

Municipality of Port Hope 2025 Ward Boundary & Council Composition Review

Backgrounder

Discussion Paper A: Understanding The Current System

Background

The Municipality of Port Hope has engaged Watson & Associates Economists Ltd. and Dr. Robert J. Williams, known as the Consultant Team, to take a close look at how its local government is set up. This includes:

- ward boundaries and how council members are elected,
- how many council members there are, and
- whether the Deputy Mayor should be elected directly by voters.

The main goal of this study is to help Port Hope Council decide whether to keep the current governance structure or modify it. Some key questions to consider are:

- Should Council consider changing the size of Council (council composition) and the way its members are elected?
- Should Council consider dissolving the wards to elect all councillors at-large (in what the *Municipal Act, 2001* calls a “general vote” system) or to modify its present two-ward configuration?
- If the ward system is maintained, what guiding principles will be observed when designing the wards?

The goal is to make sure the system is fair, effective and reflects the needs of the community.

Setting

The Municipality of Port Hope was formed on January 1, 2001, following a Ministerial Restructuring Order issued on March 28, 2000. This order combined the former Town of Port Hope and the Township of Hope into one new corporation, eventually named the Municipality of Port Hope. The municipality is one of seven lower-tier municipalities in the County of Northumberland and is represented on the County Council by the Mayor.



The Ministerial Order stated that the new municipal Council would have seven members:

- one Mayor (referred to as “the head of council” in the Order) elected by general vote and,
- six councillors, elected from two wards
 - Ward 1 elects 4 councillors
 - Ward 2 elects 2 councillors

The ward boundaries were established in 2000 by the Restructuring Order to match the boundaries of the pre-amalgamation municipalities and have not been altered since. The Order specified that a deputy head of council “shall be appointed by the council . . . from among its members.”

For the purposes of his review, it is important to note that while the Ministerial Order states that “Each member of the council of the new town shall have one vote,” it also specifies that “the two members of council from Ward Two shall each have two votes on council for matters relating to approvals under the Planning Act, tax rate adjustments arising out of the restructuring ... and boundary adjustments.”

This arrangement seems to be unique among lower-tier municipalities in Ontario, and its application and implications will be examined by the Consultant Team as part of their review of Port Hope’s governance structure.

What The Review Will Look At

Based on the motion of Council that authorized this review and its own experience in undertaking council composition and ward boundary reviews, the Consultant Team will explore:

- Does the current system, where councillors are elected in two wards, give everyone fair and effective representation?
- Is having a different number of councillors in each ward fair?
- Would an electoral system in which the Deputy Mayor is elected by a general vote provide improved leadership?



What's Coming Next

Port Hope will release a series of short Discussion Papers on its website to help residents understand the different topics being considered in this review:

- ***Discussion Paper A: Understanding The Current System***
- **Discussion Paper B: How Big Should Council Be?**
- **Discussion Paper C: The Component Parts of the Port Hope Council**
- **Discussion Paper D: The Method of Election for Councillors**
- **Discussion Paper E: Guiding Principles to Design Wards**
- **Discussion Paper F: Why a Ward Boundary Review?**

Your input is essential. These papers are here to inform and invite your feedback. Help shape the future of Port Hope's local government.