

The word "HALIFAX" is written in a bold, white, sans-serif font against a dark blue background. The background features a large, abstract geometric shape that resembles a stylized 'H' or a series of overlapping triangles in various shades of blue.

2022 District Boundary Review Phase One Final Report

May 30, 2022 Executive Standing Committee

Phase One - Scope

Phase One is to:

- Review Council Governance structure;
- Provide rationale for the number of councillors and polling districts for HRM

What is required for:

- Effective political management?
- Effective representation?
- Accountability?

Phase Two - Scope

Phase Two is to:

- Review the distribution of polling districts within HRM in accordance with section 368 (4) of the MGA
- Considers the number of electors, relative parity of voting power, population density, communities of interest, and geographic size
- Public Engagement will be led by District Boundary Resident Review Panel

Phase One Process



Council approval of Two Phased study approach recommended by NSUARB and designation of Executive Standing Committee to oversee Phase One
December 14, 2021



Approval of the public engagement process by Executive Standing Committee
February 28 and March 28, 2022



Public and Council Consultation
April 6 to May 4, 2022



Submission of final report to Regional Council on Phase One by Executive Standing Committee
May 30, 2022

Public Consultation



Online survey developed by
Narrative Research - 1166
completed responses



Public Information meetings
hosted by Community
Council

April 19 – 28, 2022



Correspondence submitted
to Executive Standing
Committee

Interviews with Members of Council

- Qualitative interviews conducted by Narrative Research on Phase One
- Additional information included by staff on Councillor workload
 - Number of meetings from 2018 to 2021: 742
 - Number of reports considered from 2018 to 2021: 1219
- Councillor Support Office survey on reported daily activities

Number of Polling Districts and Councillors

- The public submissions on the number of districts in the “What We Heard” report support a recommendation of 16 districts within the HRM.
- This recommendation is supported by data provided on current and projected populations for the HRM and a jurisdictional scan of comparable Canadian cities on representation
- Rapid increases in HRM’s population will have an impact on future Boundary Review studies

Governance Structure

- Information on HRM's current governance structure informed the survey and community council presentations
- Residents were asked whether the existing governance structure is accessible, allows for effective decision making and representation for residents or their districts
- Only focused on current governance structure and did not examine individual committees
- Feedback in the "What we Heard" report does not support changes to the current governance structure

Electoral Reform Items

- The NSUARB does not have jurisdiction to amend legislation or to consider proposals that are not enabled under the current legislative framework.
- This includes legislation such as the HRM Charter, the Municipal Elections Act (MEA) or the MGA.
- Items such as voter eligibility, designated electoral districts for certain groups, and councillor nomination requirements require legislative amendments and a comprehensive policy assessment to support the legislative request.

Items identified

- The inclusion of designated or protected seats for specific groups (African Nova Scotian, Francophonie, Indigenous representation)
- Reducing the voting age to 16 years of age
- Extending voting and candidacy rights landed immigrants/new Canadians
- The use of a ranked ballot or run-off ballot system
- Adding Permanent Residents to the list of electors to vote in municipal elections

Next Steps



Consideration of ESC report on Phase One by Halifax Regional Council – June 14, 2022



Phase Two begins to review the distribution of polling districts within HRM in accordance with section 368 (4) of the MGA led by District Boundary Resident Review Panel



Public consultation activities commence for Phase Two – September 2022

Next Steps Continued



Final report from resident panel to ESC on Phase Two must be submitted November 28, 2022



Consideration of Phase Two findings and ESC recommendation by Regional Council – December 2022



Submission of 2022 District Boundary application to NSUARB by December 31, 2022



NSUARB to hold public hearings on HRM Boundary Review application in 2023 and render a decision

Recommendation

It is recommended that to complete Phase One of the District Boundary Review, the Executive Standing Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council:

1. Confirm the number of polling districts and the number of councillors at sixteen to be applied to Phase Two of the 2022 District Boundary Review;
2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to return to Council with a report on the potential electoral reforms set out in the body of this report, including any necessary legislative amendments

Questions?

