



2021 Ward Boundary & Council Composition Review

Township of Oro-Medonte

Discussion Paper

April, 2021

Watson & Associates Economists Ltd.
905-272-3600
info@watsonecon.ca

In association with: Dr. Robert J. Williams



Table of Contents

	Page
1. Background.....	1
2. Setting	1
3. Parameters for an Electoral Review.....	2
3.1 “The Composition of Council”	3
3.2 The Method of Election for Councillors	7
3.3 Guiding Principles to Design Wards	8
3.4 Is a Ward Boundary Review Necessary?.....	11
3.5 A Consultation Process.....	12
4. Population and Growth Trends	13
4.1 Existing Population	13
4.2 Forecast Population Growth 2021 to 2031.....	14
5. Preliminary Evaluation of the Status Quo	16



1. Background

The Township of Oro-Medonte has retained Watson & Associates Economists Ltd. and Dr. Robert J. Williams, hereinafter referred to as the Consultant Team, to conduct a comprehensive and independent Ward Boundary and Council Composition Review (W.B.C.C.R.).

The primary purpose of the study is to prepare Township Council to make decisions on whether to maintain the existing council composition and ward structure or to adopt an alternative. Other matters that are integral to a comprehensive review include the following:

- Is it appropriate to consider dissolving the wards to elect all councillors at-large (in what the *Municipal Act* calls a “general vote” system)?
- Is it appropriate to consider changing the composition of council (size and how council is elected) as part of the review?
- If councillors will continue to be elected in wards, what guiding principles will be observed in the design of the wards?

This W.B.C.C.R. is premised on the legitimate democratic expectation that municipal representation in Oro-Medonte will be effective, equitable, and an accurate reflection of the contemporary distribution of communities and people across the municipality.

2. Setting

In 1994 portions of the former Townships of Oro, Flos, Medonte, Orillia, and Vespra were amalgamated to form the Township of Oro-Medonte. The amalgamated Township includes identified settlement areas at Craighurst, Hawkestone, Horseshoe Valley, Moonstone, Shanty Bay, Sugarbush and Warminster, as well as many smaller communities lying between the Cities of Barrie on the west and Orillia on the east.

Given its proximity to these larger centres and the Greater Toronto Area (G.T.A.), the Township’s population is about to grow significantly – with a recent provincial forecast indicating an additional 24% growth in population over the next 10 years.

Township Council consists of a Mayor and Deputy Mayor elected at-large, and five councillors elected in five wards. The ward boundaries have remained unchanged



since 1994, although in 2005 a report prepared by the Township's Clerk indicated that since the "distribution of the electorate is relatively similar among the existing five wards, it is recommended that no ward boundary adjustments be considered for the 2006 Municipal Election." By 2014 staff received some enquiries with respect to whether the wards and representation were balanced, but no action was taken until late 2020 when the Township initiated a W.B.C.C.R. aimed at achieving "a balanced approach to voter parity for the 2022, 2026 and 2030 elections."

This decision coincided with a council composition review being undertaken by the County of Simcoe that was accelerated in response to a review initiated by the Province of Ontario to examine regional governance models and services that included Simcoe County. At the time of preparing this report, County Council has not made a final decision, but Council and its Governance Committee have considered the matter several times in 2020 and early 2021, including proposals aimed at reducing the size of County Council and using weighted voting. The pertinent point is that options to modify council composition include reducing each lower-tier municipality's representation from two (the Mayor and Deputy Mayor) to one (the Mayor). Should such a change be approved, Oro-Medonte will need to consider possible changes to the composition of Township Council: Should the office of Deputy Mayor be retained? Should the position continue to be filled through an at-large vote? Should an additional ward councillor be added in place of a separately elected Deputy Mayor to retain a seven-member Council? Or should the total number of elected officials be reduced?

For all these reasons, a review of Oro-Medonte's ward boundaries and council composition is timely.

3. Parameters for an Electoral Review

There are three basic and inter-connected components of an electoral system that lower-tier municipalities in Ontario such as Oro-Medonte can address under existing provincial legislation:

- a) the size of the council of a local municipality (referred to as "the composition of council" in the *Municipal Act, 2001* s. 217 (1));



- b) the method of election for councillors that may be “by general vote or wards or by any combination of general vote and wards” (*Municipal Act, 2001* s. 217 (1) 4); and
- c) assuming that Council will be elected by wards, the actual ward configuration, including the number of wards, the number of councillors to be elected in each ward (what may be termed the ward magnitude) and the boundaries of the wards (as implied in the *Municipal Act, 2001* s. 222 (1)).

