



# **2022 Governance and Boundary Review Municipality of the County of Inverness**

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## **Discussion Paper**

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Watson & Associates Economists Ltd.  
905-272-3600  
[info@watsonecon.ca](mailto:info@watsonecon.ca)

In association with: Dr. Robert J. Williams



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# 1. Background

In compliance with a statutory requirement of the Nova Scotia *Municipal Government Act (MGA)*, the Municipality of the County of Inverness<sup>1</sup> has retained Watson & Associates Economists Ltd. and Dr. Robert J. Williams, hereinafter referred to as the Consultant Team, to conduct a comprehensive and independent governance and boundary review (G.& B.R.).

In order to ensure that the Review is conducted in an objective and defensible manner and that Council can make its decision based on sound recommendations, the G.& B.R. consultant team has managed the review at arm's-length from staff and elected officials but worked within the municipality's established public consultation process to ensure that residents and elected officials have the information needed to evaluate the present configuration and possible alternative electoral systems in Inverness and with sufficient opportunities to provide their perspectives on the issues being considered in the Review.

As spelled out in section 369 of the *MGA*, “a study of the number and boundaries of polling districts in the municipality, their fairness and reasonableness and the number of councillors” is required every eight years beginning in 2006. To comply with this section of the *MGA*, a final G.& B.R. report will be completed for consideration by Council at its December 15, 2022 meeting. At that time, Council will decide whether to confirm or to alter the number and boundaries of polling districts and the number of councillors. Its decision at that time serves as an application that will be submitted to the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board (U.A.R.B.) for consideration and action; the municipality's electoral arrangements for the next eight years will be affirmed in an order from the Board.

This review is premised on the expectation that representation in the Municipality of the County of Inverness should be a fair and reasonable reflection of the contemporary distribution of communities and electors across the municipality consistent with best

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<sup>1</sup> In all cases where the text refers to “the County of Inverness”, “the County” or to “Inverness”, it is intended to denote the Municipality of the County of Inverness not to the geographic County of Inverness that also includes the Town of Port Hawkesbury or to the Inverness settlement area.



practices followed in other municipalities in Nova Scotia and the guidance provided by the U.A.R.B. through its Municipal Boundaries User Guide<sup>2</sup>.

## 2. Governance

The Municipality of the County of Inverness is governed by a council consisting of six members, each elected in a separate polling district. A Warden and Deputy Warden are selected by a vote of council.

This arrangement dates from an order of the U.A.R.B. issued in October 1993 that reduced the Council from fourteen Councillors elected in fourteen polling districts to six councillors elected in six polling districts. This change was characterized in the municipality's application to the Board as "attempting to conform with the policy of [the] provincial government to downsize the numbers of elected representatives, and to achieve [a] more effective, efficient, and manageable structure of municipal government."<sup>3</sup>

The composition of the councils in District and County Municipalities in Nova Scotia varies today from 12 in Pictou and Colchester to 5 in Barrington, Digby and Richmond, with four others electing a 7-member council and three an 8-member council. Inverness is therefore part of the cluster at the lower end of the range and is the only County electing six members. However, the 2021 Inverness population of 13,239 is closer to that reported in Antigonish (15,101) which has a 10-member council than it is to the populations of Barrington (6,523), Digby (7,242) and Richmond (8,509) which have Councils comparable in size. See Figure A.

As the U.A.R.B. has indicated in the Municipal Boundaries User Guide, "several factors" beyond the population of the municipality are to be taken into account in determining the number of councillors, specifically "the desired style of the council, the governance structure of the council, and a determination of an effective and efficient number of councillors."

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<sup>2</sup> See <https://nsuarb.novascotia.ca/mandates/municipal-boundaries/municipal-boundaries-user-guide>

<sup>3</sup> Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board Decision N.S.U.A.R.B.-M.B.-93-15 (October 27, 1993), page 5.



