

# City of Vaughan 2024-25 Ward Boundary and Council Composition Review Backgrounder

## Discussion Paper A: Vaughan's Electoral System

### Background

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The City of Vaughan has retained Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., John Miller of ICA Associates Inc., Dr. Robert J. Williams, and Dr. Zachary Spicer, hereinafter referred to as the Consultant Team, to conduct a comprehensive and independent Ward Boundary and Council Composition Review.

The primary purpose of the study is to prepare City Council to make decisions on whether to maintain the existing ward configuration and council size or to adopt an alternative. Matters that are integral to a comprehensive review include the following:

- Is it appropriate to consider dissolving the wards to elect all councillors at-large (in what the *Municipal Act, 2001* calls a “general vote” system)?
- Is it appropriate to consider changing the composition of council (its size and/or how council is elected) as part of the review?
- If councillors will continue to be elected in wards, what guiding principles will be observed in the design of the wards?

This Ward Boundary Review is premised on the legitimate democratic expectation that municipal representation in Vaughan on election day and throughout the term of Council will be effective, equitable, and an accurate reflection of the contemporary distribution of communities and people across the municipality.

### Setting

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The City of Vaughan was established under provincial legislation at the beginning of 1972 as a lower-tier municipality in the Regional Municipality of York. The new municipality was originally called the Town of Vaughan, but it achieved City status in 1991. The present municipality is an amalgamation of portions of the Townships of King and Vaughan and the Village of Woodbridge. As part of the amalgamation, the former police villages of Maple and Thornhill were dissolved.

Vaughan is currently governed by a 10-member Council, composed of a mayor, four regional councillors (the regional councillor who receives the most votes serves as the



deputy mayor for the term) and five local councillors (local councillors sit exclusively on Vaughan Council) who are elected in five wards (one per ward). Although the municipality began with all members of Council elected at-large, a ward system was established in 1985. The configuration was modified in an Ontario Municipal Board order in 1994, from three wards electing a total of five councillors to five wards each electing one councillor. A by-law following a staff-run ward boundary review was appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board in 2009. The current ward boundaries date from the 2009 Board order. Some minor boundary changes were approved before the 2000 and 2006 municipal elections.

## **Topical Discussion Papers B to D**

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Discussion Papers will be available to residents, each addressing one of the topics to be considered in this review:

- Discussion Paper B – What is the Optimal Size for a Municipal Council?
- Discussion Paper C – The Component Parts of Vaughan’s Council
- Discussion Paper D – Guiding Principles to Design Wards