



City of Burlington

Council Composition and Ward Boundary Review Interim Update

December 2024

Summary

Composition of Council



- The minimum size for the council of a local municipality in Ontario is five, “one of whom shall be the head of council”
- No clear principles at play, no “standards” and no formulas to apply in determining the appropriate size of Council
- City of Burlington council is composed of 7 members, 2 above the minimum
- The composition of local councils in Ontario varies widely.

Context

Council Size across Halton Region



Municipality	2021 Population	Area (sq.km)	Council Members	Avg. Population per Member	Election Format
Burlington	186,948	187.71	7 Total Members Mayor 6 Local & Regional Councillors	26,707	6 Wards Each ward elects one councillor who serves on both the regional and local council
Halton Hills	62,951	276.81	11 Total Members Mayor 2 Regional Councillors 8 Local Councillors	4,905	4 Wards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Councillors elected in two Wards Each ward also elects two local councillors
Milton	132,979	363.83	9 Total Members Mayor 4 Regional Councillors 4 Local Councillors	14,775	4 Wards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each ward elects a regional and local councillor
Oakville	213,759	138.94	15 Total Members Mayor 7 Regional Councillors 7 Local Councillors	14,251	7 Wards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each ward elects a regional and local councillor
Average	149,159	241.82	11	15,159	-

Focus On Burlington

Composition of Council



- Burlington's City Council is unique in Ontario:
 - the six councillors (plus the Mayor) constitute the entire governing body for the City;
 - the six councillors (plus the Mayor) are all members of the governing body of a second municipality (the Region of Halton); and
 - the Mayor has assigned responsibilities to all six councillors to serve as a Deputy Mayor for particular "portfolios"
 - Council members also serve on several local and regional agencies, boards and commissions.

Guiding Principles to Design Wards



A **ward-based** electoral system should address these core principles/guidelines:

REPRESENTATION BY POPULATION



Efforts should be made to ensure that wards have reasonably equal populations. Ward population sizes need to be balanced to achieve effective representation. Population variance should strive to be no greater than 15%, but an accepted variance can be as high as 25%.

PROJECTED DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS



Revised ward boundaries should accommodate projected growth patterns for the next 3-4 election cycles.

GEOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION



Revised ward boundaries should follow Burlington's natural boundaries, road allowances and physical features where feasible.

COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST



Efforts should be made to avoid splitting neighbourhoods or communities of interest into different wards, considering community history, minority representation, and geography when generating ward boundary options.

ENSURING EFFECTIVE REPRESENTATION



The four articulated principles contribute to achieving the over-arching principle of effective representation.

