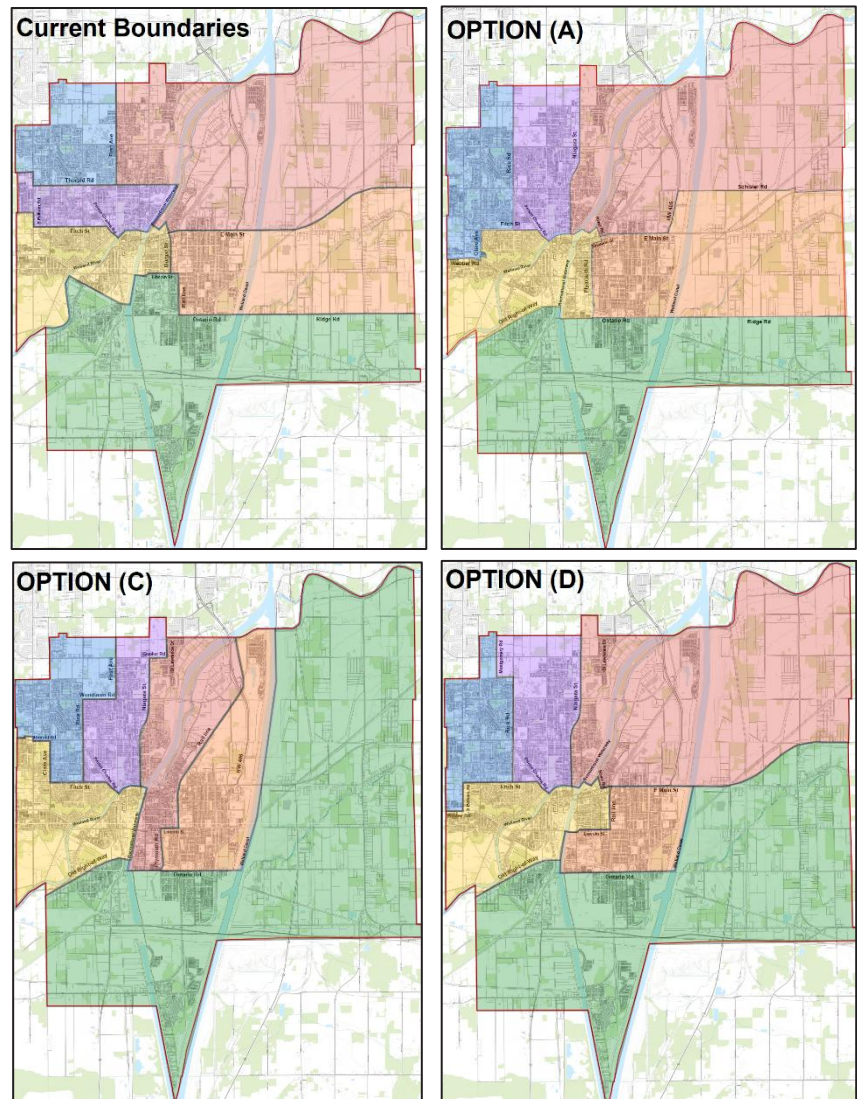
Based on our own analysis and suggestions from stakeholders, we then modelled and tested over a dozen draft concepts. Through this process we prepared **four options** that:

- Meet the test for “effective representation.”
- Deliver improved parity of population for the period of 2025 to 2030 compared to existing ward boundaries. Whether these options will continue to deliver acceptable parity by 2034 will depend on Welland’s actual rate of growth.

While each of the presented options has strengths and weaknesses, they are all acceptable improvements over the current boundaries. *Detailed maps, population tables, and evaluations for each option are provided in Schedule I.*

To select a preferred option, we must consider which option best balances, the principles of effective representation within the Welland context.

The Supreme Court of Canada has repeatedly described **parity as of “prime importance”** when making determinations on effective representation. However, the courts are also clear that **parity is not the sole determining factor for delivering effective representation**. Departures from optimal parity may be preferred if achieving optimal parity results in boundaries that sufficiently violate the other principles of effective representation.



Accordingly, for this evaluation, we broadly group the principles into two categories to facilitate the functional comparison of the options presented:

1. **Optimal parity today and in the future**; and
2. **Respecting community character and features** (i.e., Community or diversity of interests; physical features as natural boundaries; and means of communication and accessibility.)
 - For the purposes of this evaluation, we narrow the specific conditions considered within the factors respecting community character and features to those that are meaningful determinative points of comparison, outlined in Section 2.5.

3.1 Welland's Preferred Ward Boundary Map

Recommendation #1: Prioritize options that deliver parity for 2026 and 2030.

- Welland's forecast growth is concentrated in north end of the city. As a result, **there is no ward boundary model that can deliver acceptable parity of representation today and when expected growth is complete** – be it in 2034 as contemplated by current forecasts, or later if takes longer to materialize. Whichever ward boundaries Council adopts for the 2026 election, those **boundaries will need to be reviewed in advance of the 2034 election** to see if they still deliver effective parity based on the actual population growth at that time.

Recommendation #2: In our opinion, Option B has the preferred ward boundaries for the City of Welland. All the presented options would result in the necessary improvements to the status quo to deliver effective representation,

- Option B provides the best overall mix of favourable parity outcomes while respecting the overall character and features of the community.
- Option C delivers marginally better parity, but at the cost of undesirable trade-offs in terms of boundaries that respect community character and geographic features.
- Option A delivers marginally better respect for community character and features, but delivers the poorest parity outcomes of the four options.

The following table outlines the relative favourability of each option according to parity and respect for community character and features outcomes.

Relative parity outcomes	Relative respect for community character & features
Option C has the most favourable parity. ▶ Two wards fall in the sub-optimal range in 2025 and one sub-optimal ward in 2030. ▶ Ward variances are primarily well within the optimal range, never exceeding +/-18% from the quotient, and have the least spread from 2025-2030.	Option A delivers the most favourable character and features outcomes. ▶ Retains the existing number of representatives for Cooks Mills as in the status quo. ▶ Retains the overall shape and size of wards reflective of the status quo.
Option B has the second most favourable parity. ▶ One ward falls in the sub-optimal range in 2025 and two sub-optimal wards in 2030. ▶ Sub-optimal wards have variances over +/-	Option B delivers the second most favourable character and features outcomes. ▶ Cooks Mills has two fewer representatives relative to the status quo, which is justifiable given the size of the population. It is affiliated with Welland "proper", as in

19% and more significant spread from 2025-2030 than Option C.	the status quo. ▶ Optimizes ward geography so wards are relatively equal in geographic size and regularly shaped.
Options D has the third most favourable parity. ▶ One ward falls in the sub-optimal range in 2025 and three sub-optimal wards in 2030. ▶ Sub-optimal wards have variances over +/- 19% and has the most spread from 2025-2030.	Option D delivers the third most favourable character and features outcomes. ▶ The number of Cooks Mills' representatives is the same as Option B, but its affiliation with Dain City is less favourable than with Welland "proper". ▶ One ward is disproportionately large and irregularly shaped.
Option A has the least favourable parity. ▶ Two sub-optimal wards in 2025, and three sub-optimal wards in 2030. ▶ Sub-optimal wards have variances over +/- 19% and similar spread from 2025-2030 as Option B.	Option C delivers the least favourable character and features outcomes. ▶ Wards have very disproportionate geographic area and are generally irregularly shaped. ▶ Cooks Mills has four fewer representatives than the status quo and is affiliated with Dain City.

Schedule I | Ward Boundary Option Evaluations

This schedule includes the detailed evaluations of the new draft ward boundary options.

For each of the options presented, the following are provided:

- A detailed map of the ward boundaries for the Municipality;
- Ward population data for 2025, 2026, 2030, 2034 and variance from the quotient; and
- A completed evaluation framework for delivering “Effective Representation”.