The next section will deal with matters to be addressed in an electoral review, using the three legislated powers listed above. It is important to note that Council has the authority to decline to make changes to any or all of these features of its electoral structure and indeed is under no obligation to consider them – even in response to a petition submitted by electors related to wards (*Municipal Act, 2001* s. 223).¹

The intention of this paper is to provide information for residents to better understand the electoral system in Oro-Medonte, and to assist Council in making determinations about whether to change some existing electoral arrangements and the alternatives open to it. Any decisions resulting from points a) and b) will shape the second phase of this review (part c) above).

3.1 “The Composition of Council”

Despite the long history of municipal institutions in Ontario, the premises and practices used for determining the overall composition of councils has never been satisfactorily or definitively addressed, either in legislation or regulation. There are no clear principles at play, no “standards” and no formulas to apply. Each municipality has its own history, its own traditions and its own attributes. Furthermore, there is no established timetable to require that municipal councils review the continuing validity of the number of places at the council table.

The *Municipal Act, 2001* establishes the minimum size for the council of a local municipality in Ontario as five, “one of whom shall be the head of council” who must be

¹ Note that by-laws in relation to Council composition (s. 217) are not open to appeal to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal (LPAT), although by-laws amending ward boundaries are.



elected by general vote (s. 217 (1) 1 and (1) 3). There are no references to a maximum or to an “appropriate” size associated with, for example, the population of the municipality. This absence contrasts with the provisions of regulations issued under the *Education Act* (O. Reg. 412/00) which include a detailed formula to determine both the number of trustees and their distribution across each school board’s area of jurisdiction before each regular municipal election.

As a result, the composition of local councils in Ontario varies widely and can be unconventional. The Township of Oro-Medonte Council is composed of seven (7) members, two above the minimum of five, a configuration that matches the composition of the councils of municipalities in Simcoe County of varying sizes, such as Ramara, Severn, Springwater, Wasaga Beach, and Tay. At the same time, when compared to other places in Simcoe County, Oro-Medonte’s Council is smaller than those elected in municipalities like Penetanguishene, Midland, and Clearview even though it is much larger in population than these places. See Figure 3-1 to compare Oro-Medonte to some other municipalities in Simcoe County and to some other similar-sized municipalities in Ontario.

Two components of Oro-Medonte’s Council are outside the control of the municipality: there must be a “head of council” elected by general vote (see above) and, pending the council composition review in Simcoe County, one additional County representative, a position currently filled by the Deputy Mayor in Oro-Medonte and other municipalities in Simcoe County.



Figure 3-1: Composition of Councils – County of Simcoe/Ontario Municipalities

Municipality	2016 Population	Council Members	Persons per Member	Wards/ At-large
SIMCOE COUNTY				
Adjala-Tosorontio	10,975	7	1,568	Wards
Bradford West Gwillimbury	35,325	9	3,925	Wards
Clearview	14,151	9	1,572	Wards
Collingwood	21,793	9	2,421	At-large
Essa	21,083	5	4,217	Wards
Innisfil	36,566	9	4,063	Wards
Midland	16,864	9	1,874	At-large
New Tecumseth	34,242	10	3,424	Wards
Oro-Medonte	21,036	7	3,005	Wards
Penetanguishene	8,962	9	996	At-large
Ramara	9,488	7	1,355	Wards
Severn	13,477	7	1,925	Wards
Springwater	19,059	7	2,723	Wards
Tay	10,033	7	1,433	Wards
Tiny	11,787	5	2,357	At-large
Wasaga Beach	20,675	7	2,954	At-large
Average	19,095	8	2,484	
OTHER ONTARIO MUNICIPALITIES (~15-30K Pop.)				
Fort Erie*	30,710	8	3,839	Wards
King Township	24,510	7	3,501	Wards
Port Hope	16,750	7	2,393	Wards
Scugog*	21,620	7	3,089	Wards
Uxbridge*	21,175	7	3,025	Wards
Average	22,953	7	3,169	

* Includes one Regional Councillor

The status quo is the default “solution”; however, endorsing the status quo is an option, as much as would be a decision to elect any number of Township Councillors. The status quo therefore requires a rationale rather than simply being accepted because it is familiar.

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



interconnected factors could be considered: the capacity of Council to provide effective political management, effective representation, and accountability.

Effective Political Management

A certain number of elected representatives are required to carry out the essential governmental functions of a municipality. The workload of representatives varies with each individual councillor. Part will be driven by the personal preferences and commitment of individual councillors, but a large element is a result of the range of responsibilities that the municipality provides. How much material must councillors review and understand before participating effectively in council decision-making? How much constituency casework is directed to councillors? What committees, agencies or other bodies do councillors participate in or chair? The size of the council has an impact on the amount of time councillors can allocate to such formal duties and to casework, as well as to their personal, family, and non-political obligations.