The appropriate size in part depends on the purpose and role Council is expected to play as a decision-making and representative body. Three interconnected factors could be considered: the capacity of Council to provide effective political management, effective representation and accountability.

a) Effective Political Management

A certain number of elected representatives are required to carry out the essential governmental functions of a municipality, including official participation in boards and commissions such as the Municipal Housing Corporation or the Regional Police Advisory Board. The workload of representatives varies with each individual councillor. The size of the council has an impact on the amount of time individual councillors must allocate to formal duties and to constituency casework, as well as to their personal, family, and non-political obligations.

b) Effective Representation

The heart of “effective representation” (to be discussed more fully in relation to the core principles for the electoral system) is the conviction that councillors must be able to maintain contact with constituents. Logically, a larger council would mean smaller polling districts and be more likely to ensure representatives can maintain closer contact with constituents. Conversely, a smaller council would mean larger polling districts and increase the challenge to deliver such representation.

Another aspect of representation relates to what will be referred to as “coherence”: districts should be designed around representing compatible communities of interest within the municipality. Ideally, districts will include a grouping of well-defined communities that are as similar as possible. A district system built around six councillors will of necessity include a larger and more diverse collection of communities in each district than a system built around a larger number of local councillors.

c) Accountability

Municipal councillors are not only “political managers” of the municipal corporation but are accountable for their decisions through an election. As such, councillors are adjudicated on their overall performance by voters regularly through the electoral process, providing incentive to, wherever possible or necessary, reflect the needs and desires of their districts on council. An effective democratic electoral system should provide voters with an adequate range of opportunities to select municipal legislators.

The number of representatives subject to public accountability for their actions is a key indicator of how close or remote the council is to the community.



The G.& B.R. will evaluate the present council structure from these perspectives as a contribution to “an informed debate” on an appropriate number of councillors for Inverness as advised by the U.A.R.B. in its Municipal Boundaries User Guide.

Figure A  
The Number of Elected Officials, 2021 Census Population and the Population Per Elected Officials in Nova Scotia Municipal Counties, Municipal Districts and Regional Municipalities

Municipality of the County of ...	Number of Elected Officials	Census population 2021	Population per Elected Official
Annapolis	11	18,834	1,712
Antigonish	10	15,101	1,510
Colchester	12	36,044	3,004
Cumberland	9	19,964	2,218
Inverness	6	13,239	2,207
Kings	10	47,918	4,792
Pictou	12	20,676	1,723
Richmond	5	8,509	1,702
Victoria	8	6,750	844
Municipality of the District of ...			
Argyle	9	7,870	875
Barrington	5	6,523	1,305
Chester	7	10,693	1,528
Clare	8	7,678	960
Digby	5	7,242	1,448
Guysborough	8	4,585	573
East Hants	11	22,892	2,081
Lunenburg	11	25,545	2,322
Shelburne	7	4,336	619
St. Mary's	7	2,161	309
Yarmouth	7	10,067	1,438
Regional Municipality of ...			
Queens	8	10,422	1,303
Windsor / West Hants	12	19,509	1,626
Cape Breton	13	93,694	7,207
Halifax	17	439,819	25,872





One other feature of the present structure that might also be considered is whether the council consists of an odd or an even number of councillors. There is no definitive agreement on these arrangements (as Figure A shows): some municipal councils have operated very successfully with an even number while others work with an odd number. The latter is often judged positively in that it is more likely to avoid a tie vote on a council decision but of course there may be occasions when a councillor is absent or precluded from voting, resulting in a tie. In municipalities where there is an even number councillors a possible deadlock can provide the incentive to seek agreement rather than accept a potentially divisive result. The Consultant Team will include this question in the survey of residents during the public consultations.

### 3. Parameters for a Boundary Review

In Nova Scotia, changes both to the composition of a municipal council (that is, the number of councillors) and to the method of election in the municipality result from orders issued by the U.A.R.B. on application by the municipality.

