

2015 federal campaign underway

ELECTION PREVIEW

By Leah Wong

With the federal election officially underway candidates from all parties are starting to knock on doors as they seek to earn the support of voters.

Though nominations are open until September 29, the parties have determined the majority of their candidates within Toronto's 25 ridings, and election signs are starting to go up.

Toronto is an important battleground for all the parties and was recently called "Canada's most important city" by NDP leader **Thomas Mulcair**. Prime Minister **Stephen Harper** and Liberal leader **Justin Trudeau** are also paying careful attention to campaigns in the city. The 2011 election resulted in the Liberal Party losing 14 of the 20 seats it held prior to parliament being dissolved—with nine being picked up by the Conservative Party and six by the NDP.

This election is the first time the newly reconfigured federal electoral district boundaries will be used, which added three seats to Toronto. While all of Toronto's current MPs are seeking re-election, the boundary changes have left three races open—Don Valley East, Scarborough-Rouge Park and Toronto Centre.

Current Don Valley East MP **Joe Daniel** is the Conservative nominee in Don Valley North, leaving

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Toronto reviews ward boundaries

IMPROVING VOTER PARITY

By Leah Wong

The city is seeking feedback from residents on options for the reconfiguration of Toronto ward boundaries to improve voter parity. The realignment of wards to achieve similar population-to-councillor ratios across the city also offers an opportunity to enhance councillors' capacity to represent their constituents.

As a result of Toronto's growth some wards have had a significant increase in population since the existing boundaries were drawn in 2000, while others have remained stable. According to the 2011 census, ward populations ranged from 88,435 in Ward 23 Willowdale to 44,935 in Ward 29 Toronto-Danforth.

"It is a good move to ensure people have representation they can access and that the democratic process is fairer," Ward 27 Toronto Centre-Rosedale councillor **Kristyn Wong-Tam** told *NRU*. Ward 27 is the second most populated ward in the city. "We have more people living downtown, but fewer votes on council."

To address the imbalance in population, the consulting team, comprising **Beate Bowron Etcetera**, **Canadian Urban Institute**, **The Davidson Group** and

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IMPROVING VOTER PARITY

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Thomas Ostler, have put forward [five distinct options](#).

Each option comes with a different number of wards citywide ranging from 38 to 58 based on the target population per ward. The “small wards” option seeks to reduce the population of wards to 50,000 people, requiring 58 councillors, while the “large wards” option has a target of 75,000 people requiring just 38 councillors.

All of the options seek to achieve effective representation, which balances factors such as voter parity, natural/physical boundaries, geographic communities of interest, ward history, capacity to represent, geographic size and shape of the ward and population growth. The options take into account the city’s population growth to 2025, a Census year, and the number of constituents a councillor can effectively represent. The consultants also considered comments from residents in the first round of consultation.

“Keeping communities of interest is one of the very important criteria that we take into consideration because you shouldn’t split [these] communities if at all possible,” said Bowron. However, she said some neighbourhoods, such as Jane and Finch and Don Mills, are too large and must be split between multiple wards.

Many wards under Toronto’s current system have boundaries that date back before amalgamation. While the consultants felt it was important to recognize ward history, it should not outweigh other criteria such as voter parity or natural and physical boundaries.

For councillors representing the city’s largest wards, rejigging the boundaries so population is more evenly distributed among wards has the added benefit of reducing or reprioritizing workloads.

“Currently [councillors] have very similar staff allocations and the same office budget, despite the fact that I have, almost twice the population of the smaller wards,” said Ward 27 Toronto Centre-Rosedale councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam. “Having the wards distributed based on the number of people living in the ward will create a more equitable workload. That is a good thing as it means residents will be better served.”

At the time of the 2011 census 78,760 people were living in Ward 27, making it the second largest ward in the city. By the 2018 election, when the new boundaries will be used there will be 94,597 living in Ward 27.