Effective Representation

The heart of “effective representation” (to be discussed more fully in relation to the guiding principles for a ward system) is the conviction that councillors must be able to maintain contact with constituents. Logically, the larger the council, the smaller the individual ward and the more likely the representative can maintain such contact. Conversely, the smaller the council, the larger the ward, and the greater the challenge to deliver such representation successfully.

Between elections, councillors must not only engage with residents but with community, business, and neighbourhood groups (and others) located in the ward and in some cases across the entire Township. Does the present council composition have an impact on the capacity of councillors to act as an intermediary between residents and the Township? Note: this is not a comment on the performance of incumbent councillors, but rather a question about the reasonable expectations associated with being an elected (part-time) representative in this configuration.

Another aspect of representation relates to what will be referred to as “coherence”: wards are designed to represent communities of interest within the Township (again, to be discussed more fully in relation to the guiding principles for a ward system). Ideally, wards will include a grouping of well-defined neighbourhoods and districts that are as similar as possible. A ward system built around five Township Councillors will of



necessity include a smaller and more diverse collection of neighbourhoods in each ward than a system in which the Township is divided into a smaller number of wards. In the present wards, the capacity of distinctive communities of interest to be effectively represented may be hampered.

Accountability

Municipal councillors are not only “political managers” of the municipal corporation but are accountable for their decisions through an election. An effective democratic electoral system should provide voters with an adequate range of opportunities to select municipal legislators: if, as the adage has it, municipal government is “closest to the people,” the number of representatives subject to public accountability for their actions is a key indicator of how close or remote the council is to the community.

The legislative authority to determine the number of Township Councillors (*Municipal Act, 2001* s. 217) rests with the municipal Council and is distinct from the determination of the method by which they are to be elected. A fundamental question for an electoral review in Oro-Medonte must be whether a council of this size is appropriate to govern an increasingly complex municipality that is now greater than 20,000 people.

3.2 The Method of Election for Councillors

As in the previous discussion, the *Municipal Act, 2001* offers no guidance on the question of whether a municipality should elect its councillors “by general vote or wards or by any combination of general vote and wards.” In addition, there is no consistency across Ontario municipalities: some municipalities with small populations use wards (such as the Townships of Zorra (8,000) and Georgian Bay (2,300)), while some municipalities with larger populations (such as Niagara Falls (85,000) and Sarnia (75,000)) do not. A handful use a mixed ward and general-vote system (most notably Thunder Bay) as permitted under the *Municipal Act, 2001*.

The Township of Oro-Medonte was established in 1994 with a ward system. This is the status quo – the default “solution” – that was originally adopted as part of the transition from its component parts into the new municipality. Again, the status quo requires a rationale rather than simply being accepted because it is familiar.



There is no definitively “better” system; rather, there is a system that best matches contemporary Oro-Medonte. For example:

A general vote system could be appropriate if . . .	A ward system could be appropriate if . . .
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oro-Medonte is (or should be) considered one political community.• councillors are expected to place greater emphasis on the well-being of the entire Township ahead of the well-being of its particular parts.• members of the public are prepared to approach any councillor for assistance.• electors want more choices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oro-Medonte is composed of several distinctive political communities.• councillors are mindful of the impact of Township-wide decisions on particular communities within the municipality.• members of the public prefer to approach a councillor who has some connection to their neighbourhood or community.• electors want clear choices.

It is primarily because of the presence of distinct and/or historically important settlements and communities in Oro-Medonte, such as Hawkestone, Craighurst or Warminster, that this review should proceed on the supposition that Oro-Medonte’s Council will continue to be elected in wards as a way to ensure that the voices of the Township’s particular localities are found around the Council table.

Of course, if the alternative of dissolving the wards to elect Township Councillors is widely supported in the public consultations, the Consultant Team would share that information with Council along with the reasons why residents support it.

3.3 Guiding Principles to Design Wards

There are several core principles for this study that are described as guiding principles to be applied during the review. It is important to recognize that this is the set of principles that will be applicable for Oro-Medonte’s review: the fact is that provincial legislation is silent on the matters that could be considered by a municipality when establishing or modifying its electoral system. There are no standard practices, terms of



reference, criteria, or guiding principles, either in provincial legislation or regulation, that can be used to evaluate the municipality's electoral system. There are some precedents that can be gathered from a review of best practices and successful electoral reviews in other Ontario municipalities and cases previously heard by the Ontario Municipal Board (O.M.B.) (now known as the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal or LPAT) that may be applicable, but a review of electoral arrangements in Oro-Medonte should be based on Oro-Medonte's own circumstances and objectives.