Whatever the number of councillors, “a study of the number and boundaries of polling districts in the municipality, their fairness and reasonableness and the number of councillors” is required every eight years beginning in 2006. Boundaries of the six polling districts in Inverness were set in Board Decision N.S.U.A.R.B.-M.B.-93-15 in 1993 and were not adjusted in the statutory applications to the U.A.R.B. in 2007 or 2015.

The intention of this review is to provide information to Council for making determinations about whether to change some or all existing electoral arrangements. While an application to the U.A.R.B. can include the possibility of dissolving polling districts (*MGA*, s. 368 (1)(c)), that specific option will only be included in the Consultant Team’s report to Council if there is widespread support expressed by members of the community during public consultations. It should also be noted that the *MGA* (s 10 (2)) precludes electing more than one councillor per district in a county municipality.

Since its last application to the U.A.R.B., the population of Inverness has grown to 13,239 but the number of electors dropped to 11,447 for the 2020 municipal election - modest changes that still must be taken into account in assessing what the legislation refers to as the “fairness and reasonableness of the polling districts.” Specifically, s. 368 (4) of the *MGA* states that “In determining the number and boundaries of polling districts the Board shall consider number of electors, relative parity of voting power, population



density, community of interest and geographic size.” Moreover, although the U.A.R.B. accepted the County’s 2015 application to maintain a system in which two districts varied above the average number of voters by approximately 13%, the U.A.R.B. Guide makes very clear that “relative parity” is the target:

**Relative parity of voting power**

“The target variance for relative parity of voting power should be  $\pm 10\%$  from the average number of electors per polling district or ward. The municipality or town must justify any variance exceeding this target in its application to the Board. The larger the proposed variance the greater the burden on the municipal unit to justify the higher variance from the average number of electors. Factors that may support higher variances include the need to accommodate population density, community of interest or geographic size.”<sup>4</sup>

In 2015, the municipality’s application to maintain the existing polling district boundaries was based on the conclusion of Council “that because of geography and traditional communities of similar interest, the districts should not be changed.” The Board’s decision restated the articulated target of  $\pm 10\%$ , but ruled “on the basis of the evidence before it, that the present polling district boundaries, and size of Council, should be maintained.”<sup>5</sup> In 2022 it will be necessary to assess the impact of population growth on voter parity and whether retaining the present polling districts can still be justified.

The challenging part of the electoral component of any review of this kind involves distributing polling districts across the municipality in a fair and reasonable way. The terms of reference direct the consultant team to submit three options to Council, which reflects the reality that there are several possible ways to distribute polling districts, including the existing arrangement. Some of the features that are taken into consideration in the distribution are measurable, such as the existing population of the district, potential future growth or depopulation and geographic size while others are open to interpretation, such as the distinct characteristics of the district or area and communities and areas of interest.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See <https://nsuarb.novascotia.ca/mandates/municipal-boundaries/municipal-boundaries-user-guide> (page 2)

<sup>5</sup> Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board Decision 2015 N.S.U.A.R.B. 206 M06653 (August 14, 2015), page 4.

<sup>6</sup> These particular features are drawn from the terms of reference for the G.&B.R.





### 3.1 Core Principles for Designing Polling Districts

There are three sources that provide guidance to the Municipality of Inverness County for the design of its polling districts.