Existing Ward System - Evaluation

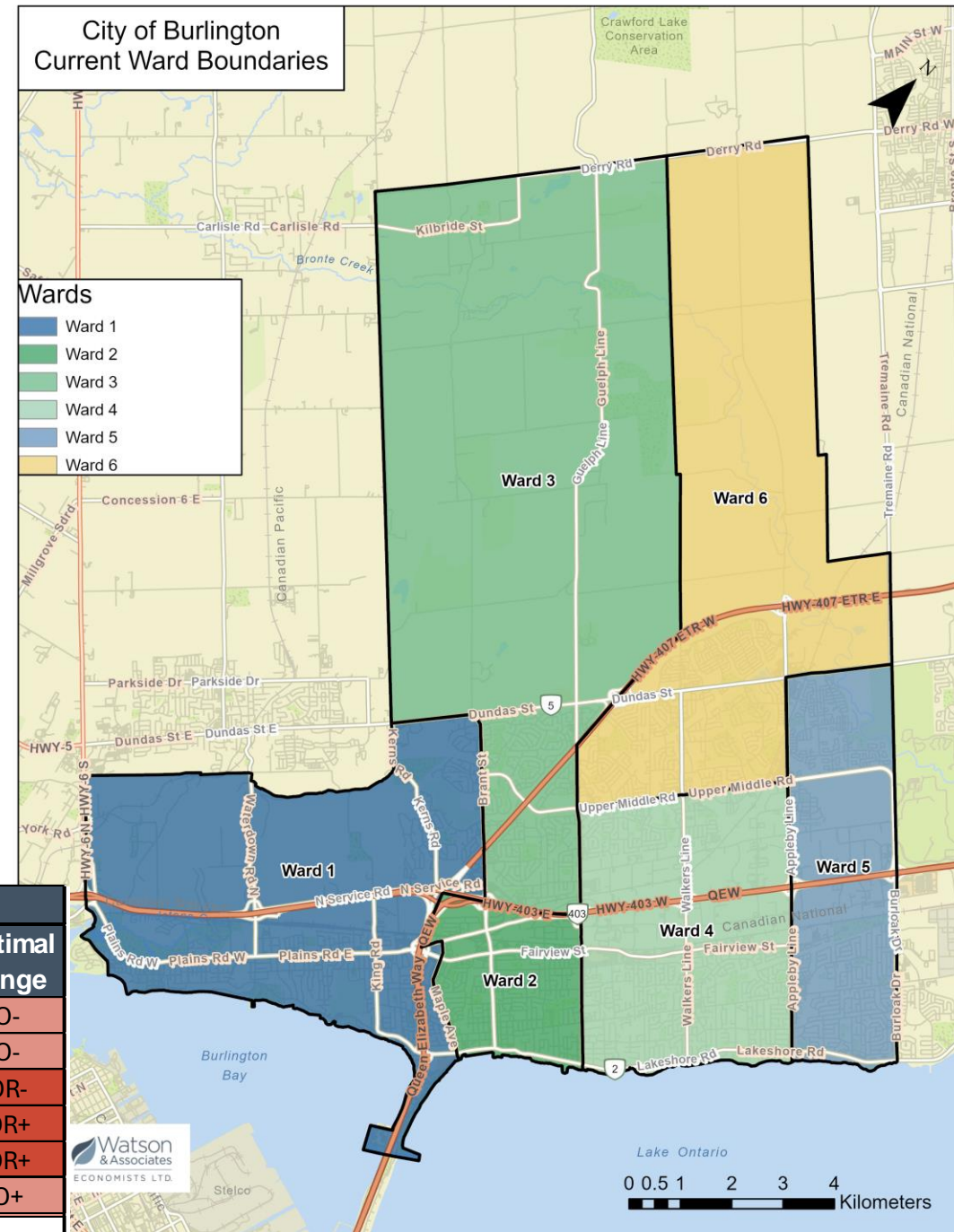
Principle	Does the Current Ward Structure Meet the Respective Principle?	Comment
Representation by Population	No	Three wards are outside the acceptable range of variation; the difference between the largest and smallest is 12,944 residents.
Future Population Trends	No	The population disparity between the present wards will likely increase as development in and around urban transit corridors intensifies.
Communities of Interest	Largely Successful	Current ward boundaries comfortably contain single, identifiable communities of interest, although much of the rural population of the City is spread out through three wards.
Geographic Representation	Largely Successful	The most significant physical barrier (the QEW) is used inconsistently.
Effective Representation	Partially Successful	Effective representation is hindered by uneven population distribution in 2024 that is expected to worsen over time.

The degree to which each guiding principle is satisfied is ranked as:

- “Yes” (fully satisfied);
- “Largely Successful”;
- “Partially Successful”; OR
- “No” (not satisfied)

O	±5% of the Optimal (Average) Population
O-	±5%-15% of the Optimal (Average) Population
OR-	>±15% of the Optimal (Average) Population

Ward	Area (SqKm)	2021		
		Population	Population Variance	Optimal Range
Ward 1	35.4	28,542	0.92	O-
Ward 2	8.2	26,785	0.86	O-
Ward 3	65.9	23,692	0.76	OR-
Ward 4	21.7	36,441	1.17	OR+
Ward 5	15.8	36,049	1.16	OR+
Ward 6	40.7	35,439	1.14	O+
Total/Average	187.7	186,948	31,158	