Based on its experiences in conducting ward boundary reviews across Ontario and the direction provided by the municipality, the Consultant Team will use the following specific principles to evaluate the present system and to formulate alternative options:

- Representation by population;
- Representation of communities of interest;
- Population growth trends; and
- Geographical and topographical features as boundaries.

Taken together, these principles will contribute to achieving the over-arching principle of effective representation.

Representation by Population

A primary goal of a ward boundary review is the achievement of population parity: that is, to the extent possible residents should be equally represented and wards should have reasonably equal population totals. A degree of population variation, however, is acceptable in recognition of varied geography, population densities and characteristics, and established communities of interest. For the Oro-Medonte ward boundary review, variances of between plus or minus 25 percent of what is called the "optimal" ward population are generally accepted as the maximum variance to achieve voter parity. The principle is intended to ensure that residents have comparable access to their elected representative and that the workload of these representatives is relatively balanced.

NOTE: This principle is based on the total population of the municipality not the number of electors, a distinction upheld in several O.M.B./LPAT decisions.



Representation of Communities of Interest

Municipal electoral arrangements in Ontario are not built exclusively on the distribution of population, but typically consider communities of interest and neighbourhoods within the municipality. The basic premise is that existing and future communities of interest should not be fragmented or divided between multiple wards if at all possible.

Communities of interest are deemed to include geographic, social, historical, economic, and/or cultural interests.

Population Growth Trends

Ward boundary reviews consider anticipated population trends to ensure the ward structure provides effective representation for the 2022 municipal election and beyond.

Population growth is anticipated in Oro-Medonte over the next decade, so wards should be designed to keep the population of the wards in reasonable parity over that time (roughly the next three municipal elections). Where possible, reliable and accurate data will be used to generate current and future population projections, including but not limited to Census data, approved building permits, approved development proposals and estimated population growth.

Geographical and Topographical Features as Boundaries

Ward boundaries will be drawn impartially and with consideration for natural and man-made features within the Township that may serve as effective boundaries within the community. Such features should be leveraged since they create pre-existing boundaries that naturally divide Township residents and may facilitate the effective representation of the ward's residents. As well, where possible, the preferred boundaries should follow straight lines, have few turns, and be easily identifiable.

Effective Representation

The specific principles (listed above) are all subject to the overriding principle of “effective representation” as enunciated by the Supreme Court of Canada.² The concept of effective representation was derived from the equality provision of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms: the court noted that the relative parity of voting power

² Reference re Provincial Electoral Boundaries (Sask.), [1991], known as the Carter decision.



was a prime, but not an exclusive condition of effective representation, since other factors – such as those to be applied in Oro-Medonte – contribute to the achievement of effective representation. It may be necessary to place a higher priority on principles other than population parity (such as protecting a community of interest) to create plausible and coherent electoral areas that better contribute to “effective representation” than electoral areas that are equal in population.

No ward design is likely to meet all the principles in their entirety; however, the best designs maximize adherence to the principles, especially in relation to representation by population and effective representation. As noted in numerous O.M.B./LPAT decisions, deviations from the specific principles can be justified by other Carter decision criteria in a manner that is more supportive of effective representation.

3.4 Is a Ward Boundary Review Necessary?

The objective of a ward boundary review is to conduct a comprehensive review of Oro-Medonte’s electoral arrangements to develop an effective and equitable system of representation. By their nature, electoral maps inevitably have a limited lifespan, since they are intended to capture the distribution of the municipality’s population at a specific time. As the population grows and is redistributed within the municipality, the “fit” is less plausible.

Oro-Medonte’s present ward design dates from the foundation of the amalgamated municipality when its population was approximately 16,700. Today the full-time resident population is about 21,500 and projected growth could take that number over 25,000 within the next ten years. As the community changes, so must the electoral arrangements, more than ever when there are perceptible and inequitable discrepancies in the population of existing wards.

A necessary step in a ward boundary review is to assess the extent to which the existing wards meet the guiding principles for a ward system that meets the goal of effective representation. The status quo will therefore be subject to the same “tests” as any alternative designs (population parity, representation of communities of interest, the incorporation of natural boundaries, and the capacity to maintain population parity over time) to identify strengths and weaknesses.



While some aspects of the current wards may continue to be valid, ward boundaries are, as just noted, temporary groupings of a set of communities and neighbourhoods for the purpose of electing municipal representatives. Prolonging their use for the sake of “convenience” or leaving them unexamined because of indifference in the face of weaknesses that can be overcome is not justifiable.