- The *Municipal Government Act, 1998* specifies that the U.A.R.B. “shall consider number of electors, relative parity of voting power, population density, community of interest and geographic size” in determining the boundaries of polling districts. (s. 368 (4)) The act goes on to direct that the study the municipality is required to conduct shall consider the “fairness and reasonableness” of the polling districts. (s. 369 (1))
- The U.A.R.B. has also issued a Municipal Boundaries User Guide (most recently in 2021) that sets out a recommended process to follow to prepare an application to the Board as well as the statutory factors to consider in the task of distributing the polling districts: “balancing the number of electors, relative parity of voting power, population density, community of interest and geographic size.” As noted in the previous part of this Paper, the Board also provides an explicit interpretation of the way the concept of “relative parity of voting power” is to be understood (that is, “ $\pm 10\%$  from the average number of electors per polling district”).
- Thirdly, there are precedents that can be gathered from applications previously heard by the U.A.R.B., in particular as they apply to Inverness. Again, as noted in the previous part of this Paper, the 2015 Board order accepted a polling district map for Inverness in which two of the six districts exceeded the target variance “because of geography and traditional communities of similar interest” reflected within the polling districts. In the 2007 Board order, the same six districts had been accepted even though the number of electors in three districts were close to the  $\pm 10\%$  margin of variance.

The 1993 Board order that established the six districts cited an earlier statute (the *Municipal Boundaries and Representation Act, 1989*) that set out the same basic principles, albeit with a slight twist: “the Board shall give consideration among other things to population density, community of interest and geographic size of polling districts.” (emphasis added) Moreover, the Order cites principles to be considered in setting provincial electoral boundaries (as directed by the Legislature to a Provincial Electoral Boundaries Commission in 1991) and the Supreme Court of Canada “Carter” decision from 1991, as contributing to its emphasis on the “relative parity of voting power”.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Reference re: Provincial Electoral Boundaries (Saskatchewan) [1991] 2 S.C.R.



The Consultant Team will conduct this portion of the G.& B.R. on the premise that an electoral system based on polling districts should attempt to meet the following three core principles or guidelines derived from these sources plus an additional overarching principle:

a) Voter Parity

- The central goal is parity (balancing the number of electors); that is, every Councillor should generally represent an equal number of electors, with some variation permitted for residential density across the County and other considerations.
- The range of variance should not exceed 10% unless it can be justified as necessary to accommodate other considerations, for example population density.

b) Representation of Communities of Interest

- Polling district boundaries should encompass traditional communities of similar interest (including social, historical, economic, and religious characteristics) while, at the same time, not fragmenting such communities.

c) Geographic Size

- Polling districts should be contiguous in shape and as compact as possible.
- Polling district boundaries should be straightforward and easily recognizable.<sup>8</sup>

d) Effective Representation

In its reviews of electoral boundaries, the Consultant Team customarily supplements these articulated principles with what has been described as the “overarching” principle of “effective representation.” This concept corresponds to the “fairness and reasonableness” consideration found in the *MGA* but the terminology itself is drawn from the “Carter” decision (see note 7).

To achieve effective representation in the ideal sense, each elector should have comparable access to an elected representative and each Councillor should speak in governmental deliberations on behalf of an equal number of residents. However, since polling districts are drawn in an environment where there are variations in population density, distinctive communities of interest and a municipality that covers

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<sup>8</sup> In U.A.R.B. Decision 2022 NSURB 114 M10626 (July 27, 2022), the Board granted the application by the Town of Stellarton that specifically used a designated roadway that “provides an easily recognizable boundary.”



a significant geographic area, rigid adherence to voter parity may result in polling districts that are drawn along arbitrary or artificial lines to meet the parity principle which could penalize certain electors.

“Effective representation” will serve as a kind of summary evaluation built around the other criteria that helps in the design of a fair and reasonable system. For example,

- Are the individual polling districts plausible and coherent units of representation?
- Do they provide equitable access to councillors for residents of the municipality?
- Are the proposed polling districts of a size, scale, and shape that a representative can serve her or his constituents successfully?

In sum, do the polling districts constitute a system that can be judged on balance to deliver effective representation even if some of the specific principles are only partially successful? The three core principles identified above each contribute to providing an effective connection between elected officials and residents,<sup>9</sup> but they may conflict with one another. Accordingly, the overriding principle of effective representation can be used to accommodate apparent conflicts between principles. Any deviation from the specific principles must be justified by other principles in a manner that is more supportive of fair and reasonable representation.