The “Effective Representation” Test Framework

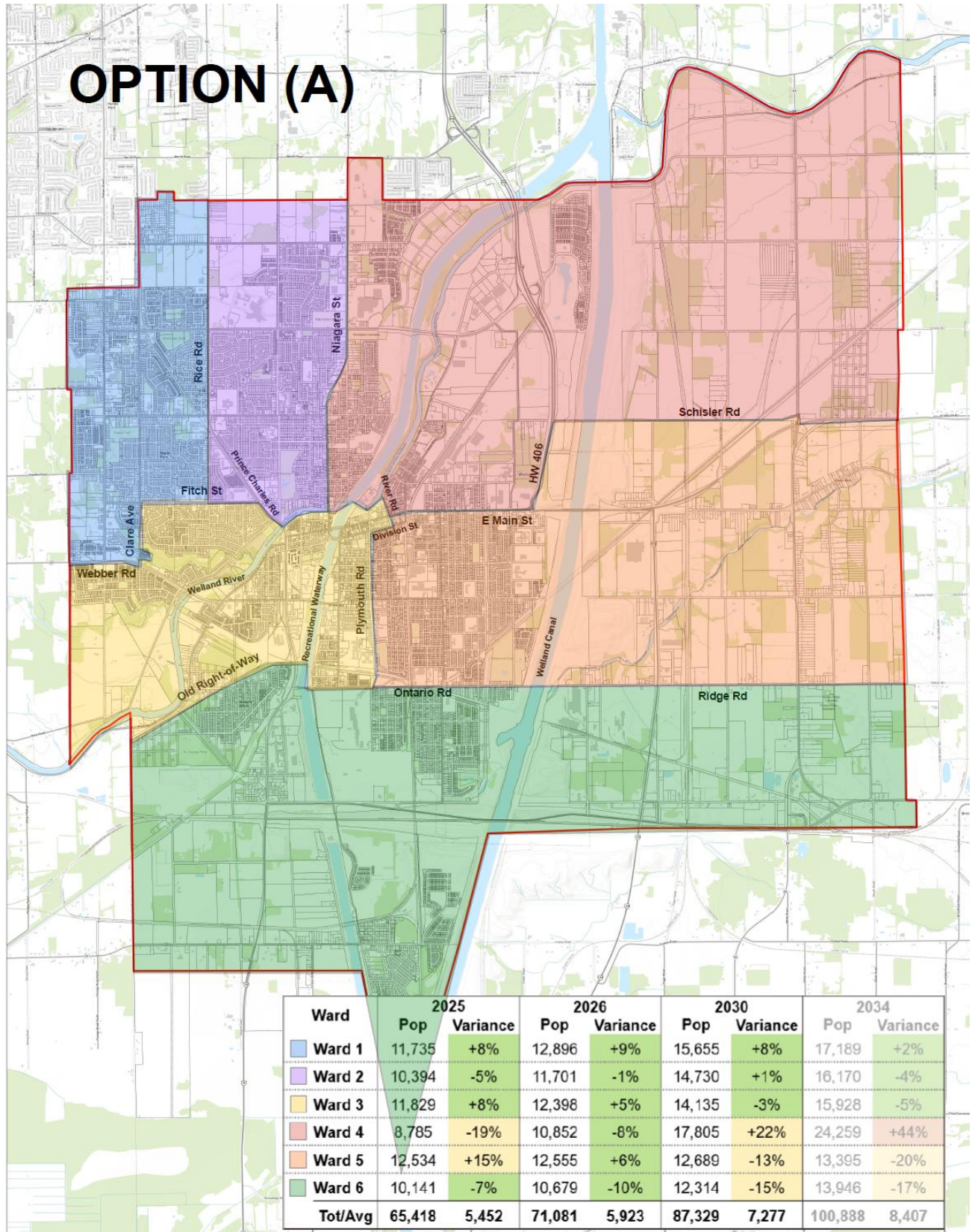
The evaluation framework used for each map includes the same considerations used to evaluate the current draft ward boundaries drawn from the Review’s terms of reference and the principles of “Effective Representation”.

StrategyCorp’s final assessment on whether each map meets the overall test for “effective representation” is highlighted in yellow at the bottom of each table.

Reminder: The “Effective Representation” Test

(1) Parity of Wards: Current Population
<i>Wards should have relatively equal populations. Subject to (6), it is generally accepted, that wards should not vary in population by more than +/- 25% from the average number of residents per councillor.</i>
(2) Parity of Wards: Forecast Population
<i>Consider population projections to maintain parity in the future. In this review, we have been directed to consider parity in through the 2026, 2030, and 2034 elections.</i>
(3) Consideration of Community or Diversity of Interests
<i>Consideration will be given to recognize and accommodate communities with distinct social, economic, cultural, historical, or geographic identities ensuring ward boundaries do not overly fragment or concentrate these communities in ways that unduly dilute their voting power.</i>
(4) Consideration of Physical Features as Natural Boundaries
<i>Consideration will be given to using natural and man-made features as ward boundaries while keeping wards compact and easy to understand.</i>
(5) Consideration of Means of Communication and Accessibility
<i>Consideration will be given to grouping existing neighbourhoods into wards that reflect current transportation and communication patterns.</i>
(6) The Overriding Principle of “Effective Representation”
<i>While voter parity should be considered of “prime importance,” a degree of variation is acceptable when taken into consideration with the other principles as they relate to a municipality’s unique characteristics.</i>
Meets the overall test for “effective representation”?
YES / NO

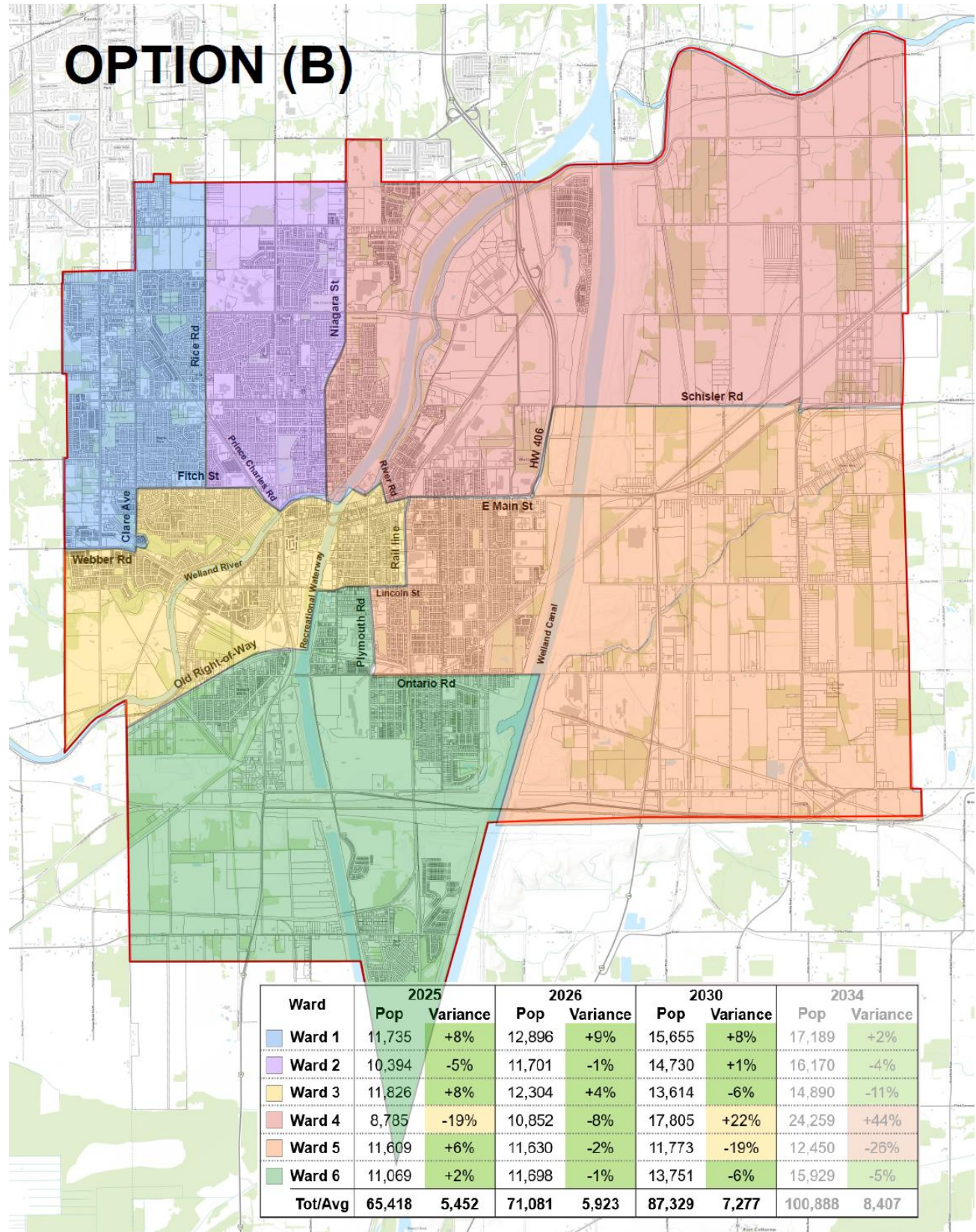
Draft Ward Boundary Option A



Option A – The “Effective Representation” Test

(1) Parity of Wards: Current Population
All wards fall within the acceptable range of parity. Wards 4 and 5 are outside the “optimal range” (+/- 12.5%).
(2) Parity of Wards: Forecast Population
- In 2026, all wards fall within the optimal range of parity. - In 2030, all wards fall within the acceptable range of parity. Wards 4, 5, and 6 will fall outside the optimal range of parity. - The “spread” in variance among ward population goes from 19% in 2026 to 37% in 2030.
(3) Consideration of Community or Diversity of Interests.
- Cooks Mills is divided among 3 wards, with the majority of the population associated with “Welland proper”. - The Downtown is divided among two wards. - Most other established neighbourhoods within Welland are not divided among Wards.
(4) Consideration of Physical Features as Natural Boundaries
- Several ward boundaries follow major transportation arteries and rights-of-way. - Wards are generally compact and easy to understand. - Ward boundaries inconsistently align with, or ignore, Welland’s waterways (incl. the Welland River, Recreational Waterway, and Canal).
(5) Consideration of Means of Communication and Accessibility
- In ward 5, East Main St, is the only connection between the east and west sides of the ward, in ward 6, the Townline Tunnel is the only route, and there is no connecting route between the east and west sides of ward 4. - There are also few crossings of River or Recreational Waterway in wards 4 and 6.
(6) The Overriding Principle of “Effective Representation”
- This map most closely resembles existing ward boundaries while providing comparable parity today, and improved parity over the next two elections compared to current ward boundaries. - These boundaries maintain many of current ward boundaries characteristics from the standpoint of physical boundaries, community of interest, and communication and accessibility. Options for crossing the canal in ward 4 are slightly less favourable.
Meets the overall test for “effective representation for the period 2026-2030?”
YES