3.5 A Consultation Process

Before 2006, the *Municipal Act* required Council to hold a public meeting before adopting a by-law to modify its ward boundaries. Today that is no longer a legislated requirement, but a municipal electoral system must be subject to a public consultation process to ensure the legitimacy of the recommendations placed before Council. This expectation has been affirmed in several O.M.B./LPAT decisions.

The goal of public engagement activities is both to inform residents about the review (including the key factors that are being considered) and gather informed evaluations from residents about the existing system and alternative designs. Considering restrictions related to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, public engagement activities were modified into virtual events under Oro-Medonte’s established protocols and policies. Details of the process are found at: www.oro-medonte.ca/wbr.

The public engagement sessions in the initial stages or first phase of this project are intended to inform the public on the ward boundary review process, the composition of council and the guiding principles adopted for the project. Those who participate will have an opportunity to provide input on potential changes to the arrangements for electing Council and the priority to be attached to the various guiding principles.

It is important to be clear that a ward boundary review is not a popularity contest to see which alternative “wins,” and that the integrity of the review and the recommendations made to Council are not inherently compromised if the consultations take a different form, or even if there is a low level of public participation in the consultations.

One important aspect of conducting an effective and independent review is that residents will be well-informed about the conduct of the entire review and should be satisfied with its integrity and with the decision eventually reached by Council. The



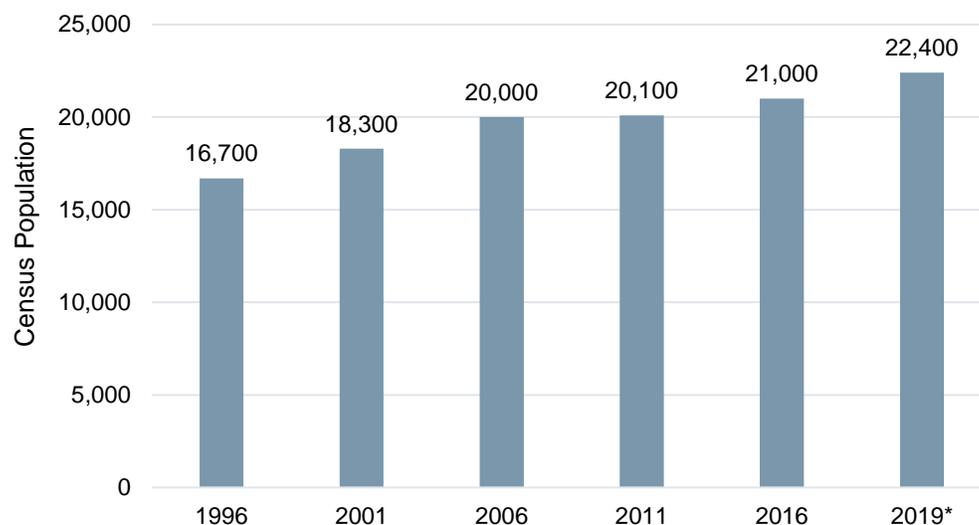
resultant goal is that there should be no incentive to appeal a by-law to the LPAT under s. 222 (4) of the *Municipal Act, 2001*.

4. Population and Growth Trends

4.1 Existing Population

Since the development of the current ward configuration in 1994, the Township's population has experienced significant growth and is expected to continue to do so over the next ten years and beyond. From 1996 when the Township's population was just over 16,700, to 2019 estimates of 22,420, the Township has grown by approximately 34% and over 5,720 people, as shown in Figure 4-1.³

Figure 4-1: Township of Oro-Medonte's Historical Population



*2019 population estimated derived from 2019 Oro-Medonte Development Charges Background Study.

Oro-Medonte is a rural community consisting of a variety of settlements of all sizes including Horseshoe Valley, Shanty Bay, and Warminster to name a few. Approximately 83% of Oro-Medonte's population resides within the different settlement areas, while 17% resides within the rural community.

³ Population figures represent Census permanent population and exclude the seasonal population.



The permanent population figures for 2016 show an imbalance of population within the current ward structure. Approximately 28% of the population of Oro-Medonte resides within Ward 1 (Horseshoe Valley, Sugarbush, and Moonstone) while the remaining four wards are generally consistent with population shares of between 16% and 19% of the total population. This population distribution, when compared to the optimal population size of 4,210 (see section 5 below), shows a population imbalance: Ward 1 is outside (above) the range at a 1.40 variance, whereas the rest fall below the average with both Wards 2 and 3 falling within 5% of the ward average.