## 3.2 The Consultation Process

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The U.A.R.B. is very clear: “Public consultation is an inherent part of the required study ... Giving the public an opportunity to provide its valuable input is a key part of the decision-making process leading to an application by a municipality or town.” However, the type of consultation and the extent of the consultation is left to the discretion of the municipality.

Public engagement activities for the G&BR will be conducted under the County’s established protocols and policies and will be aimed at both informing residents about the review (including the key factors that are being considered) and gathering informed evaluations from residents about the existing system and alternative designs. Several alternatives have been designed for Inverness residents to safely participate in the

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<sup>9</sup> Note: this is not an observation on the performance of incumbent members of council but refers to whether the polling district boundaries help or hinder them serve as effective representatives.

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review process, including four in-person meetings in four locations over two days, a virtual consultation session, an information website, and a survey designed to solicit feedback on the current electoral structure.

It is important to be clear that a governance and boundary review is not a popularity contest and that the integrity of the review and the recommendations made to Council are not inherently compromised if there is a low level of public participation in the consultations. In addition, the review will be conducted at arm's-length from staff and Council to ensure its legitimacy.

One important consequence of conducting an effective and independent review is that residents should be well-enough informed about the conduct of the entire review – and should be satisfied enough with the decision reached by Council – that there will be little incentive for the public to apply to participate in the Board hearing as a formal intervenor or to comment on the application either by providing a letter of comment or by registering to speak in person at the hearing.

The public consultation sessions are intended to inform the public on the governance and boundary review process, the composition of council, and the core principles adopted for the project. Those who participate will also have an opportunity to provide input on a set of preliminary polling district boundary options.

## 4. Preliminary Evaluation of the Status Quo

This section reviews the existing electoral structure in the municipality in terms of the identified core principles. The existing polling district structure is presented in Figure B for reference purposes.

### **Voter Parity**

The objective of relative parity of voting power (every Councillor generally representing an equal number of constituents within his or her respective polling district) is the primary goal of an electoral redistribution, with some degree of variation acceptable in light of population densities and demographic factors across the County. The indicator of success in a district design is the extent to which all the individual polling districts approach an “optimal” size.

Optimal size can be understood as a mid-point on a scale where the term “optimal” (O) describes a district with a population within 5% on either side of the calculated optimal



size (often referred to as the “average” size). The classification “below/above optimal” (O + or O -) is applied to a polling district with a population between 6% and 10% on either side of the optimal size. A polling district that is labelled “outside the range” (OR + or OR -) indicates that its population is greater than 10% above or below the optimal polling district size. The adoption of a 10% maximum variation is based on previous orders issued by the U.A.R.B.

The Inverness submission to the U.A.R.B. in 2015 included a chart showing the number of electors in the 2012 municipal election (12,344) (See Table 1). The optimal size for a polling district in a six-district system at that time was 2,057. Acceptable polling district boundaries would see each district include between 2,428 and 1,986 electors (that is,  $\pm 10\%$  of the optimal figure, what the U.A.R.B. refers to as “ $\pm 10\%$  from the average number of electors per polling district”).

Table 1: Population by Existing Polling District, 2012 Election

Distribution of Electors in Polling Districts 2012			
Polling District	Number of Electors	Variation from Optimal	Optimal Range
1	2,323	1.13	OR +
2	1,946	0.95	O -
3	1,895	0.92	O -
4	1,966	0.96	O
5	1,891	0.93	O -
6	2,323	1.13	OR +
Total Number of Electors 12,344		Optimal Number of Electors = 2,057	

Based on the municipality’s 2020 list of electors for the election conducted in that year, the total number of electors was 11,447 (See Table 2); the optimal size for a polling district in a six-district system would be 1,908. Acceptable polling district boundaries would see each district include between 2,099 and 1,717 electors (that is,  $\pm 10\%$  of the



optimal figure, what the U.A.R.B. refers to as “ $\pm 10\%$  from the average number of electors per polling district”).