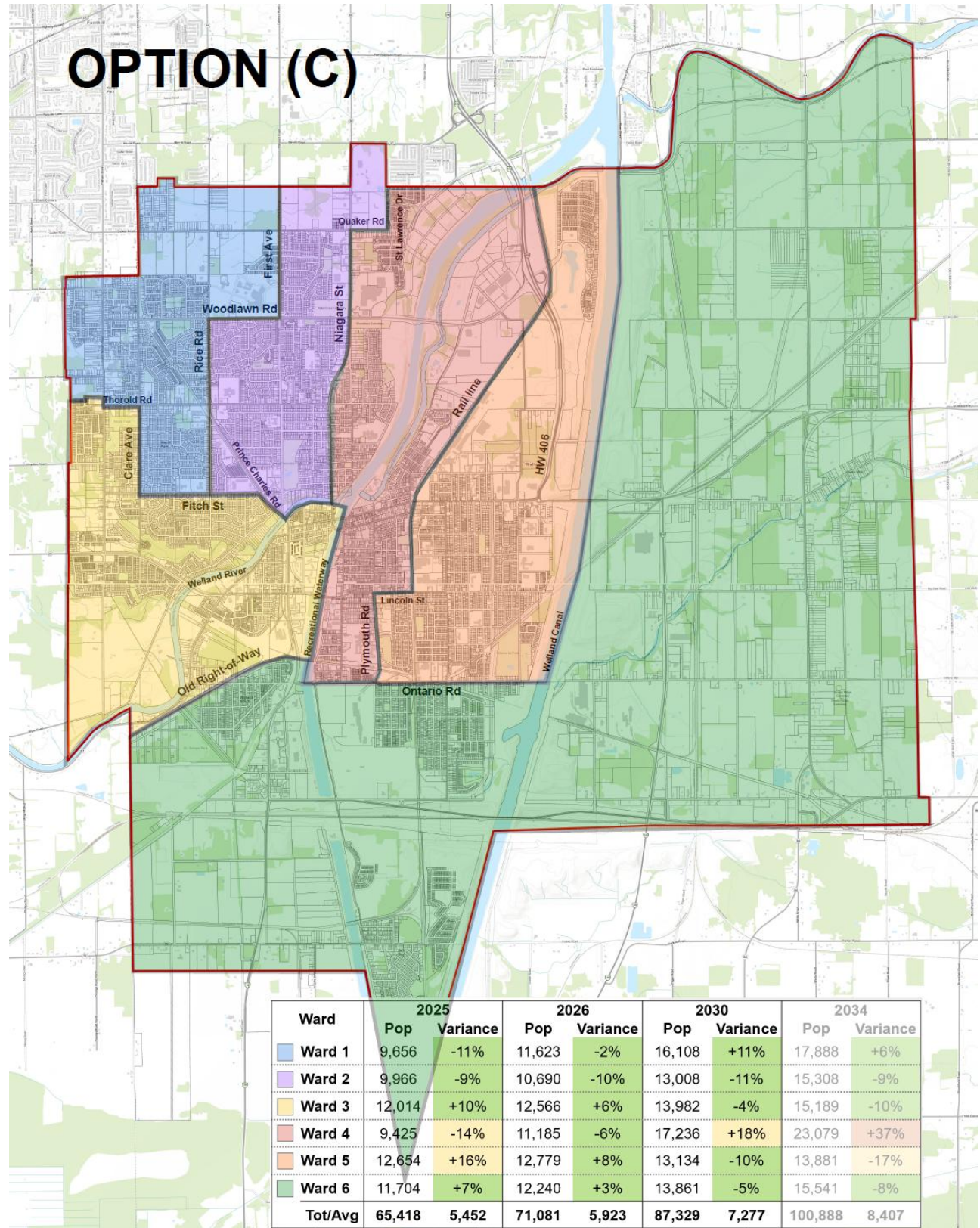
Draft Ward Boundary Option B



Option B – The “Effective Representation” Test

(1) Parity of Wards: Current Population
All wards fall within the acceptable range of parity. Ward 4 is outside the “optimal range” (+/- 12.5%).
(2) Parity of Wards: Forecast Population
- In 2026, all wards fall within the optimal range of parity. - In 2030, all wards fall within the acceptable range of parity. Wards 4 and 5 will fall outside the optimal range of parity. - The “spread” in variance among ward population goes from 17% in 2026 to 41% in 2030.
(3) Consideration of Community or Diversity of Interests.
- Cooks Mills is divided among 2 wards, with the majority of the population associated with “Welland proper”. - Most other established neighbourhoods within Welland, including the Downtown are not divided among Wards.
(4) Consideration of Physical Features as Natural Boundaries
- Wards are generally compact and easy to understand. - Several ward boundaries follow major transportation arteries and rights-of-way. - Ward boundaries inconsistently align with, or ignore, Welland’s waterways (incl. the Welland River, Recreational Waterway, and Canal).
(5) Consideration of Means of Communication and Accessibility
- In ward 4, is no connecting route between the east and west sides of the Canal. There are also few crossings of River or Recreational Waterway in ward 4. - Most other wards contain one or more crossings of waterways within the ward.
(6) The Overriding Principle of “Effective Representation”
- This map still closely resembles existing ward boundaries while improved parity today and over the next two elections compared to current ward boundaries. - These boundaries maintain many of current ward boundaries characteristics physical boundaries, standpoint, but with slightly less favourable transportation options across the Canal in ward 4, and 2 wards in the Cooks Mills areas as opposed to 3.
Meets the overall test for “effective representation for the period 2026-2030?
YES

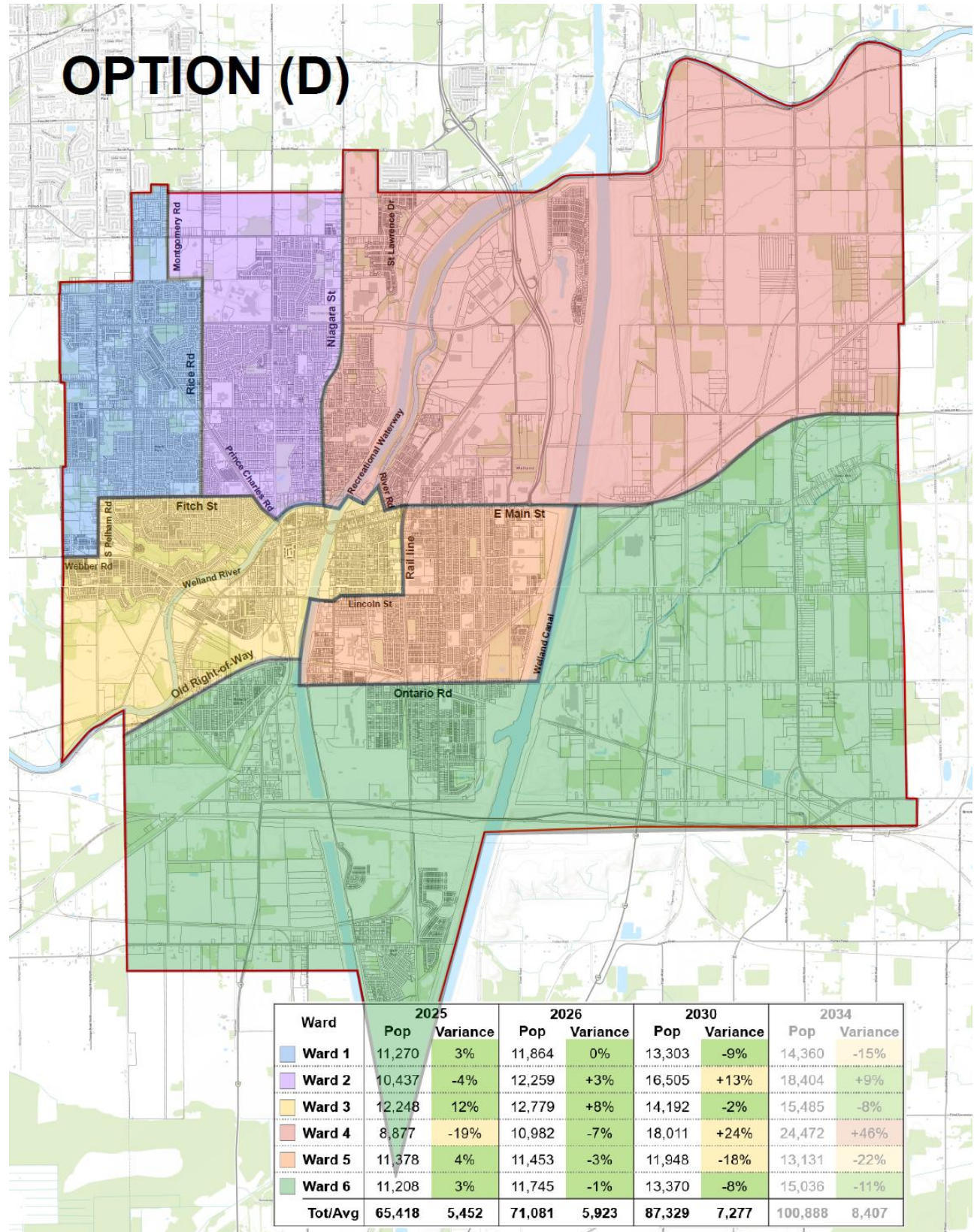
Draft Ward Boundary Option C



Option C – The “Effective Representation” Test

(1) Parity of Wards: Current Population
All wards fall within the acceptable range of parity. Wards 4 and 5 fall just outside the “optimal range” (+/- 12.5%).
(2) Parity of Wards: Forecast Population
- In 2026, all wards fall within the optimal range of parity. - In 2030, all wards fall within the acceptable range of parity. Only ward 4 will fall outside the optimal range of parity. - The “spread” in variance among ward population goes from 18% in 2026 to 29% in 2030.
(3) Consideration of Community or Diversity of Interests.
- Cooks Mills is divided among 2 wards, with the majority of the population associated with Dain City and South Welland. - The Downtown is divided among two wards. - Most other established neighbourhoods within Welland are not divided among Wards.
(4) Consideration of Physical Features as Natural Boundaries
- Wards are generally more irregular in shape and area. Ward 6 is significantly larger than all other wards. - Several ward boundaries follow major transportation arteries and rights-of-way. - The Canal is a major recognizable boundary. Other waterways are inconsistently used or ignored (incl. the Welland River and Recreational Waterway).
(5) Consideration of Means of Communication and Accessibility
- Fewer wards bisected by waterways, and each have one or more available crossings. - Ward boundaries are generally oriented along current and historic transportation corridors that run north to south through the City (Canal, Rail line, Niagara St.).
(6) The Overriding Principle of “Effective Representation”
- This map provides significantly improved parity today and over the next two elections compared to current ward boundaries. - This map is a significant departure from existing ward boundaries that better uses significant physical features as boundaries, keeps communities of interest undivided, and limits wards that are bisected by waterways, but with resulting boundaries that are generally irregular, potentially confusing, and may not optimize representations for the Cooks Mills area.
Meets the overall test for “effective representation for the period 2026-2030?”
YES