Figure 4-2: Population Distribution by Ward (2016 est.)

Ward	2016 Population	2016 Population Variance
Ward 1	5,900	1.40
Ward 2	4,000	0.95
Ward 3	4,030	0.96
Ward 4	3,690	0.88
Ward 5	3,420	0.81
Total	21,000	-
Ward Average	4,210	-

Source: Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2021.

Note: Numbers have been rounded.

4.2 Forecast Population Growth 2021 to 2031

The Consultant Team working on this review will prepare a population forecast extending out three electoral periods from 2021 to 2031. This review will look at historical building activity from 2016 through 2021 to develop a 2021 base population estimate by community and at a sub-geographic area. The Consultant Team will review active development applications, site plans of subdivisions, and intensification opportunities within the Township to help inform and prepare accurate and credible population estimates.

It is anticipated that the Township of Oro-Medonte will grow by more than 3,500 people (17%) over the next ten-year horizon, bringing the population to approximately 27,000 permanent persons, including the net Census undercount (excludes seasonal



population).⁴ Like recent trends, a majority of this population growth is expected to occur within Horseshoe Valley and other settlement areas, with minimal growth anticipated to be dispersed throughout the rural communities.

Some residents may question the relevance and validity of future population growth as the basis for wards in 2021. This is a legitimate question since, for example, the determination of constituency boundaries for the House of Commons is always about “catching up.” The allocation of seats and the relevance of constituency boundaries is evaluated after each Census and, where there have been population changes, adjustments are made. In Ontario, however, municipalities only review the suitability of their representative bodies on a discretionary basis, meaning that councils may choose to keep the same wards in place indefinitely and the principle of “one person, one vote,” which anticipates each person’s vote would be weighted equally, is eroded.

One of the ways to keep wards in sync with population changes – in addition to establishing a policy to review boundaries on a pre-determined cycle – is to design the wards with an eye to the future. In the Oro-Medonte W.B.C.C.R., that horizon will be population forecasts for a ten-year period (that is, after two elections in 2022 and 2026 and ahead of the third scheduled municipal election in 2030). As discussed above (and in the guiding principles), anticipated population trends over that time can be determined with some confidence and will be applied in the designs. In other words, a new set of wards can be adopted that are not out-of-date the day after they are approved.

The “representation by population” guiding principle directs the Consultant Team to seek population parity in wards for the next election; that is, to move from boundaries that reflected Oro-Medonte’s population in 1994 to boundaries built around the population distribution in 2021 and beyond. Given that Oro-Medonte is expected to grow significantly over the next decade, however, some preliminary ward options will also be developed that place a higher priority on this future development than on achieving population parity based on 2021 figures. They would, in other words, reflect the change in population from 1994 out to 2031. It is important to note that in the

⁴ The Census undercount represents the net number of permanent residents who are missed (i.e. over-coverage less under-coverage) during Census enumeration in accordance with Statistics Canada. Census undercount is estimated at approximately 3.0% within Oro-Medonte.



O.M.B. Toronto ward boundary decision in 2017 which endorsed a 47-ward plan,⁵ a majority of the Board ruled that the by-law adopted by Council, built on correcting “the current population imbalance” but growing into parity “based on the anticipated further development in specific areas in the City,” was an acceptable approach. In the words of the City’s primary review consultant, “it is more appropriate to allow wards to grow towards voter parity than away from voter parity.”⁶

5. Preliminary Evaluation of the Status Quo

Whether or not a ward system can be considered successful involves evaluating how well it provides “fair and effective representation for all constituents.” Before using the guiding principles to develop alternatives to the current system, then, it is appropriate to apply the same guiding principles to the current system to determine whether it is still viable and, if not, what shortcomings need to be considered in designing alternatives.

Representation by Population

One goal of this review is to design a system of representation that achieves relative parity in the population of the wards now, with some degree of variation acceptable considering population densities and demographic factors across the Township. The indicator of success in a ward design is the extent to which all the individual wards approach an “optimal” size. Based on the Township’s overall 2016 population (21,000) and a five-ward system, the optimal population size for a ward will be 4,210.

Optimal size can be understood as a mid-point on a scale where the term “optimal” (O) describes a ward with a population within 5% on either side of the calculated optimal size. The classification “below/above optimal” (O+ or O-) is applied to a ward with a population between 6% and 25% on either side of the optimal size. A ward that is labelled “outside the range” (OR+ or OR-) indicates that its population is greater than 25% above or below the optimal ward size. The adoption of a 25% maximum variation is based on federal redistribution legislation but is widely used in municipalities like Oro-Medonte where there are urban concentrations as well as extensive rural territory and significant residential developments expected in the future.