Table 2: Population by Existing Polling District, 2020 Election<sup>10</sup>

Distribution of Electors in Polling Districts 2020			
Polling District	Number of Electors	Variation from Optimal	Optimal Range
1	2,134	1.12	OR +
2	1,765	0.93	O -
3	1,681	0.88	OR -
4	1,767	0.93	O -
5	1,956	1.03	O +
6	2,144	1.12	OR +
Total Number of Electors 11,447		Optimal Number of Electors = 1,908	

Preliminary Assessment of the Present Polling Districts:

- Elector data from 2012 shows two polling districts are outside the acceptable  $\pm 10\%$  range of variance, three others fall narrowly below “optimal” (between 6% and 10% of the optimal size) and only District 4 is within 5% of “optimal.” This distribution was approved by the U.A.R.B. because the boundaries were judged to reflect “geography and traditional communities of similar interest.”
- Elector data from 2020 shows the same two polling districts outside the acceptable  $\pm 10\%$  range of variance, two others are close to “optimal” (between 6% and 10% of the optimal size) and only District 4 is within 5% of “optimal.” More notably, District 3 is now below the acceptable  $\pm 10\%$  range of variance. In sum, three of the six districts exceed the variation the U.A.R.B. has generally applied, albeit by a two-percentage point margin in all cases.

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<sup>10</sup> Note that for the special elections in 2022 there were 2173 eligible voters in District 1 and 1783 in District 2. This discussion will refer to the complete figures used in 2020 not the partial figures for 2022.





- Districts 1 and 6 (at opposite ends of the municipality) remain above the defined range of variation in 2020 even though District 1 includes a largely uninhabited area within Cape Breton Highlands National Park and District 6 includes numerous settlement areas.
- Based upon this information, an application to the U.A.R.B. that preserves the present districts cannot be based exclusively on meeting the voter parity principle.

### **Representation of Communities of Interest**

Polling districts should have a “natural” feel to those who live within them, meaning that each should be characterized by recognizable social, historical, or economic connections. This should be done to avoid creating polling districts that combine communities with disparate interests and limited patterns of interaction that complicate the role of the representative as “the voice” of the district in Council deliberations, and to ensure communities of interest remain intact during the design of polling district boundaries.