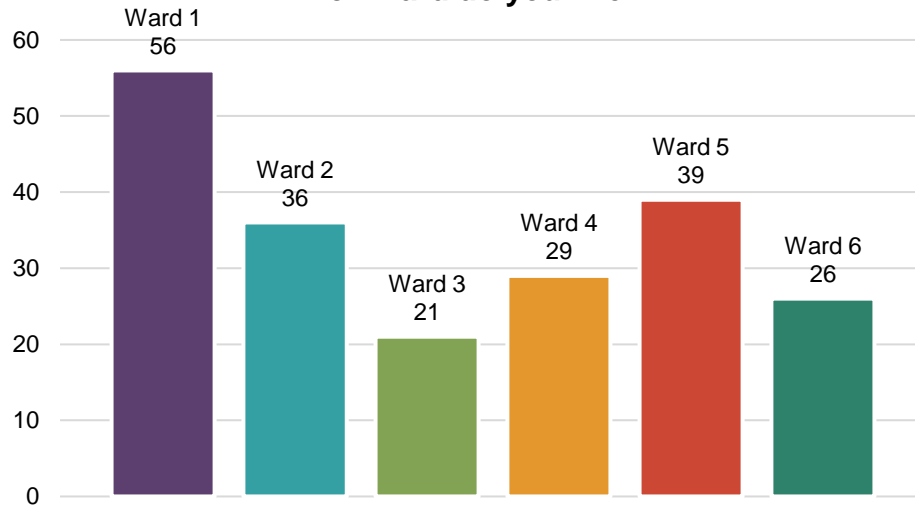
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What we Heard

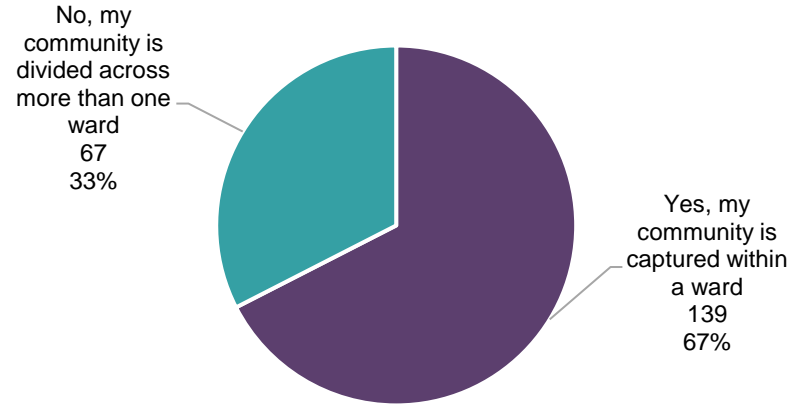
216 Total Responses



Which ward do you live in?



Do the boundaries of the ward you live in capture all of your community?



Strengths and Weaknesses of the Current Boundaries in your ward?

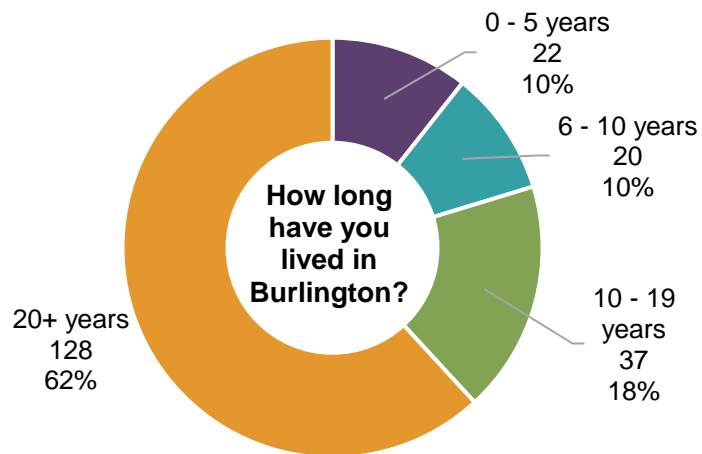
Strengths

- Communities and neighbourhoods in the ward are similar and connected (76)
- I know who my Councillor is (152)
- I know where the ward's boundaries are (95)
- It is the right size (65)
- It has the right number of residents (66)

Weaknesses

- Communities and neighbourhoods are spread out over multiple wards (54)
- The ward's area is too large (43)
- It has too many residents for one Councillor to cover (55)

How long have you lived in Burlington?