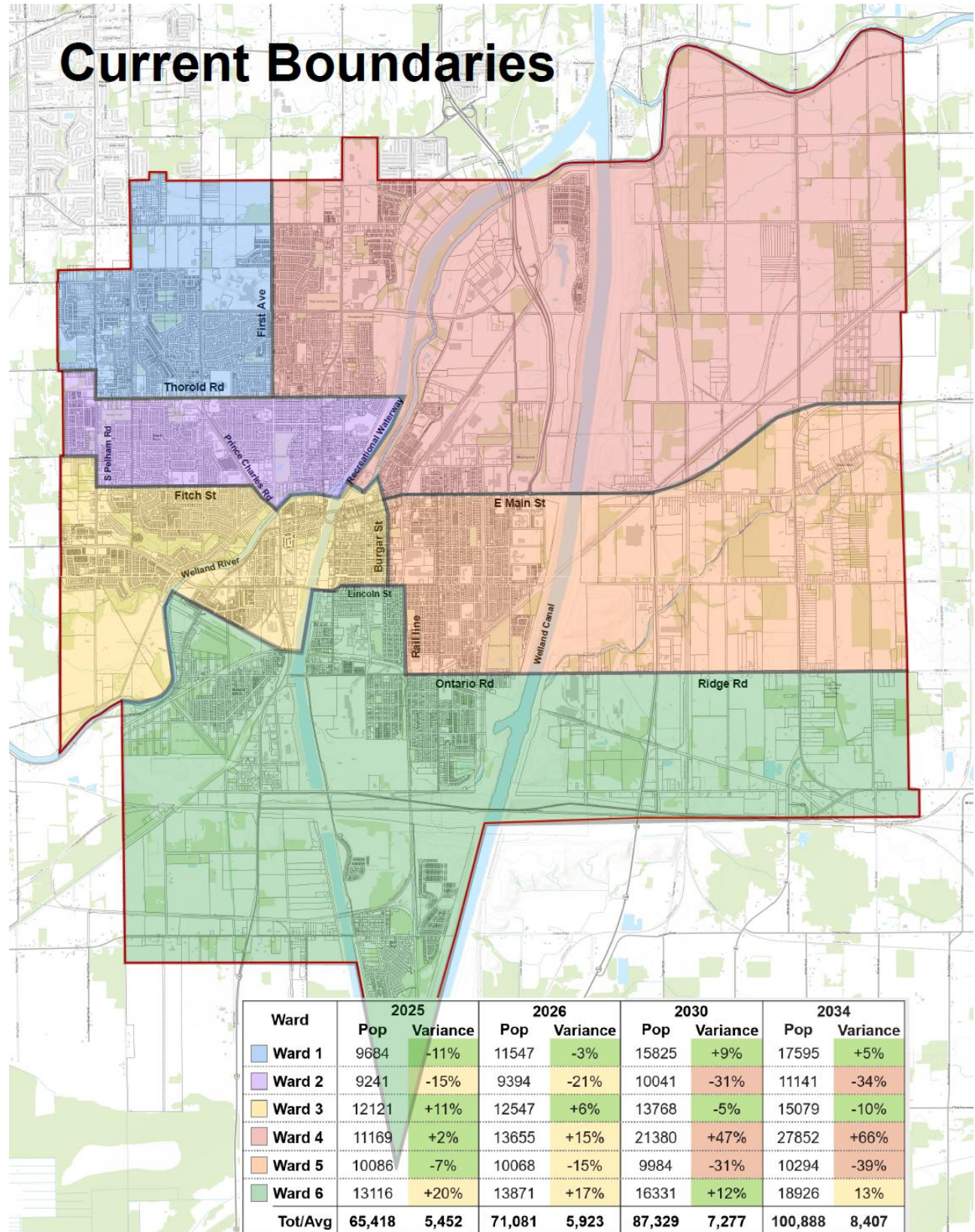
Draft Ward Boundary Option D



Option D – The “Effective Representation” Test

(1) Parity of Wards: Current Population
All wards fall within the acceptable range of parity. Ward 4 is outside the “optimal range” (+/- 12.5%).
(2) Parity of Wards: Forecast Population
- In 2026, all wards fall within the optimal range of parity. - In 2030, all wards fall within the acceptable range of parity. Wards 2, 4, and 5 will fall outside the optimal range of parity. - The “spread” in variance among ward population goes from 15% in 2026 to 42% in 2030.
(3) Consideration of Community or Diversity of Interests.
- Cooks Mills is divided among 2 wards, with the majority of the population associated with Dain City and South Welland. - Most other established neighbourhoods within Welland, including the Downtown are not divided among Wards.
(4) Consideration of Physical Features as Natural Boundaries
- Most wards are generally compact and easy to understand. Ward 6 is slightly irregular, and significantly larger than any other ward. - Several ward boundaries follow major transportation arteries and rights-of-way. - Ward boundaries inconsistently align with, or ignore, Welland’s waterways (incl. the Welland River, Recreational Waterway, and Canal).
(5) Consideration of Means of Communication and Accessibility
- In ward 4, is no connecting route between the east and west sides of the Canal. There are also few crossings of River or Recreational Waterway in ward 4. - Most other wards contain one or more crossings of waterways within the ward.
(6) The Overriding Principle of “Effective Representation”
- This map still closely resembles existing ward boundaries while improved parity today and over the next two elections compared to current ward boundaries. - These boundaries maintain many of current ward boundaries other characteristics but with slightly less favourable transportation options across the Canal in ward 4, and 2 wards in the Cooks Mills areas as opposed to 3, and more irregular boundaries in ward 6.
Meets the overall test for “effective representation for the period 2026-2030?
YES

Current Boundaries



Current Boundaries – The “Effective Representation” Test

(1) Parity of Wards: Current Population
All wards fall within the acceptable range of parity. Wards 2 and 6 are outside the “optimal range” (+/- 12.5%)
(2) Parity of Wards: Forecast Population
- In 2026, all wards remain within the acceptable range of parity. Wards 2, 5, and 6 will fall within the acceptable but sub-optimal range. - In 2030, Wards 2, 4, and 5 will fall outside the acceptable range of parity. Ward 1 will remain within the acceptable but sub-optimal range. - In 2034, Wards 2, 4, and 5 will have fallen further outside the acceptable range of parity. Wards 1 and 6 will remain within the acceptable but sub-optimal range. - The “spread” in variance among ward population goes from 38% in 2026 to 95% in 2034.
(3) Consideration of Community or Diversity of Interests.
- Cooks Mills and the Downtown area are both divided among 3 and 2 wards respectively. - Most other established communities – incl. Dain City, South Welland, French Town, Plymouth Cordage – are not divided among Wards.
(4) Consideration of Physical Features as Natural Boundaries
- Several ward boundaries follow major transportation arteries (incl. First Ave., Thorold Rd., East Main St., Lincoln St., Ontario Rd., and Ridge Rd.). - Ward boundaries inconsistently align with, or ignore, Welland’s waterways (incl. the Welland River, Recreational Waterway, and Canal) which are significant natural boundaries in the City. - Part of the boundary between Wards 3 and 6 runs along a decommissioned rail line through a naturalized area, which no longer acts as a recognizable boundary.
(5) Consideration of Means of Communication and Accessibility
- Welland is generally oriented along current and historic transportation corridors the run north/south through the City (i.e., the historic and active canals), however Welland’s wards seem to primarily divide the City along east/west corridors. - In ward 4 and 5, East Main St, is the only connection between the east and west sides of the ward, in ward 6, the Townline Tunnel is the only route. - There are also few crossings of River or Recreational Waterway in Wards 3 and 6.
(6) The Overriding Principle of “Effective Representation”
- While Welland’s wards do not exceed the acceptable ranges for parity today, anticipated population growth is likely to create sufficient variance between wards to violate acceptable ranges by the 2030 election. - Additionally, three wards are outside of optimal range for parity with little evidence these variances are justified based on other factors of overall effective representation today.
Meets the overall test for “effective representation for the period 2026-2034?
NO

Appendix I | Council Composition and Method of Election

At the Council meeting of January 14th, 2025, Council decided as follows:

“24-14 THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY WELLAND approves the composition of council to remain status quo.” and,

“24-14 THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WELLAND directs staff to conduct a ward boundary review.”

In the RFP, this Review was described in the following terms:

- **“Phase 1** will be to review current Council Composition, Council Compensation⁶ and feasibility of “At-Large” vs Ward Boundary System of governance.”
- **“Phase 2 (Conditional)** will be in the event a ward boundary system is recommended, a review and recommendations for a ward boundary system including changes (if any) in the number of wards and optimal re-alignment. (if required)”

In compliance with the terms of reference and with due regard to Council's decisions on January 14th, 2025, this **Appendix to the Final Report provides commentary on the following:**

1. **The size of council** (i.e., the number of elected representatives)
2. **How councillors are elected** (wards, at-large or a combination of both systems)
3. **How many wards and councillors per ward** (if a ward system is chosen)
4. **Direct election of a deputy mayor**

Section 1 | The Size of Council

The Municipal Act

Section 217 of the *Municipal Act* authorizes a municipality to “change the composition” of its Council subject to a minimum council size of five members, including the head of Council (the Mayor).

