



23 May 2016

Toronto City Council - Executive Committee

Toronto City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
M5H 2N2

Re: **Toronto Ward Boundary Review**
Executive Committee EX15.2

The Ward Boundary Review sought (and is recommending) a ward structure for the municipality to achieve effective representation. The approach taken during the consultation process was inward-looking, unnecessarily Toronto-centric, and myopic. Little consideration was given to how a ward structure could help make Toronto City Council better, instil greater trust in City Hall, or improve the democratic process in Toronto. It gives little consideration to how these new ward boundaries will fit with the existing federal and provincial electoral district boundaries from practical and pragmatic points of view.

The only thing that the suggested new boundaries achieves is better voter parity. That is a good start but much more is needed and could have been accomplished.

The simplest and most effective solution was too briefly considered and found wanting even though it has major advantages for the voter during (and between) elections and for those managing municipal elections.

The goal of the 'drawthelines' process was clear but the scope of work should have been expanded to include other considerations, many of which were raised during the process. The report (Appendix D) does summarise much of those comments. However, little if any thought was given to the review of the Municipal Election Act (currently underway), a constitutional challenge to the MEA that will directly affect the next (and subsequent) municipal elections in Toronto, and how Ranked Choice Voting may affect those elections.

We recommend that rather than simply shifting ward boundaries as advised in the report, the report should be a part (an important part) of a larger discussion on how City Council and our democracy in Toronto can be improved before the next municipal election in 2018. This can be accomplished in the time frame as noted in the Implementation Timeline (which may have to be adjusted given the current MEA review).

Why is this important? There are as many people in Toronto who do not vote as who do. Not one Mayor, City Councillor, or School Trustee has been elected in Toronto for many, many years with a true majority of the vote. With turnout rates between 38% and 54% over the past four elections, a candidate would have needed the support of practically every voter to achieve that true majority. In most cases, they would have need some voters to vote early and often.

When a candidate can be elected by 10.3% of voters or when a multi-term, incumbent City Councillor who wins every poll in the ward, receives over three-quarters of the vote but is supported by less than 40% of the electorate, then effective representation needs a better, multi-faceted fix than simply redrawing the lines between wards.

Further, there is a whole group of people living in Toronto and paying taxes that do not vote - permanent residents that were not considered in this report - should they be included in municipal elections?

Federal, Provincial, and Municipal Electoral Districts

Elections Canada spent a great deal of time and effort in its latest review of the electoral boundaries across Canada. In Toronto, this process resulted in three new 'ridings'; increasing the number of seats in Parliament from 22 to 25 (average population of 123,000). In similar fashion and following previous practice, Elections Ontario mirrored the federal boundaries and increased the number of provincial electoral districts to 25 in the City of Toronto.

Why is this significant? Currently, there are two wards in Toronto for each Federal / Provincial electoral district. Logic suggests that the City of Toronto follow and increase the number of wards from 44 to 50 (if a single Councillor was elected per ward). Alternatively, have 25 wards with the same boundaries as the federal and provincial 'ridings' and elect two Councillors from each. Either would result in meeting the 61,000 population target set by the consultants.

The report (page 27) suggested that "only a very small number of Councillors and the public supported this scenario". That makes sense if a single Councillor was to see the size of a constituency double. The work load would be onerous.

However, again from the report (page 27), "adjusting boundaries to make the 50 ward version respect voter parity will end up resembling Option 1 but with three additional wards. The conclusion seems to be that adding three wards / Councillors was alright but six is too many?"

Further, "federal riding boundaries are reviewed and adjusted every 10 years, which does not deliver a long term solution". The Province reviews the MEA after every municipal election cycle. The Federal review uses the most current census information. Either a four-year or ten-year review seems more than an adequate solution.

Some Practical Considerations

Matching the electoral district boundary between all three orders of government makes practical sense. Anyone in Toronto would know that they have an MP, an MPP, and two City Councillors in their 'riding' and that those four people work together collegially to most effectively represent them. One can hope. This is preferable to having to recall that you are represented by three politicians from three separate ridings / wards.

A source of frustration to voters and an ongoing challenge for deputy returning officers on any election day is changes to the voters list. Having common boundaries between all three orders of government would help. This is not addressed in the report. Being able to have common voting places (as much as possible) would also ease confusion on election day. Making voting easier helps with turnout.

By being consistent, between all three orders of government, on the boundaries for electoral districts, there would be no worry that gerry-mandering of wards was at work at anytime. No suggestion that comments from incumbent City Councillors were self-serving or in-conflict, thereby building confidence in this review process.

Final Thoughts

From the report (Executive Summary 1.5), "In addition to 'voter parity', effective representation includes several other components, which have to be balanced when designing a ward structure. Geographic communities of interest have to be respected, natural/physical boundaries should be used as ward boundaries and ward history, population growth, the capacity to represent, and the geographic shape and size of a ward have to be taken into consideration."

The report suggests that "the recommended ward structure meets the tests of effective representation and any amendments that City Council may wish to make have to maintain these tests to be defensible at the Ontario Municipal Board."

Those tests need to be made available to anyone in Toronto, to be transparent. Might it be better to work with those who will challenge those tests at the OMB (before it gets to that stage and save the 8-10 months contemplated) so that the improvements suggested can be implemented for 2018 and not be deferred until 2022?



What is clear is that the test factor given the most weight was population, both current and projected forward two and ten years.

There are many, many other considerations that deserve an equal review and inclusion in a plan to improve how we chose our City Councillors. Toronto should be a model for how municipal government works; redrawing the lines is not enough.

We recommend the report be tabled pending a more comprehensive, six- to nine-month review of elections in Toronto beginning in the Summer of 2016. The by-law could be drafted in the late-Spring of 2017 for a Council meeting that Summer. This would fit the timeline noted.

By being open and inclusive, the time saved by avoiding the OMB allows for this broader discussion and review by all of us.

Once that is done, a broader set of improvements to Elections Toronto (that would include implementing relevant recommendations from the Municipal Election Act review expected this summer) could be put in place in time for the next municipal election in the Fall of 2018.

The Green Party of Toronto would be pleased to assist in any way we can to make Toronto's City Council and democracy more effective, more inclusive, and more worthy of trust by everyone.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

ABKasperski

(on behalf)

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