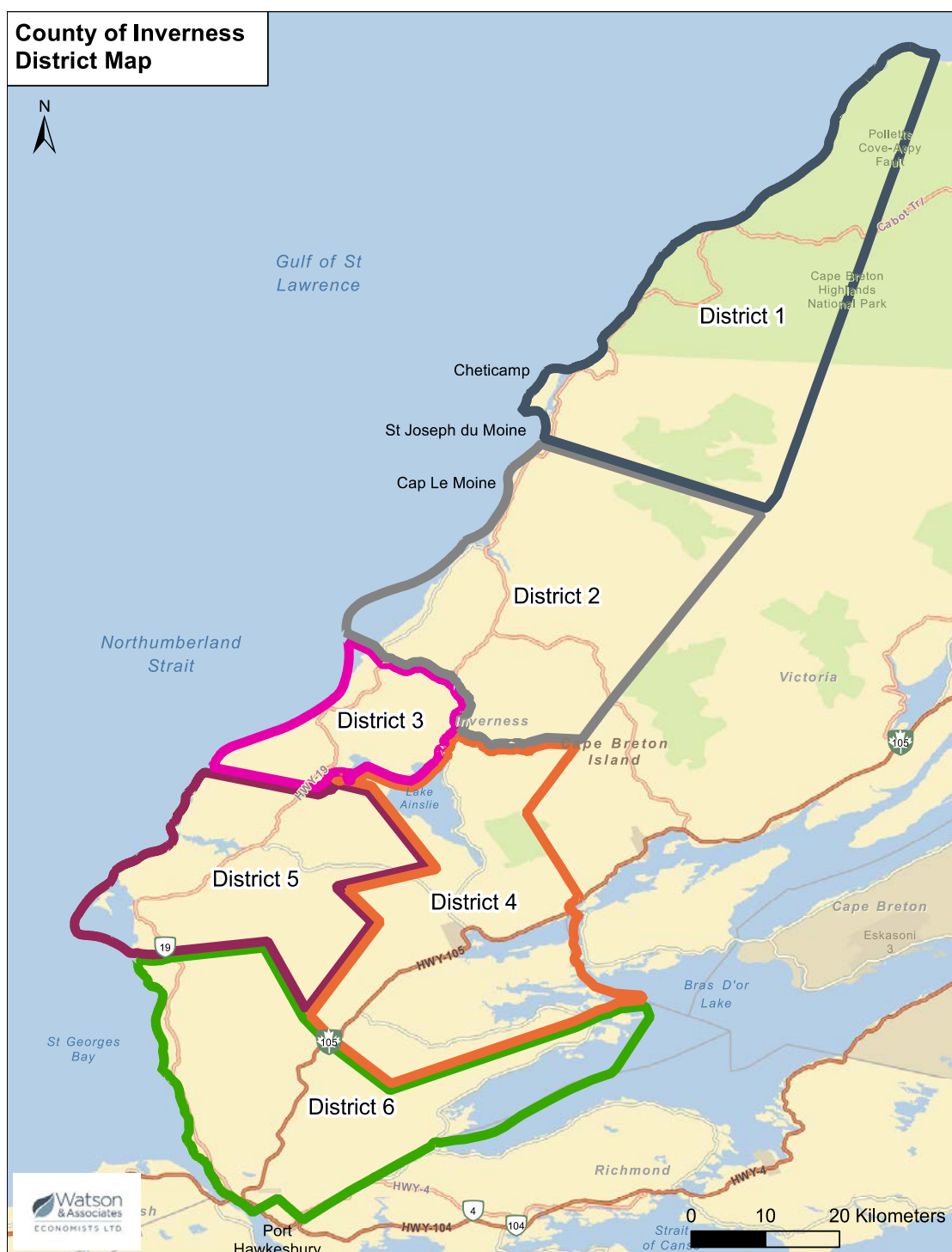
In Inverness, the six polling districts are combinations of fourteen earlier polling districts that may have had historical meaning but do not necessarily correspond to contemporary communities of interest within Inverness. Research by the Consultant Team has not discovered the grounds used for drawing the boundaries of the fourteen districts.

#### **Preliminary Assessment of the Present Polling Districts:**

- It is difficult to argue that the current six polling districts ensure effective representation for the numerous communities of interest within the County of Inverness. Within each district is found several identifiable settlements or groups of settlements (such as the several identified as “Margaree”) of various sizes and individual histories. For example:
  - The cluster of predominantly French-speaking communities along the coast are placed in two different Districts.



Figure B: Existing Polling District Structure





- District 4 includes a narrow strip of territory along the shores of Lake Ainslie and Loch Ben but the adjacent inland districts such as MacCormicks Corner and Hays River are in District 5.
- The northern point of District 4 is at Upper Margaree but the District also includes Lake Ainslie, Whycocomagh, the Orangedale area, the River Denys settlements and more. While Whycocomagh is roughly in the centre of the District, the outlying areas have few obvious connections to one another.
- Based upon these observations and comparable comments on Districts 5 and 6, an application to the U.A.R.B. that preserves the present districts must downplay the community of interest principle.

### **Geographic Size**

The municipality covers an area of approximately 3,800 square kilometres of which at least 350 square kilometres are located in Cape Breton Highlands National Park. Districts 1 and 2 are narrow in shape, confined by the coastline and the boundary with the County of Victoria. South of Scotsville, that boundary turns eastward towards Bras D'Or Lake creating a roughly five-sided area south of the southern boundary of District 2 (see Figure B). Four districts are located in that southern area. Only District 3, and to a lesser extent District 5, could be described as compact.