The Act gives no guidance on:

- The maximum size of Council.
- Similarly, it is silent on an appropriate number of councillors per resident. Across Ontario the number of Councillors per resident ranges from one Councillor per thousand residents to one Councillor for almost a hundred thousand residents, in large communities like Toronto and Mississauga.

Municipalities are free to choose a size that fits their unique circumstances.

Form Follows Function

The optimal size of Council for Welland depends on the purpose and role Council is expected to play as a decision-making and representative body.

⁶ The Council Compensation component of the project was excluded from the final project scope.

The most important design feature is always “**form follows function**,” meaning that Council needs to be designed to ensure that it is capable of delivering on its assigned functions.

Under the *Municipal Act*, it is the role of members of Council to:

- oversee the overall strategic needs of the community;
- manage the needs of the ward;
- provide oversight on financial governance and accountability; and
- deliver on provincially mandated responsibilities.

To achieve these ends, a municipality may consider a number of factors to determine its Council size including Councillor workload, cost, and governance.

Determining Appropriate comparable municipalities for Welland

Welland is a lower tier municipality within Niagara Region.

- From a “function” point of view, it is appropriately compared to other lower tier municipalities.
- Upper-tier municipal councils are not considered.

Compared to Lower and Single Tier Municipalities with Similar Populations, now and in the future, Welland has a large Council.

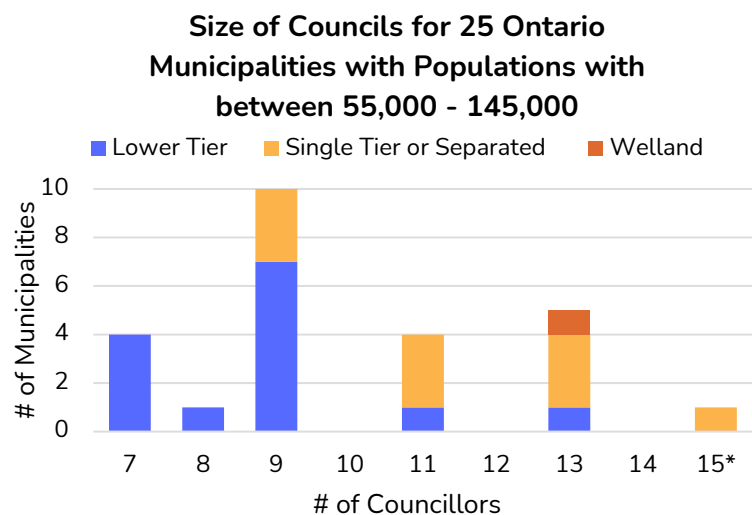
Municipalities often consider Council size in similar municipalities as a relevant guide when reviewing the size of their Councils.

As outlined in the body of this Report, Welland’s current estimated population is about 65,418, and is expected to grow to up to 100,888 by 2034.

This chart shows the size of Councils for 25 lower-tier, single-tier, or separated municipalities⁷ in Ontario with populations between 55,000-145,000.⁸

As you can see, of the 25 in this sample:

- Welland is one of six municipalities in this population range with 13 or more members of Council.
- The most common size of council was 9 members (10/25); followed by 13 members (5/25), and 7 members (4/25).
- The majority of lower tier municipalities (12/14) have 9 or fewer members of Council.



⁷ See Appendix III for comprehensive list of Single Tier and Lower Tier comparators based on Welland’s current and projected population.

⁸ AMOpen: <https://www.amo.on.ca/size-municipal-council-and-population>

Councillor Input on Council Size

Through interviews, councillors provided two distinct opinions on the size of Council:

- That Council currently has the right size; and
- That the size of Council needs to be reduced.

Below is a sample of what we heard.

Councillor Input on Council Size

Status Quo

- *"It's status quo for now. Change would be premature right now."*
- *"I don't think we need a change."*
- *"I don't know why we would consider decreasing from a representation perspective."*
- *"Shrinking Council would make it more challenging to attract younger people [to run]."*

Reduce the Size

- *"I'd probably even go down to 6 Councillors."*
- *"When you have a larger number, it waters down the issues on Council."*
- *"The current council size creates meetings that are long winded."*
- *"The size right now is too large, even if it remains the same, my personal opinion is that ward redistribution needs to happen."*
- *"If we go to 8 Councillors and 8 wards it would lessen the workload I think."*

Public Input on Council Size

In the public survey on Council Size conducted by the City of Welland from October 16 to November 20, 2024, the most selected option for the preferred Council Composition was 5-7 members of Council which was selected by 51.3% of respondents (or 156 people).⁹

While the first public survey for this Ward Boundary Review did not specifically ask about the size of Council, members of the public included comments about the size of Council as part of their open-ended feedback.

Most comments reflected a preference to reduce the size of Council and more specifically to see a change in both the number of wards and Councillors to a system of 8 wards with 1 Councillor per ward.

Below is a sample of comments that we heard about the current or desired size of Council.

Public Comments on Size of Council and Number of Wards

Maintain Status Quo

- *"I am not in favour of reducing elected representation, so I am happy that is off the table. I am in favour of maintaining our democratic representation in keeping the twelve elected"*

⁹ [Response to Notice of Motion – Options to Reduce Council Size to Lessen Financial Impact on Taxpayer](#), City of Welland, January 14, 2025

Councillors.”

- ▶ “The current ward boundaries have worked leave them alone.”
- ▶ “If you look at number of councillors and workload, the more you shrink the size of Council, the 35- or 38-year-old is going to look at the job and say, ‘No, I’ll do this when I retire.’”

Reduce the size of Council

- ▶ “There should be less Councillors.”
- ▶ “Recommend reduce Council membership to 8.”
- ▶ “More wards, less Councillors would make a lot more sense.”
- ▶ “I think each ward needs to be maintained, since they vary dramatically in types of resident, but there are too many Councillors.”
- ▶ “I still believe we have too many Councillors for our population.”

Increase the number of wards

- ▶ “North Welland is growing by over 12,000 homes in the next 3-7 years. All of Welland is growing by over 20,000 homes. We will need more wards.”

Create eight wards and eight Councillors

- ▶ “I love to see eight wards, 8 Councillors. Is that an option within the extra choices to be presented to council?”
- ▶ “I’m not sure how that would apply to the resident count, and if each quadrant could be halved. I do like the idea of eight wards, and this could be a starting point.”
- ▶ “Define 8 wards, 1 Councillor per ward.”
- ▶ “Eight wards. 8 Councillors.”

Quality of Governance

Both councillors and the public made comments regarding the impact of Council size on the quality of governance Council is able to provide.

Representative Stakeholder Comments on Governance

- ▶ “I don’t like long meetings, but I don’t think a smaller Council is a better Council.”
- ▶ “Creates meetings that are long winded. There are too many Councillors. When I first joined Council, I thought you should never reduce. Now my top choice is reduction and at-large.”
- ▶ “When it comes to process and planning for the long term, it should be a drawn-out process to a certain extent. It should be the right decisions and should consider public input and council input.”
- ▶ “Other municipalities have two meetings a month whereas we always have three or four.”
- ▶ “We’ve done some procedural things to improve meetings. The agendas have gotten a little bit smaller.”

Councillor Workload

One consideration in assessing the size of Council is the appropriateness of the workload carried by members of Council. In Welland, both the Mayor and Councillors are considered part-time positions.

There are a variety of factors that influence Councillor workload, many of which do not relate to structure, but to culture, demand for service, or personal style.

- **The quantity and pace of Council and Committee meetings:** It is often said that “many hands make light work.” In thinking about the work of a Council, having more Councillors can make it easier to populate committees. The alternative is also true. The smaller the Council, the greater the demand and burden to serve on committees. Yet, there is a considerable body of literature related to governance and decision-making that points out that when it comes to effective and efficient decision-making, bigger is not necessarily better or more efficient.¹⁰
- **The needs of the ward for participation in events:** The public deserves and expects their elected officials to be present and visible. There need to be enough hours in the day to meet this expectation.
- **The demand for casework by constituents:** Rapidly growing municipalities may face a greater burden on development files than low growth or established wards.
- **The policy of the municipality towards casework:** Some municipalities tolerate “in the weeds” engagement in problem solving by Councillors. Others have protocols which transfer constituency work from the Councillor to staff as quickly and smoothly as possible.
- **Style of each Councillor:** No matter what structure is chosen, it is important to remember that political representation is an art, not a science. How each approaches the task to serving on Council is a deeply personal matter.

We heard different views about workload during our interviews with Council.

For some members of Council, the workload is evenly distributed and manageable. A few discussed that having two Councillors per Ward allows for the workload to be shared and for Councillors to balance other commitments such as other jobs and time off without their constituents needs going unaddressed.

Other members of Council voiced concern that the workload is heavy and, in some cases, unevenly distributed.