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Current Toronto Wards by Population

- Ward 23 Willowdale: 88,435
- Ward 27 Toronto Centre-Rosedale: 78,760
- Ward 42 Scarborough-Rouge River: 77,675
- Ward 20 Trinity-Spadina: 76,600
- Ward 41 Scarborough-Rouge River: 68,145
- Ward 38 Scarborough Centre: 66,830
- Ward 28 Toronto Centre-Rosedale: 66,585
- Ward 22 St. Paul’s: 65,515
- Ward 26 Don Valley West: 64,910
- Ward 10 York Centre: 64,830
- Ward 37 Scarborough Centre: 64,345
- Ward 5 Etobicoke-Lakeshore: 64,015
- Ward 35 Scarborough Southwest: 62,445
- Ward 11 York South-Weston: 62,385
- Ward 24 Willowdale: 62,355
- Ward 15 Eglinton-Lawrence: 62,050
- Ward 40 Scarborough-Agincourt: 62,030
- Ward 1 Etobicoke North: 61,315
- Ward 44 Scarborough East: 60,240
- Ward 34 Don Valley East: 59,430
- Average: 59,385**
- Ward 6 Etobicoke-Lakeshore: 58,995
- Ward 25 Don Valley West: 58,315
- Ward 33 Don Valley East: 57,150
- Ward 32 Beaches-East York: 57,365
- Ward 19 Trinity-Spadina: 57,240
- Ward 2 Etobicoke North: 56,725
- Ward 43 Scarborough East: 55,130
- Ward 39 Scarborough-Agincourt: 54,975
- Ward 12 York South-Weston: 54,005
- Ward 16 Eglinton-Lawrence: 53,985
- Ward 14 Parkdale-High Park: 53,765
- Ward 4 Etobicoke Centre: 53,640
- Ward 31 Beaches-East York: 53,570
- Ward 30 Toronto-Danforth: 53,290
- Ward 13 Parkdale-High Park: 53,270
- Ward 36 Scarborough Southwest: 52,855
- Ward 3 Etobicoke Centre: 52,230
- Ward 7 York West: 52,085
- Ward 17 Davenport: 50,510
- Ward 8 York West: 50,340
- Ward 21 St. Paul’s: 48,640
- Ward 9 York Centre: 46,040
- Ward 18 Davenport: 44,970
- Ward 29 Toronto-Danforth: 44,935

SOURCE: 2011 CENSUS

IMPROVING VOTER PARITY

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All of the options presented increase the number of wards in downtown, which would more evenly distribute the workload for councillors in Toronto's fastest growing area. While ward population is determined solely by the number of residents, Wong-Tam noted that she also represents a large business community in her ward.

Even when she can fit in 12-14 meetings a day, Wong-Tam said her office faces a bottleneck in dealing with resident concerns. Most of the proposed options suggest lower numbers of residents than currently reside in Ward 27.

"It should allow us to engage with our residents more fully and more frequently," said Wong-Tam. "Right now getting to my desk is challenging because there is just so many people living and working here."

What is not presented in the five options are boundaries that align with federal and provincial ridings. Toronto will have 25 ridings in the upcoming federal election, up from the 22 that were used to configure the current municipal wards.

The consultants found there was little public interest in having just 25 councillors representing large numbers of people. While the public expressed interest in having the 25 ridings split in two, similar to the current system, this option has also not been put forward. Looking to population projections for 2026, Bowron said splitting federal ridings in two would continue to perpetuate the imbalances presently seen across the city.

While the federal ridings, for the most part, reflect voter parity across ridings, in many cases there simply isn't a logical way to divide the ridings into two equal sized wards. This is an issue under the current ward boundaries. For example as of 2011, Ward 22 St. Paul's had a population of 65,515, while its other half, Ward 21 St. Paul's only has 48,640. Though there has been intensification in both wards, there has been more development within the boundaries of Ward 22, which captures the section of Yonge Street between Eglinton and the rail line south of the Summerhill subway station.

"Using the [federal boundaries] and dividing them in half did not achieve effective representation," said Bowron. "The voter parity was not good enough to solve any of the issues that are happening today."

The five options will be presented at 12 public meetings held across the city between mid-September and late October and

the consultant team will be meeting with council members to discuss the options. The team is also collecting feedback through an [online survey](#).

Through these consultations the consultants are seeking comments on residents' preferred options and the specific boundaries of each ward. Bowron said the consultants expect residents will alert them to boundaries that cut through communities of interest of which they are not aware.

As with the first round of consultation Bowron expects a lot of comments will be made that are outside of the scope of the review. In the last consultation issues were raised concerning how community councils function and their varied volume of work. Bowron said the consultants are compiling these comments separately from the review and will submit them to city staff. [nru](#)



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