Most of the district boundaries (that is, the markers that separate the districts from one another on a map) are remarkably straight, a surprise given the landscape of Cape Breton Island. Schedule 'A' of the original Board order (see Note 3) provides a written description of the boundaries of the six districts while the Order itself summarizes the way the previous fourteen districts would be combined into six.

Unfortunately, there is no record of the process used to determine how the lines were originally drawn so that, for example, the following text describing a portion of the District 5 boundary would be unlikely to be considered straightforward and easily recognizable:

“proceeding along ... a line ... easterly to the iron bridge over the South West Mabou River on the Glencoe Road;  
THENCE southerly to the Fire Tower on River Denys mountain;  
THENCE in a north easterly direction to the Miramichi Brook then northerly to the eastern end of Cameron's Brook then ... etc.”.

Similar descriptions apply to all six districts.



### Preliminary Assessment of the Present Polling Districts:

- There is little possibility that the six polling districts could be balanced in terms of the area within their boundaries, given the nature of the topography of the County and the distribution of population. Nor should they necessarily be, as discussed in relation to effective representation.
- Evidence suggests, however, that some adjustments should be considered to come closer to voter parity since the smallest district by area is also includes the smallest number of electors and one of the two districts with the largest number of electors is also one of the largest by area. Districts that cover large geographic areas may justifiably be home to a smaller number of electors than districts that are smaller and more compact. The reverse is also equitable: districts that are small in area can reasonably take in higher populations. What is undesirable are districts that fail to address this “trade off” of area and voters, such as situations where the smallest districts in area also have the smallest population and the largest districts in area also have the largest population.
- In many cases, electors (and even candidates for office) are unaware of the actual boundaries between districts since the “markers” are largely confined to a map rather than being based on something visible or noticeable.
- Based upon these observations as well as the apparent disconnect between the boundary lines themselves and the physical features that residents can relate to, an application to the U.A.R.B. that preserves the present districts must overlook the impact of the geographic size principle.

### **Effective Representation**

As discussed above, the three core principles are subject to the overarching principle of effective representation. The most fundamental function of elected representatives, after all, is to represent their constituency both at the Council table and in being accessible to assist constituents. Relative equality of the number of voters per representative is essential to the proper conduct of both these roles.

### Preliminary Assessment of the Present Polling Districts:

- The disparities between districts in terms of electors and geographic size work against the achievement of effective representation. The present configuration embeds a dilution of the votes cast by certain electors compared to others. In the 2020 municipal election, the 2,144 electors in District 6 and the 2,134 electors in District 1 were each entitled to elect a Councillor but in District 3 the same power was granted to 1,681 electors. While this difference is relatively small in actual



numbers (around 450 electors), the principle of voter parity is not met since the number of voters required to elect a member of council varies between districts and the number of electors in these three districts fall outside the acceptable range of variation. Because of those limitations, effective representation is weakened.

- Some districts are not politically meaningful units of representation, thereby complicating the capacity of the elected representative to speak cogently on behalf of those who elected her or him.
- In previous applications to the U.A.R.B. some of the specific principles were only partially successful but the Board was prepared to rule that on balance the “fairness and reasonableness” consideration was met. In 2022, this assessment suggests that the “balance” is less convincing but that some aspects of the present polling district configuration could be adjusted to better meet the expectations of the U.A.R.B.

## 5. The Preliminary Options

In the coming weeks, the Consultant Team will engage the community and will produce a series of preliminary options for the public and Council to consider. Through consultation on these preliminary options, the Consultant Team will provide a final report and a recommended district boundary structure for Council, who will ultimately make the final decision on its application to the U.A.R.B. The principles discussed above will guide the recommendations from the Consultant Team. The consultation process will help guide the thinking around which principles – voter parity or communities of interest, for instance – should take precedence, given the County’s history, culture, economy, settlement patterns and population forecasts.