Councillor Comments on Councillor Workload

Workload is manageable

- *“I don't typically compare to other people's workload, I think it's probably similar.”*
- *“I can't say I'm busier than others.”*
- *“The workload is manageable for Ward Councillors. It is not an overwhelming task.”*

¹⁰ “Companies have also learned to keep meetings as small as possible. Our research highlights what we think of as the Rule of Seven: every person added to a decision-making group over seven reduces decision effectiveness by 10 percent. If you take this rule to its logical conclusion, a group of 17 or more rarely makes any decisions. Of course, a larger group may sometimes be necessary to ensure buy-in. But organizations trying to make important decisions should limit the size of the group as much as they can.” Michael Mankins and Jenny Davis-Peccoud, “Decision-focused meetings”, Bain & Company (Boston: June 7, 2011); found at: <https://www.bain.com/insights/decision-insights-9-decision-focused-meetings/>

Workload is distributed unevenly

- ▶ *"I have a heavier workload."*
- ▶ *"I probably get the majority of the calls. I'm available and that makes a big difference in your workload."*
- ▶ *"Workload of committees needs to be equalized as well."*
- ▶ *"When you have the downtown in your ward, the population may be less, but the work and the issues are greater, and the workload is uneven."*

Reducing the size of Council would reduce workload

- ▶ *"If we go to 8 councillors and 8 wards it would lessen the workload I think."*

The Benefits of an Uneven Number on Council

We note that the Mayor and Council of Welland add up to 13, an uneven number, which is generally considered to be a best practice. If there is to be a change in the size of Council, we recommend that it continue to be an uneven number to address this potential flaw.

Cost Impacts of Council Size

Council Pay structure was last amended on September 19, 2023, in the Welland Staff Report, "Updated -2022-2026 Welland City Council Remuneration" Recommendations"

For the purposes of this Review, it is reasonable to assume a budget of approximately **\$40,000 per councillor**.

Honorarium \$	Conferences. Conventions & Seminars	Canadian Pension Plan/Pension Plan Equivalent	Benefits	Health Tax	Cell Phone/Data Usage	Total Average Cost per Councillor
28,212	3,479	3,634	3,232	562	326	39,445

(Source: Welland's 2024 Statement of Remuneration and Expenditures of Council Members)

This represents a small fraction of the total 2024 operating budget for the Municipality.

Overall Findings on the Size of Council

We make the following observations:

- The question of the size of Welland's Council is currently settled by vote of council. Nevertheless, under our terms of reference, we were directed to study this question to provide a base on content should the matter be revisited at some point in the future.
- Welland's Council is on the large end of the range both for its population today, and its expected population. Welland could reduce Council to seven or nine and still have an appropriate population/Councillor ratio that is well within provincial norms. This would be true even with when Welland realizes planned growth in population.
- The best arguments for having a Council size on the upper end of the range are:
 - **Share of the Workload:** More Councillors enables the workload to be spread across

more people, especially for committee representation and ensures that Councillors have the ability to work a full-time job while being a Councillor.

- **Diversity of voices for better representation and greater inclusion:** More Councillors ensures that there is a diversity of voices around the Council table to represent different community interests.
- **More diversity in who can serve.** Having a larger council also makes the burden of being a councillor more manageable, and potentially more accessible to persons in different stages and walks of life.
- The main advantage of a smaller Council is the potential for more efficient decision-making. There is a considerable literature that says boards with seven members are the most efficient, and that efficiency of decision-making decreases as size increases. It is arguable the degree to which this research is directly applicable to elected local governments. Their effectiveness is not merely a function of the decisions they make, but also a function of their ability to represent the community. A smaller council may be quicker to decide, but it may also be less representative of community diversity needed to ensure the legitimacy of the government in the eyes of the governed.
 - **The “real” cost of a large Council** is in way it could potentially undermine the efficiency and effectiveness of decision-making. The benefit of a more streamlined Council is in the way that it can help achieve a more efficient Council with more stream-lined decision-making.
- **Don’t reduce Council simply to save money on the cost of councillor compensation:** While we believe to our core that every public dollar is important, at \$40k per Councillor, compensation costs are not material to the overall cost of local government if they are necessary to meet public expectations of representation and contribute to a strong local democracy. Similarly, if Welland reduces the size of its Council, it is probable that compensation savings on Council seats will be offset to some degree by the need to invest more in staff resources to manage the burden of constituency-type work.

Welland’s Councillors are part-time. Through interviews we heard that the burden of serving on Council can take a significant amount of time per week due to the number of meetings and committees, and that reducing Council might drive that up, to the point that it can make it challenging for anyone other than a retired person to undertake the work on a part-time basis.

In our view, this is a legitimate concern and argues against excessive reduction in Council size. We do not tend to favour Councils of five. Seven is tight and problems can arise in circumstances where workload spikes due to illness or other personal challenges. Nine provides more redundancy, and better opportunity for de facto succession planning (recognizing that any such plan can be altered by the results of an election.) For all that some see this an advantage, others would say that nine is already on the large side.

At present, only a relatively few municipalities have full-time Councillors. At this time in Welland’s growth, we would not recommend any change that would require Councillors to be considered full-time, but reductions in the number of Council members might entail a change in the way that they approach the task and are supported by staff in constituency work.

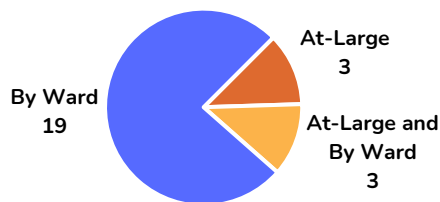
Section 2 | Method of Election

The RFP specified that the Review should consider the current ward system and an at-large system. A hybrid combination of the two is also technically possible.

Section 222 of the *Municipal Act* authorizes a municipality to “divide or redivide the municipality into wards” or “dissolve the existing wards” in favour of an at-large system.

Other than the head of Council (Mayor), who must be elected at-large, Council members can be elected at-large or by wards or through any combination of at-large and wards.

Method of Election for Councillors in 25 Ontario Municipalities with Populations with between 55,000 - 145,000



Municipalities have discretion to determine whether to use a ward or an at-large system or a combination of the two. Like Council size, the *Municipal Act* provides no criteria to guide a municipality’s decision making under section 222.

Municipal Comparators

Of the same 25 Ontario Municipalities¹¹ from AMOpen with populations between 55,000 and 145,000.

- 19 use a ward system
- 3 use a combination of wards and at-large systems.
- 3 use an at-large system;

Considerations from the Literature

While the *Municipal Act* does not provide guidance for a municipality about which electoral system to use, the literature surrounding council structure usually points to a number of “pros and cons” associated with ward and at-large systems. These pros and cons are useful to consider in which system might better serve Welland.

It is also important to remember that the *Municipal Act* contains broad discretion on this question for a reason: municipalities are unique, and the benefits associated with a particular electoral system in one municipality may not apply in the same way in a different municipality.

System	Potential Advantages	Potential Disadvantages
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¹¹ See Appendix III for comprehensive list of Single Tier and Lower Tier comparators.

By ward	▶ May ensure representation from diverse areas/communities of interest. ▶ Voters may be more likely to know candidates. ▶ Simplified election process for voters because there is a shorter list of candidates. ▶ Election campaigns are less expensive and time consuming for candidates. ▶ May create a more efficient division of responsibilities among Councillors, allowing for focus on sub-areas of the municipality. ▶ Councillors may be more likely to be accessible and knowledgeable about local issues.	▶ Councillors may be less likely to have a broader, City-wide view. ▶ May perpetuate and/or accentuate differences and divisions (such as attachment to pre-amalgamation communities). ▶ Voters have less choice/flexibility (they can only vote for candidates in their ward). ▶ Greater likelihood of acclamations. ▶ Population changes can lead to unequal workloads for Councillors. ▶ There is no guarantee in a diverse community that a Councillor elected in a local ward will share an affinity with local residents.
At-large	▶ Well organized but geographically diffuse interest groups may be able to elect a representative by supporting an at-large Councillor. ▶ Councillors may be more likely to have a broader, municipality-wide view. ▶ May promote attachment to the municipality as a whole. ▶ Electors can vote for all candidates (greater choice and flexibility). ▶ Residents can approach all Councillors with their concerns. ▶ May reduce likelihood of acclamations.	▶ With a large council, a large number of candidates may be overwhelming or confusing to voters. (How deeply held or informed is one's 12th choice for Council?). ▶ Councillors may not be familiar with area-specific issues and residents may prefer being able to talk to "one of their own." ▶ Risk that one area may dominate. ▶ Councillors may not reflect all areas/communities of interest (rural v. urban). ▶ Elections may be more costly and time consuming for candidates (which may discourage new entrants). ▶ May create a greater advantage for incumbents due to barriers to entry to the field. ▶ May lead to duplication of Councillor efforts or "champion shopping."

Most stakeholders preferred a ward-based system for electoral purposes. In a very real sense, participants tend to see Welland as "one" place. However, we did hear that there are distinct areas of Welland where maintaining representation by ward is important – most notably Dain City and Cooks Mills.

Council Input on Method of Election

Councillor Comments on the Method of Election

In support of the ward system

- ▶ "I'm opposed to at-large."
- ▶ "At-large elections make it really challenging to canvass the entire City. Most residents

want you to live nearby so they can say ‘have you seen what’s going on this street.’”

- ▶ “Barriers to entry are very high with at-large elections; I’m very thankful that we have wards.”
- ▶ “I have no interest in having an at-large system, but sometimes it feels like I was elected at-large because of residents contacting me from all over the city.”

In support of at-large

- ▶ “I like at-large because I get calls from all different wards.”
- ▶ “Argument in favour of at-large: you get a better pool of candidates. The con to it: it’s hard to run a campaign city wide.”

While the first public survey did not specifically ask about the method of election, members of the public included comments about the method of election as part of their open-ended feedback.

The comments below have been sorted into themes to reflect this feedback.

