



Greater St. Albert
Catholic Schools

Electoral Ward Boundary Review

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED

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November 7, 2024

Introduction

In May 2024 the consultant submitted a scope and sequence proposal to the Board of Trustees for review and consideration. The Proposal outlined a three Phase review. Moving from one Phase to the next required a clear direction from the Board.

Phase I consisted of an initial assessment of the review process with an overview of the legal aspects of the review with an emphasis on equitable representation based on federal, provincial and local government review guidelines.

Phase II proposed the commencement of a population review of the populations areas that are contained within the legal boundaries of the division.

Phase III the population data were examined through the lens of the representation by population distribution model.

Phase IV at the direction of the Board public meetings would be held as specified by the Board. An online consultation portal was created to garner public input.

The consultant was invited to an online meeting with the Board in June to review the review process in Phase 1. The Board directed the consultant to proceed with Phases II and III. This work was done over July and August by conducting a thorough review of the provincial municipal affairs population data. The initial findings were presented to the Board in September. Further review of the population data was confirmed by contact with respective municipal government offices.

In mid-September The Board upon review the revised population data directed the consultant to proceed to Phase IV and plan for and attend the public engagement sessions. Public meetings were held in St. Albert on October 23, Legal on October 24 and in Morinville on October 29, 2024. As mentioned a community portal was open to the public for a three-week period closing October 31, 2024.

Throughout the entire review process the consultant would like to express his earnest appreciation to the Board of Trustees for their guidance and clarity of purpose, and the Senior Administration and staff for their adherence to the direction of the Board and the support they provided in making available all necessary documents and information as requested.

Overview of Public Consultation

In Phase IV the direction to the consultant was to prepare a summary of the findings and provide a non-binding recommendation.

As previously stated, three public meetings were held in each of the three Wards.

Approximately 18 constituents attended in person and 101 responded on line. For the purposes of the report they shall remain anonymous.

At each of the in-person meetings participants had the opportunity to respond to a Status Quo consideration and three options that were available for discussion.

For Consideration: Maintain the Status Quo (7 trustees with 3 wards) This option preserves the current structure of 7 trustees representing 3 wards, 4 Trustees for St Albert, 2 trustees for Morinville and 1 Trustee for Legal

- **Pros:** Stability and continuity in representation.
- **Cons:** Some Wards far exceed or fall short of ideal representation levels.

Option A: 7 Trustees (5 trustees in one ward, 2 trustees in another ward)

- **Pros:** Keeps 7 trustees with adjusted boundaries for better population representation.
- **Cons:** Some areas remain below the ideal population per trustee.

Option B: 6 Trustees (4 Trustees in Ward One St. Albert, 2 Trustees for the combined Ward 2 Morinville and Ward 3 Legal)

- **Pros:** Reduces Trustees while maintaining reasonable representation.
- **Cons:** Large population differences across wards.

Option C: 6 Trustees (5 trustees in Ward One St. Albert, 1 Trustee for the combined Ward 2 Morinville and Ward 3 Legal)

- **Pros:** Adjust the boundaries for better population distribution.
- **Cons:** Fewer trustees may reduce representation in some areas.

All participants were also given the opportunity to express themselves on the following value statements.

“How important is it to you that the ward boundaries are changed to reflect population growth and community identity?”

Very Important	36.6%	37
Somewhat Important	22.8%	23
Neutral	17.8%	18
Not Important	20.8%	21
Not Sure	2.0%	2
TOTAL		101

Observation: Approximately 60% of respondents recognize population growth.

“What are the most important factors in deciding trustee ward boundaries for you? (Select all that apply)”

Ensuring each trustee represents a similar number of residents	37.6%	38
Preserving community identity	48.5%	49
Maintaining equitable representation	41.6%	42
Simplicity and clarity of boundaries	21.8%	22
Other (please specify)	8.9%	9
TOTAL		101

Observation: In essence the community understands the concept of “similar number of residents” and “equitable representation” combined at 79%.

The participants we asked to state their preference for the Options A, B, and C as presented with a remain at **status quo consideration**.

“Which option do you support most for future trustee representation?”

Maintain the Status Quo (7 trustees with 3 wards)	54.6%	57
Option A (7 Trustees, 5 in one ward, 2 in another)	21.8%	22
Option B (6 Trustees, 4 in one ward, 2 in another)	7.9%	8
Option C (6 Trustees, 5 in one ward, 1 in another)	13.9%	14
TOTAL		101

Observation: The numbers speak for themselves so let us accept this on face value. However, we are reminded that the very act of review suggested that the status quo has over time and with continued growth, becoming problematic.

The distribution and disparity of Trustees to constituents within the context of representation by population is increasing. The Board of Trustee is to be commended in undertaking this review on behalf of the citizens of their Wards and in adhering to the same level of examination as do all branches of government.

The verbatim comments by the participants are available to the Board of Trustees in which respondents express themselves freely. The consultant has only redacted language that was undignified.

Recommendation and Rationale

Option C: (6 Trustees with 5 Trustees in Ward One St Albert and 1 Trustee for the combined Ward 2 and 3 Morinville and Legal). This option follows the mathematical model as presented throughout the process with the Ward populations fall within the 25% +/- thus each Trustee represents an average of 15,050 constituents within the band of 11,287 to 18,812. It is acknowledged that this option introduces the notion of an even number of Trustees when it come to voting on motions.

Option A: 7 Trustees with 5 in Ward One St Albert and 2 Trustee for the combined Ward 2 and 3 Morinville and Legal. As we will remember the word “practicable” we acknowledge that Board had some latitude in its consideration of local context. A fifth Trustee for St Alberta reduces their average represent by population from a current 18,607 to 14,886 and may assist in the assignment of the number of schools each Trustee would have oversight.

The representation by population in the combined Wards 2 and 3 would be 8,000 and thus slightly below the -25% band of 9,675.

Option B: 6 Trustees with 4 in Ward One and 2 in combined Wards 2 and 3 Morinville and Legal.

This option does not adequately address the high representation by population ratio for Ward One Trustees and only modestly increases representation currently in Ward Two from 7,000 to 8,000 and Ward Three from 2,000 to 8,000 both below the band range.

Status Quo Consideration: Remaining with the status quo remains before the Board should any of the above recommendations fail to gain a majority vote.

Appendices:

1. [On Line Survey Responses](#)
2. [In Person Placemat responses](#) (Embargoed at this time)