

COUNCIL MEETING
OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK

REPORT CLK-2025-08
September 2, 2025

SUBJECT: **Ward Boundary Review - StrategyCorp Final Recommendations**

AUTHOR: **Tara Stephens, Director of Legislative Services/City Clerk**

APPROVING: **Rob Axiak, Chief Administrative Officer**

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council receive StrategyCorp's Final Report to Council – Ward Boundary Review for information; and further

THAT Council approve, Option B as the preferred ward boundary configuration for the City of Welland and direct staff to bring forward a by-law to re-divide the municipality into wards consistent with Option B for use in the 2026 and 2030 municipal elections.

RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN

Liveability. Updating ward boundaries to reflect current and near-term growth supports equitable representation, civic participation, and access to local government.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

StrategyCorp recommends council prioritize equality for the 2026 and 2030 elections given concentrated growth in North Welland, with a review before 2034 to confirm continued effective representation. Option B is identified as the preferred ward boundary map because it best balances population equality with respect for community character and geographic features; all presented options improve upon the status quo.

BACKGROUND:

In April 2025, the city retained StrategyCorp to complete a Ward Boundary Review to ensure effective and equitable representation through the 2026, 2030, and 2034 elections. The terms of reference specified a council of 13 members

(Mayor plus two councillors for each of six wards). StrategyCorp's work proceeded in two (2) phases with public and council engagement.

DISCUSSION:

The Ward Boundary Review is intended to ensure that every resident has fair and effective representation at council. As the city continues to grow, especially in North Welland, the current ward boundaries no longer reflect population distribution, which could result in some residents being under-represented compared to others. To address this, StrategyCorp developed and evaluated several new ward boundary options, guided by principles of parity, community character, and effective representation.

After reviewing all four options, StrategyCorp identified Option B as the best overall solution for the 2026 and 2030 elections. Option B provides the most balanced mix of population parity while respecting established neighbourhoods and natural boundaries. It avoids dividing most existing communities, keeps ward shapes compact and recognizable, and ensures residents can clearly identify with their ward.

The alternatives were considered as follows:

- Option A respects community character but has the weakest population balance.
- Option C offers slightly stronger parity, but the trade-offs include irregular ward shapes and less respect for community features.
- Option D is an improvement over the current system, but its population balance weakens by 2030 compared to Option B.

Overall, Option B strikes the best balance between ensuring each councillor represents a similar number of people, preserving neighbourhood cohesion, and creating wards that are straightforward to understand. StrategyCorp also recommends that council plan to review the boundaries again after the 2030 election to confirm that growth patterns have not created new imbalances before 2034.

If council supports the recommendation of Option B, staff will, in line with StrategyCorp's advice, establish mechanisms to ensure the ward boundaries are reviewed following the 2030 election and before the 2034 election. This will be accomplished by recording the requirement in the clerk's legislative calendar and election preparation files, incorporating it into the city's work plan and strategic tracking tools, and documenting it within the Clerk's Division transition materials to ensure continuity for future staff and Councils.

FINANCIAL:

There are no direct financial implications resulting from Council's selection of Option B as the preferred ward boundary configuration.

ATTACHMENT:

Appendix I – StrategyCorp – Ward Boundary Review – Final Recommendations Report.