Public Comments on how Councillors should be Elected

In support of at-large

- ▶ “All that is required is 10 Councillors with a Mayor for the entire city. Remove the wards all together.”
- ▶ “There shouldn’t even be a ward system; it should be at-large. This city isn’t big enough to need someone to focus on one ward.”
- ▶ “There should be no wards. All areas of the city are equal and should be treated as one. 6 councillors at-large. Wards create pressure for spending on ‘pet’ projects.”
- ▶ “Remove the ward system and establish a 6 Councillor at-large system.”

In support of wards

- ▶ “Councillors should be elected by Ward to allow local people to participate. Not on a city-wide basis. This will result in elites controlling the city.”

Cost Considerations for Election Methods

The costs associated with running a campaign by ward or at-large has two main considerations:

- The overall expenditure on elections; and
- Accessibility of the electoral process to individuals who want to be involved.

Average Election Costs by Ward and At-Large

Election	Average Spend
Mayor (At-Large)	\$28,792
Ward 1	\$3,017
Ward 2	\$3,280
Ward 3	\$3,434
Ward 4	\$2,780
Ward 5	\$3,637
Ward 6	\$3,642

The chart (right) summarizes the campaign expenses for all candidates who ran successfully for office in the 2022 election.

Regional (At-Large) | \$8,685

(Source: City of Welland)

The costs of running a winning election by ward ranged from a low of \$1,263 (Ward 3) to a high of \$5,483 (Ward 2) with an average spend of \$3,287 across the City. The costs of running at-large for both the Mayor and Regional Councillors ranged from \$7,907 to \$41,264 for both successful and unsuccessful candidates with an average spend of \$16,728.

It is well understood that campaign spending does not necessarily equate to electoral success. The perceived need to spend can be a barrier to entering a race, however. This could have the effect of favouring incumbents with accumulated name recognition.

Overall Findings on Method of Election

The costs for at-large regional elections are a good proxy for the cost that would be incurred by each “competitive” or “all in” candidate if all councillors were elected at-large.

If so, that would suggest that total candidate campaign expenses may cost approximately \$60k more in an at-large system.

Probably the bigger issue is that the burden of campaigning would increase by over 500% for at-large elections. In 2026, this would mean that instead of reaching 11,800 residents in a typical ward race, candidates would need to reach 71,000 residents city wide. By 2034, candidates would need to reach over 100,000 residents based on forecasted population growth.

With the forecast growth of Welland, we would not recommend moving to at-large elections.

Section 3 | Number of Wards and Number of Councillors per Ward

The third major consideration is:

- The numbers of wards; and
- The number of Councillors per ward.

The authority to make this decision is in Section 222 of the *Municipal Act* authorizes a municipality to “divide or redivide the municipality into wards.” The Act does not prescribe rules about how this must be done.

Accordingly, it is permissible for a Council to:

- assign any number of Councillors per ward.
- assign a different number of Councillors to different wards.

In making decisions in this regard, the best guidance again falls back to giving effect to the principles of “Effective Representation.”

It is interesting to note that the decisions on these two factors tend to be:

- dependent on preferences about Council size, and
- influenced by the demographic and geographic realities that go into ward design.

Decisions about number of wards and Councillors per ward are important in their own right, but they are also enablers of addressing other priorities relating to local effective representation.

Municipal Comparator Analysis on Number of Councillors by Ward

Within the two sets of comparators for current and future growth in Appendix III, StrategyCorp identified all lower-tier, single-tier, and separated Ontario municipalities with Councils with a ward-based election system (26 total incl. Welland).

- **85% (22/26)** of those municipalities elect equal numbers of representatives per ward. This includes municipalities that elect one or more than one Councillor per ward.
- **62% (16/26)** elect 1 representative per ward.
- **23% (6/26)** elect 2 representatives per ward.

Councillor Input on Number of Councillors per Ward

Councillor Comments on How Many Councillors Per Ward

In support of two Councillors

- ▶ *"It's more about personalities than the ward system."*
- ▶ *"It's a bit much for just one person."*
- ▶ *"Two per ward is favourable; getting the diversity and perspectives of two people in each ward."*
- ▶ *"Having two people means always someone there to deal with the local issues."*
- ▶ *"Two councillors per ward is needed, if you're working another job, you're not available as much."*
- ▶ *I like the fact that we have two in each ward; it allows us to have coverage during councillor absences."*
- ▶ *"I'm used to having two and I think its beneficial."*

In support of one Councillor per ward

- ▶ *"Personally, I don't care if there are one or five. I look at it from an impact of how we get younger people in the role."*

Public Input on Number of Councillors by Ward

StrategyCorp also consulted the public on what the preferred number of Councillors would be within a ward system.

Representative Public Comments on Number of Councillors

One Councillor per Ward

- ▶ *"I truly think it should be one Councillor per ward."*
- ▶ *"I like the idea of splitting up the wards and having one Councillor per area. Maintains the number of Councillors but allows for more diverse representation and prepares for growth."*
- ▶ *"They should be divided up into smaller areas one Councillor per area."*
- ▶ *"I think two Councillors per area is redundant especially if both come from the same area as we have in Ward 6, both live in Dain City."*

- ▶ *"I would like to see the creation of 12 smaller wards, with one representative for each. This ensures representation for anticipated growth and facilitates more hands-on management in a smaller geographic location."*

Two Councillors per Ward

- ▶ *"I still think two councillors per ward makes it easier for citizens to reach one of their councillors."*
- ▶ *"Regardless of boundaries, each ward should have two Councillors for the sake of balance."*

Findings on Number of Wards and Councillors per Ward

Councillors per Ward: The opinions and perspectives reported above speak for themselves and reflect a legitimate range of opinion.

- Amongst comparators, the majority (62%) of municipalities with a ward system elect 1 Councillor per ward.

Number of Wards: The two main drivers that could force a general redesign of the ward boundaries are either:

- Change in the size of Council, and
- Need to adjust boundaries to achieve numerical parity for equality of representation (for example, due to changes in population related to uneven growth).

Section 4 | Direct Election of a Deputy Mayor

Some municipalities choose to have a Deputy Mayor position that is elected at-large by the community. An elected Deputy Mayor position can create opportunities for people to gain experience representing the entire community.

However, the cost of campaigning is expensive as it's similar to a mayoral campaign in terms of effort required. It can also create a perception of two tiers of council.

Some municipalities in Ontario that have an elected Deputy Mayor include the Town of Newmarket and the City of Richmond Hill.

Some municipalities also choose to have a rotating Deputy Mayor role where Council elects a Deputy Mayor from within the ward Councillor's cohort. This role is more ceremonial in nature. A few municipalities that have this model include the City of Barrie and the City of Kawartha Lakes.

Currently, Welland they use a rotating Vice-Mayor model.

Representative Stakeholder Comments on the Deputy Mayor

Maintain Status Quo

- ▶ *"The Vice-Mayor role is really good experience, once they [Councillors] are sitting in that chair, they get insight and people grow from it."*
- ▶ *"A deputy mayor would create challenge of having a second person running city wide."*
- ▶ *"I like the rotation because it gives councillors exposure to the role and see if it's something they could actually do."*

- ▶ *“I don't see benefit in electing a deputy mayor.”*
- ▶ *“No, I would not want a deputy mayor for the size of our city.”*

Findings Re Deputy Mayor Position

Amongst the stakeholders that we spoke with the majority of participants were opposed to the addition of an elected Deputy Mayor position. We did not receive any public comments in the survey regarding the addition of an elected Deputy Mayor.

We do not believe that creating one “at-large” council position would be especially beneficial to the operation of Council. Many of the concerns raised with the existing Vice-Mayor model, would likely be better addressed through procedural changes as opposed to electoral ones.

Appendix II | Terms of Reference

On January 14th, 2025, Welland City Council passed the following motions:

(1) “THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY WELLAND approves the composition of council to remain status quo.”

AND

(2) “THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WELLAND directs staff to conduct a ward boundary review.”

In April 2025, the City retained StrategyCorp following a competitive, open bidding process to conduct a Ward Boundary Review (the “Review”). Specifically, the City’s Request for Proposal (RFP) outlines the following Terms of Reference:

“Phase 1 will be to review current Council Composition, Council Compensation¹² and feasibility of “At Large” vs Ward Boundary System of governance.

Phase 2 (Conditional) -in the event a ward boundary system is recommended, a review and recommendations for a ward boundary system including changes (if any) in the number of wards and optimal re-alignment. (if required)

If a ward boundary system is recommended, considerations will encompass potential alterations to ward boundaries, which may involve changes in the number of wards, realignment, or other modifications. The review and recommendations will consider the following factors:

- *Historical context of prior ward boundaries within the municipality*
- *Geographical constraints, such as canals and major roads*
- *Current and anticipated future growth, ensuring changes remain pertinent for the upcoming three elections (2026, 2030, 2034)*
- *Best practices in the field*
- *Public engagement/input and stakeholder participation*
- *Evaluation of the pros and cons associated with each proposed governance option*

Ultimately, the review findings and recommendations will be presented to the Welland City Council for approval, with all presentations and reports.”¹³

Given Council approved the status quo for council composition (1) at the January 14th meeting, this Review will only consider ward boundary configuration for a Council of 13 including the Mayor, and 12 councillors elected by ward where each of Welland’s six wards elect to councillors each.¹⁴

¹² Council compensation was subsequently excluded from the scope of the Review.

¹³ City of Welland. (2025) Request for Proposal #RFP25-05 Consulting Services for Ward Boundary Review. Section 4: Specifications and Requirements, page 22.

¹⁴ By the scope of the RFP, we have been instructed to include commentary on Council composition and method of election as an appendix to our final Report for information purposes only.