⁵ Later overridden in July 2018 through the *Better Local Government Act, 2018*.

⁶ Ontario Municipal Board case MM170033 (December 15, 2017), para. 27.



As illustrated in Figure 4-2, the recent population data suggests that one ward (Ward 1) is well beyond the upper end of the defined range of variation and contains approximately 30% of the entire Township's population. While the remaining wards have existing populations that fall within the optimal range, the significant imbalance in Ward 1 does not allow the present wards to fully meet the parity principle.

Protection of Communities of Interest and Neighbourhoods

Electoral districts in Canada are not traditionally considered to be merely arithmetic divisions of the electorate designed to achieve parity of voting power. Rather, they are part of a system “which gives due weight to voter parity but admits other considerations where necessary” (Carter decision, page 35). One of the customary other considerations is “community of interest.” The rationale is that electoral districts should, as far as possible, be cohesive units and areas with common interests related to representation.

In the municipal context, “community of interest” is frequently linked to “neighbourhoods” since the neighbourhood is the most identifiable geographic point in most people's lives; it is where they live. More importantly, the responsibilities of the municipality are also closely associated with where people live; roads and their maintenance, the utilities that are connected to or associated with their dwelling, and the myriad of social, cultural, environmental, and recreational services are often based on residential communities. Even municipal taxation is inextricably linked to one's dwelling. Identifying such communities of interest recognizes that geographic location brings shared perspectives that should be reflected in the municipal representational process.

In most municipalities there are more communities of interest or neighbourhoods than there are electoral districts, so wards will of necessity have to be created by grouping together such building blocks for the purposes of representation. This principle addresses two perspectives: what is divided by ward boundaries, and what is joined together. Alternative ward configurations will therefore be assessed in terms of how successfully they separate or aggregate certain communities of interest into plausible units of representation. The priority is that communities ought not to be divided internally; as a rule, lines are drawn around communities, not through them. Secondly, as far as possible wards should group together communities with common interests.



With one possible exception (Ward 2), Oro-Medonte's wards are not coherent collections of communities. There are several identifiable lakefront communities from Shanty Bay to Cedarmont Beach that are located in three separate wards, each of which stretches at least 15 kilometres into the rural areas to the north. Ward 1 includes settlements at Horseshoe Valley, Sugarbush, and Moonstone, the latter separated from the others by Highway 400. From these perspectives, the present wards do not meet the community of interest principle.

Population Growth Trends

As mentioned in section 4.2 of this report, Oro-Medonte is expected to grow by over 3,500 permanent residents bringing the population to 27,000. A majority of this growth will be concentrated within the existing settlement areas, particularly those that fall within Ward 1. Ward 1, which is already above the average in its existing conditions, will continue to develop and these trends indicate that the present ward system in Oro-Medonte will not successfully accommodate future population growth in wards that are compatible with this principle.

Geographical and Topographical Features as Boundaries

Most of the north-south ward boundary lines in Oro-Medonte are road allowances between numbered concessions, although there are some more prominent features (such as a small stretch of Highway 400 and Bass Lake Sideroad). Local roads themselves are not used as the boundaries.

The exception to these straight lines is the boundary between Ward 1 and Ward 3 that follows the irregular Third Line North between Bass Lake Road and Horseshoe Valley Road. Most of the ward boundaries do not meet this principle but there are some exceptions.

Effective Representation

The principle of effective representation is not based on the performance of incumbent councillors. It is, rather, a concept that is premised on the on-going relationship between residents and elected officials – not just on the way the resident is “counted” on election day, although that is an important component of a fair system of representation. Are the individual wards each plausible and coherent units of representation? Are they drawn in such a way that representatives can readily play the



