

ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY

CITY OF TORONTO WARD BOUNDARY REVIEW

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THE PROBLEM The disparity in the populations of the City of Toronto's wards is large and increasing. This undermines equality of electoral representation, residents' access to councilors, and the quality of constituency services provided by councilors. All councillors have identical office resources and time constraints, yet some must interact with more constituents than others.

BACKGROUND In 1996 the provincial government aligned provincial ridings with federal boundaries. In 2000 it unilaterally reduced the size of Toronto's council from 56 wards to 44 by cutting each of the 22 ridings in half.

The population of the city as a whole has grown, however this aggregate picture masks an uneven pattern of population change across the city. New Census data show that since 2000, some parts of the city have added population while other parts have shrunk. This is not a downtown versus suburbs issue — population growth and loss has occurred in all parts of the city.

DISPARITY IN WARD POPULATION The variation in population between wards started out small. If the population of all wards had been equal, each would have had about 55,800 residents in 2000. On average, ward populations deviated from this by about 6%. The most populous ward was 19% larger than the average, and the least populous about 17% smaller.

In 2011, the average deviation had doubled to 12%. The most populous ward was 49% larger and the least populous 24% smaller than the ward average of 59,400 residents. Eighteen wards are above the average and 26 below. Fifteen wards have populations more than 10% above or below the average, and 7 more than 20%. The most populous ward (23) contains twice as many residents as the least populous wards (18 and 29).

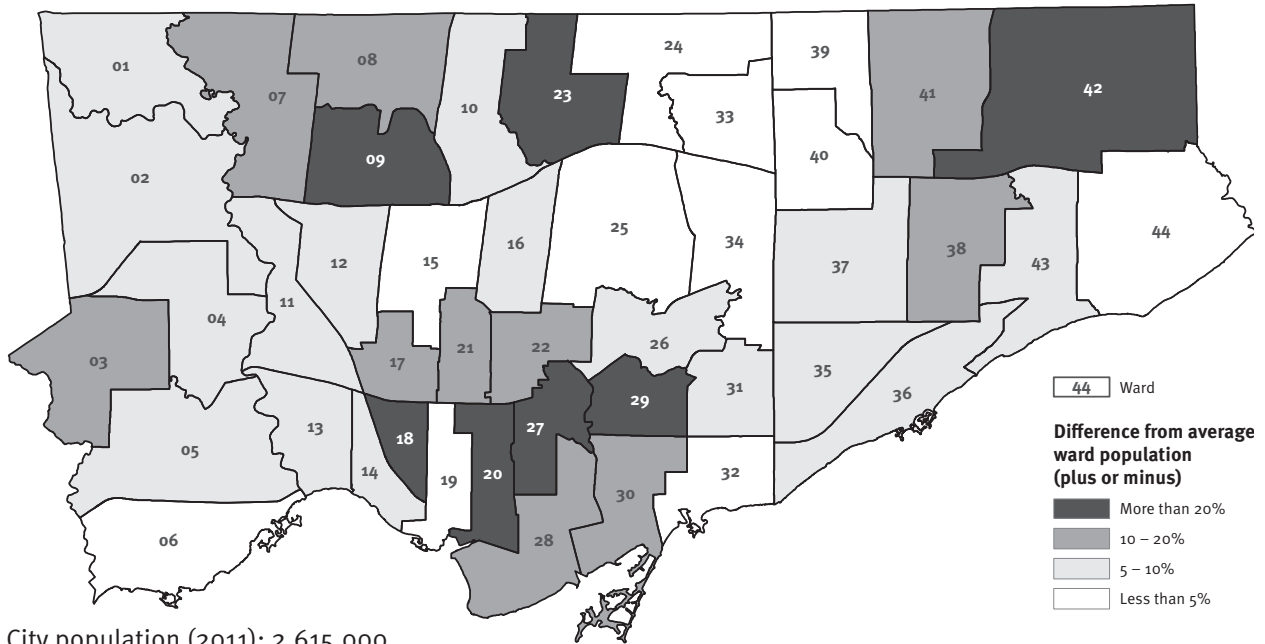
→ SEE THE MAP AND GRAPH ON REVERSE SIDE

OPTIONS Under the *City of Toronto Act*, the council can define ward boundaries without provincial approval. Two options are available:

- 1. The default.** The City may adopt the reapportioned federal and provincial boundaries when they are completed at the end of 2013. The problem is that the populations of the wards are likely to continue to be unbalanced in terms of population, and riding boundaries do not correspond to meaningful community areas. Given population growth, the City of Toronto is likely to gain one or two seats, but there is no guarantee that they will respect the City's municipal boundaries.
- 2. Define new boundaries.** Some have argued that it is important that ward boundaries align with provincial and federal riding boundaries, yet we are the only North American jurisdiction that does this. The City could choose to define wards that are meaningful to the City's many communities. One way to do this would be to create wards of equal population by combining the City's 140 designated neighbourhoods. The City could hold contests to name the wards. A public process for redefining ward boundaries can bring City government closer to the people.

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The largest and smallest wards are located in both core and suburban areas



City population (2011): 2,615,000

Average ward: 59,400

The city grew by 134,000 between 2001 and 2011

WARDS 2011 Population