Statutory Authority

Ontario law gives municipalities a significant degree of flexibility to pick their own ward and council structure. The *Municipal Act* gives councils discretion to set:

- the number of members of Council (Municipal Act, 2001, s. 217 (1));
- the method of election for Councillors, which may be “by general vote or wards or by any combination of general vote and wards” (Municipal Act, 2001, s. 217); and
- the ward configuration, including the number of wards, the number of Councillors to be elected in each ward and the boundaries of the wards (Municipal Act, 2001, s. 222 (1)).

Guiding Principles of this Review, the Principles of “Effective Representation”

This Review is guided by the principle of “effective representation” as first defined by the Supreme Court in a judgement that is commonly known as the *Carter* decision.¹⁵ *Carter* has been subsequently applied by the Courts, the OMB and its successor Tribunals.

The issue in *Carter* was whether a difference in population between provincial ridings in Saskatchewan infringed the right to vote protected by section 3 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (the Charter).

In *Carter*, the Supreme Court held that the purpose of the right to vote enshrined in the Charter is not “equality of voting power” but the right to “effective representation.”

Effective representation is the right to be “represented in government,” where “representation” entails both the right to a voice in the deliberations of government (the legislative role of elected representatives) and the right to bring your concerns to your representative (the ombudsman role of elected representatives).

Effective representation begins with voter parity, the idea that all votes should have equal weight and, as a result, the number of people living in each ward should be similar. According to the Supreme Court:

A system which dilutes one citizen's vote unduly as compared with another citizen's vote runs the risk of providing inadequate representation to the citizen whose vote is diluted. The legislative power of the citizen whose vote is diluted will be reduced, as may be access to and assistance from his or her representative. The result will be uneven and unfair representation.

While parity is of “prime importance,” the Supreme Court held that it is “not the only factor to be taken into account in ensuring effective representation:”

Notwithstanding the fact that the value of a citizen's vote should not be unduly diluted, it is a practical fact that effective representation often cannot be achieved without considering countervailing factors.

The Supreme Court provided a non-exhaustive list of factors that should be considered, including geography (natural and manmade), community history, community interests (such as urban and rural), minority representation and population growth. These factors allow the population of wards to vary to some extent.

¹⁵ Reference Re Provincial Electoral Boundaries (Saskatchewan), [1991] 2 S.C.R. 158. *Carter* is available online here: <http://scc-csc.lexum.com/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/766/index.do>.

It is generally accepted, that wards should not vary in population by more than 25% from the average, unless there is a good reason to depart from this having regard to overall effective representation.

When defining effective representation as the right protected by the Charter, the Supreme Court of Canada noted that the relative parity of voting power was a prime, but not an exclusive, condition of effective representation.

One thing is clear though. While maintaining relative parity is important, both now and in the future, it is not the only factor. As one Ontario Tribunal put it, “ward design is not just a purely mathematical exercise.”

Departure from mathematical parity should be avoided and minimized but may be justified where the other factors set out above combine to justify the departure to achieve overall effective representation.

In other words, effective representation is a balance. The Supreme Court rejected the “one person – one vote” approach in favour of a more nuanced approach that balances voter parity with a number of other factors to ensure “legislative assemblies effectively represent the diversity of our social mosaic.”

The principle of effective representation has been interpreted and applied in a long line of Ontario Municipal Board cases dealing specifically with ward boundary and council structure issues.¹⁶ They have subsequently been restated and refined in more recent cases such as Hamilton.¹⁷

¹⁶ See, for example, *Teno v. Lakeshore (Town)*, (2005), 51 O.M.B.R. 473 and *Osgoode Rural Communities Association et al. v. Ottawa (City)* [2003] Decision/Order 0605.

¹⁷ [*Dobrucki v Hamilton \(City\)*](#), 2017 CanLII 85763 (ON LPAT).

Appendix III | Comparator Municipalities

Table of Comparator Municipalities based on Welland's current 2025 population

Name	Type	Council Size	Population (2021)	Elections	Cllrs per ward
City of St. Thomas	Single Tier	9	42,840	At-Large	N/A
Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury	Lower Tier	9	42,880	By Ward	1
Town of Innisfil	Lower Tier	9	43,326	By Ward	1
Town of New Tecumseth	Lower Tier	10	43,948	By Ward	1
City of Quinte West	Single Tier	13	46,560	By Ward	Unequal
City of Woodstock	Lower Tier	7	46,705	At-Large	N/A
Town of Georgina	Lower Tier	7	47,642	By Ward	1
City of Cornwall	Single Tier	11	47,845	At-Large	N/A
Haldimand County	Single Tier	7	49,216	By Ward	1
Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville	Lower Tier	7	49,864	By Ward	1
City of North Bay	Single Tier	11	52,662	At-Large	N/A
City of Belleville	Single Tier	9	55,071	By Ward	Unequal
City of Welland	Lower Tier	13	55,750	By Ward	2
Town of Aurora	Lower Tier	7	62,057	At-Large	1
Town of Halton Hills	Lower Tier	11	62,951	By Ward	2
Norfolk County	Single Tier	9	67,490	By Ward	Unequal
City of Sarnia	Lower Tier	9	72,047	At-Large	N/A
Town of Caledon	Lower Tier	9	76,581	By Ward	1
City of Sault Ste. Marie	Single Tier	11	76,731	By Ward	2
City of Kawartha Lakes	Single Tier	9	79,247	By Ward	1
City of Peterborough	Single Tier	11	83,651	By Ward	2
Town of Newmarket	Lower Tier	9	87,942	By Ward	1
City of Niagara Falls	Lower Tier	9	94,415	At-Large	N/A
City of Pickering	Lower Tier	7	99,186	By Ward	1
Municipality of Clarington	Lower Tier	7	101,427	By Ward	1

Table of Comparator Municipalities based on Welland's 2034 forecast Population

Name	Type	Council Size	Population (2021)	Elections	Cllrs per ward
City of Belleville	Single Tier	9	55,071	By Ward	Unequal
Town of Aurora	Lower Tier	7	62,057	At-Large	1
Town of Halton Hills	Lower Tier	11	62,951	By Ward	2
Norfolk County	Single Tier	9	67,490	By Ward	Unequal
City of Sarnia	Lower Tier	9	72,047	At-Large	N/A
Town of Caledon	Lower Tier	9	76,581	By Ward	1
City of Sault Ste. Marie	Single Tier	11	76,731	By Ward	2
City of Kawartha Lakes	Single Tier	9	79,247	By Ward	1
City of Peterborough	Single Tier	11	83,651	By Ward	2
Town of Newmarket	Lower Tier	9	87,942	By Ward	1
City of Niagara Falls	Lower Tier	9	94,415	At-Large	Unequal
City of Pickering	Lower Tier	7	99,186	By Ward	1
City of Welland	Welland	13	100,888	By Ward	2
Municipality of Clarington	Lower Tier	7	101,427	By Ward	1
Municipality of Chatham-Kent	Single Tier	15*	103,988	By Ward	Unequal
City of Brantford	Single Tier	11	104,688	By Ward	2
City of Thunder Bay	Single Tier	13	108,843	Both	N/A
City of Waterloo	Lower Tier	8	121,436	By Ward	1
Town of Ajax	Lower Tier	7	126,666	By Ward	1
City of Kingston	Single Tier	13	132,485	By Ward	1
Town of Milton	Lower Tier	9	132,979	By Ward	1
City of St. Catharines	Lower Tier	13	136,803	Both	N/A
City of Cambridge	Lower Tier	9	138,479	By Ward	1
Town of Whitby	Lower Tier	9	138,501	Both	N/A
City of Guelph	Single Tier	13	143,740	By Ward	2

* Chatham-Kent has approved a reduction in its Council size from 18 to 15 for the 2026 elections.

Appendix IV | Summary of Public Survey Engagement Demographics

Public Engagement Survey

- **Online Public Survey:** A public engagement survey was posted on the City's "Engage Welland" Website from July 14th to July 28th, 2025. The survey received 15 responses.

Respondents by Residency:

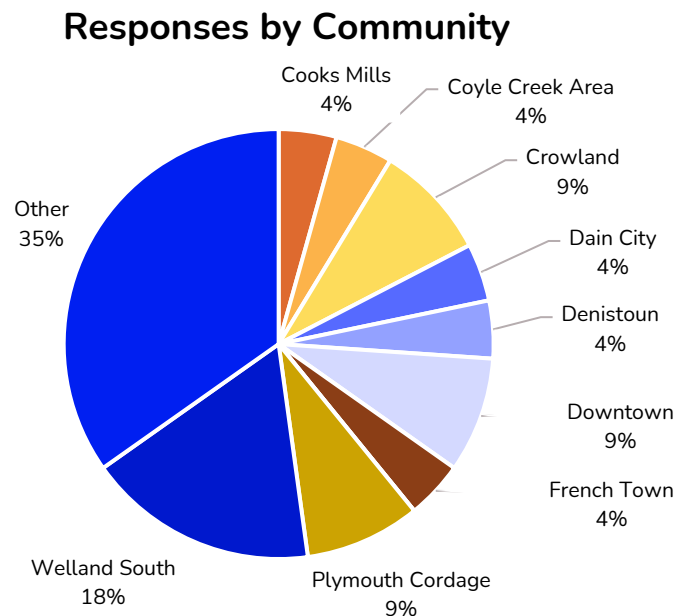
- **100%** of survey respondents live in Welland full time.

Respondents by Ward:

- Ward 6 represented 7% of respondents
- Ward 5 represented 13% of respondents
- Ward 4 represented 20% of respondents
- Ward 3 represented 27% of respondents
- Ward 2 represented 20% of respondents
- Ward 1 represented 13% of respondents

Respondents by Community:

Q3. Welland includes many communities, townships, hamlets, and neighbourhoods that residents identify with. What neighbourhood or community do you most identify with? Select all that apply.



*Of the 35% that selected other, 3 said that they were from Welland North and the others provided street intersections.