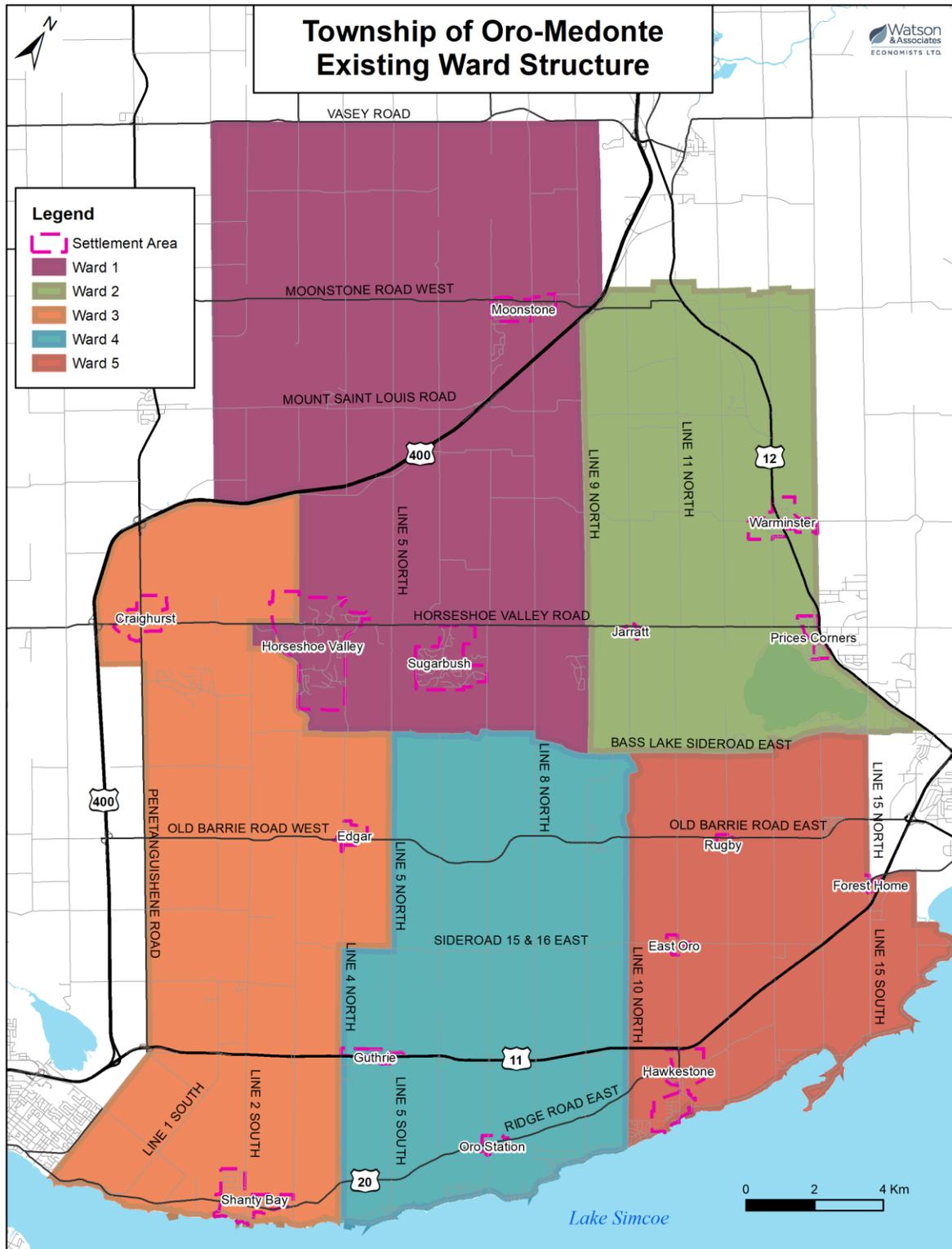
role expected of them? Do they provide equitable (that is, fair) access to councillors for all residents of the municipality?

No ward design is likely to meet all the principles in their entirety; however, the best designs maximize adherence to the principles, especially in relation to representation by population and effective representation. As noted earlier, deviations from the specific principles can be justified by other Carter decision criteria in a manner that is more supportive of effective representation.

On the whole, Oro-Medonte's present wards, as shown in Figure 5-1, come close to achieving effective representation for 2022, although population imbalances and the very large geographic size of Ward 1 undermine the achievement of this principle, as does the mix of communities in most wards and the potential impact of future residential development. These are all challenges that can be met in a ward boundary review to make effective representation stronger in Oro-Medonte.



Figure 5-1: Existing Ward Structure





Summary

The current system meets some of the ward boundary review principles but is less certain to do so as the Township's population continues to grow.

Principle	Does the Current Ward Structure Meet the Respective Principle?	Comment
Representation by Population	Somewhat successful	One ward is well outside the acceptable range of variation.
Protection of Communities of Interest and Neighbourhoods	No	Four wards are a mixed collection of communities, lakefront divided into three parts.
Population Growth Trends	No	The Township's population is forecast to grow over the next decade which is expected to contribute to uneven population distributions.
Geographical and Topographic Features as Natural Boundaries	Somewhat successful	Most markers used as boundaries of the wards are straight lines, although they follow road allowances rather than visible markers.
Effective Representation	Somewhat successful	Effective representation is hindered by some uneven population distributions and an uneven mix of communities and settlement areas.