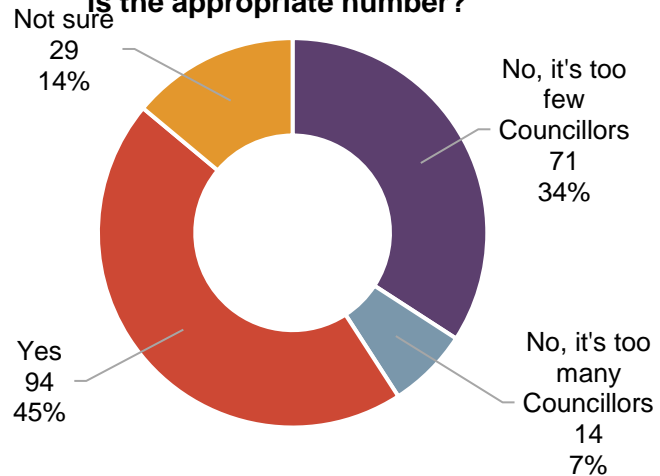


What we Heard

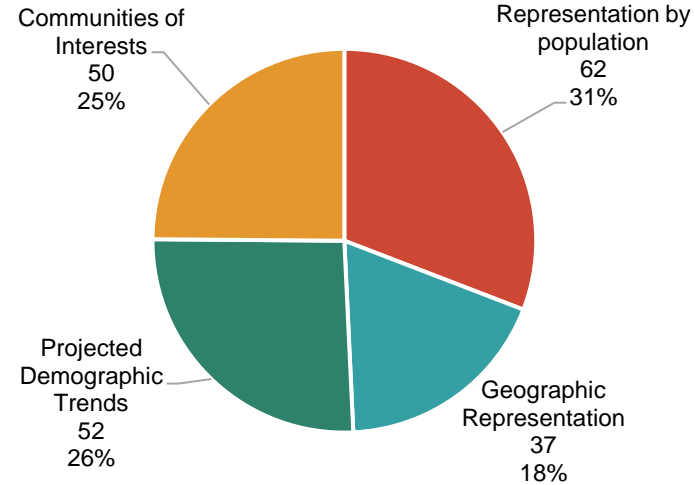
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With Councillors representing approximately 31,000 constituents per ward, do you feel a six-ward system with six Councillors and one Mayor is the appropriate number?



Please indicate the ONE guiding principle you believe should be given the greatest priority to ensure effective voter representation.



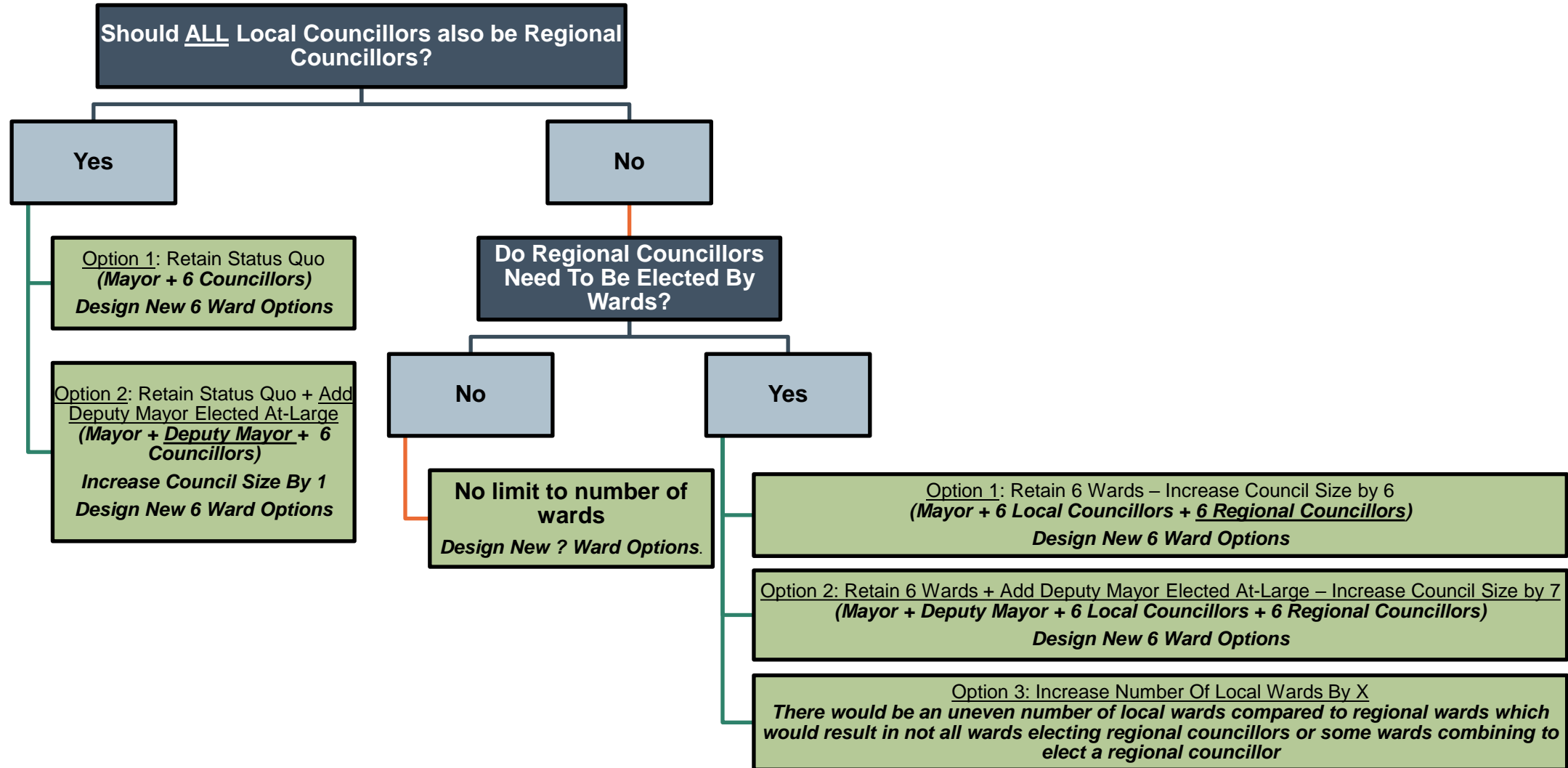
Other things we heard.....

- Some felt that the size of council was too small and councillors had too many obligations placed upon their time, from sitting on both local and regional council and participating in the work of various agencies, boards, and commissions. Conversely, other respondents argued that Burlington Council is the right size, and they feel well represented.
- The importance of communities of interest principle, with some worrying that differing community needs within wards may not be adequately addressed if changes to the ward boundaries or composition were explored (e.g., Wards 3 and 6 both have rural and urban communities).
- Worry about future growth, namely from the Major Transit Station Areas (M.T.S.A.s) within the City of Burlington and the importance of prioritizing the projected demographic trends principle in this review.

Alternative Council Composition Configurations

Questions to be Answered

Composition of Council



Questions to be Answered

Composition of Council 1996

City Council adopted the following two principles regarding representation:

I) The Mayor should be one of the City of Burlington's representatives on Regional Council

II) That Regional Councilors from the City of Burlington should sit on both City and Regional Councils

THAT there be one Alderman per ward in the City of Burlington

THAT of the seven (7) representatives from the City of Burlington sitting on Regional Councils one (1) shall be the Mayor ...and that the balance of the Council of the City of Burlington be composed of six (6) members who are elected by ward

Question	Decision	Next Steps
<i>Should All Local Councillors Also Be Regional Councillors?</i>	Yes	The Consultant Team will explore alternative ward designs using six wards that adhere to the guiding principles. These alternative designs, including the possibility of directly electing the deputy mayor, will be put to the public during the second phase of consultation.
	No	Council will need to decide whether Regional councillors need to be elected by wards. Subsequent action by the Consultant Team will depend on Council direction.
<i>Do Regional Councillors Need to be Elected by Wards?</i>	No	The Consultant Team will study the composition of council, designing new wards based upon assessment of the optimal number of councillors for Burlington, including the design of how to elect Regional councillors.
	Yes	The Consultant Team will explore three options. The first keeps six wards, with voters in each ward electing a Regional and local councillor for a total of 13 members of council (including the mayor). The second has the same composition but introduces an elected deputy mayor. The third explores an increase of wards, with Regional councillors being elected in some but not all or elected through a combination of wards.



Questions?