

# Municipal District of Willow Creek Electoral Boundary Review

## Terms of Reference

The Council of the Municipal District of Willow Creek No. 26 has confirmed its interest in proceeding with review of electoral boundaries within the municipality. To ensure that the process of review is thorough and review a robust public engagement and consultation plan will be undertaken as part of the process of review. This Terms of Reference outlines the current state of the electoral boundaries, the legislation, election history, and the purpose, criteria, process and timeline for the project.

### The Municipality

The Municipal District of Willow Creek (MDWC) is located in the Southern part of Alberta, occupying an area of 4,485 square kilometers with a population of 6,081 (2021 Census). Reaching from the Porcupine Hills in the west to Vulcan County and the County of Lethbridge in the east, the Municipal District of Willow Creek No. 26 boasts an enviable diversity of terrain, people and economic opportunity.

Primary agricultural production is the leading industry within the M.D. of Willow Creek. Blessed with rich agricultural land, the municipality is populated by multi-generation farm and ranch operations. Grain, forage and oilseed production account for the majority of crops grown within the municipality. Cow / calf, beef feedlots, pork and poultry operations are prevalent.

The Municipal District is a very large rural community that is characterized by low density development except for areas that include the Hamlet of Granum and rural subdivisions including Moon River Estates, Orton, Pine Coulee, Woodhouse and Parkland which have higher population densities. Also located within the M.D. of Willow Creek are eight Hutterian Brethren Colonies with populations of approximately 75-150 each.

Four towns are also located within the M.D. of Willow Creek Including: Claresholm, Fort Macleod, Nanton and Stavely. These Towns have elected representatives of their own and are not part of the election structure of the M.D.

### The Legislation

The Municipal Government Act Sections 148 and 149 provide municipalities the ability to divide the municipality into wards and to establish their boundaries.

Determination of the boundaries must be undertaken by Bylaw by a municipality. Prior to the final adoption of a bylaw establishing electoral divisions a public hearing is required to be conducted. Notifications in accordance with the Act must be made which include advertising in accordance with Section 606.

### Election History within the M.D. of Willow Creek

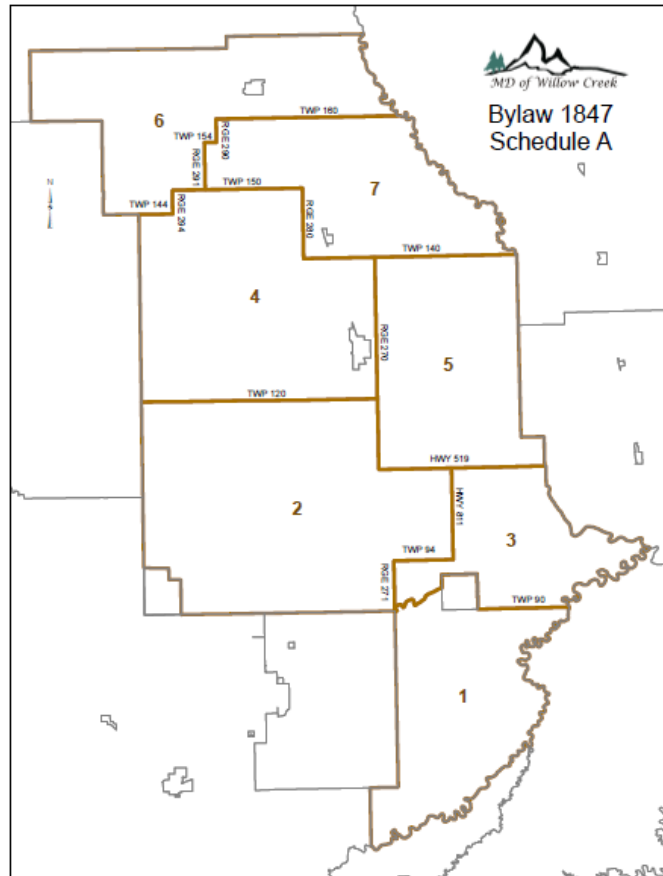
Election Year	Actual Voters	Eligible Voters	Elected Councillors	Acclaimed Councillors
2001	565	2945	3	4
2004	292	Not available	1	6
2007	375	Not available	2	5
2010	434	Not available	2	5
2013	431	Not available	2	5
2017	596	Not available	3	4
2021	795	Not available	3	4
2022 (by-election)		Not available		1

## The Current Electoral Boundary Bylaw

Municipal District of Willow Creek No. 26 Electoral Boundaries and Representation Bylaw No. 1847 was adopted in December 2020. The Town of Granum Dissolution Order in Council 17-2020 article 3(b) required the MD to pass an electoral boundary bylaw in accordance with Section 148 and 149 to take effect at the 2021 general election as no prior record of an electoral boundary could be found within municipal records. This Order in Council was issued by the province for the dissolution of the Town of Granum.

To evaluate the boundaries for Bylaw No. 1847 a review of available Federal census data was undertaken. At that time the data was determined to not be detailed enough to accurately evaluate a restructuring of municipal electoral boundaries. As such Bylaw No. 1847 was adopted with the existing boundaries.

Schedule "A" of Bylaw No. 1847 which outlines the electoral boundaries is shown here:



The current Division Populations as determined by the 2016 Federal Census, insofar as the data was able to be interpreted, are as follows:

Division 1 – 704

Division 2 – 1109

Division 3 – 993

Division 4 – 803

Division 5 – 499

Division 6 – 659

Division 7 - 818

As part of Council's 2022-2025 Strategic Plan a key initiative was to undertake a municipal census in order to complete a review of the MD of Willow Creek electoral boundaries prior to December 31, 2023 and to have them implemented for the 2025 municipal election.

# Electoral Boundary Terms of Reference

## Purpose of the Electoral Boundary Review

The purpose of the Electoral Boundary Review will be to evaluate the current census profile of the M.D. of Willow Creek to determine if the current Division boundaries require adjustment to reflect equitable elected representation in future years.

The Electoral Boundary Review shall include:

1. A review of best practices of electoral boundaries for municipal districts.
2. Population analysis of electoral divisions to determine current demographic profile.
3. Population projection to determine anticipated future population changes.
4. Spatial analysis of current division boundaries to determine potential boundary adjustments.
5. GIS modelled options for alternate ward boundaries to balance population nodes and rural areas.
6. Council review of electoral boundary options.
7. Public consultation and engagement to review electoral boundary options and to receive input on preferred boundary options.
8. A Public hearing to consider a new electoral boundary bylaw.

## Electoral Boundary Review Criteria

The following criteria are to be used to evaluate the determination of new M.D. of Willow Creek division electoral boundaries:

1. The Council will rely on the Municipal Government Act and regulations, general advice from Administration, the methods and best practices of other municipalities and advice from government agencies, 2023 M.D. of Willow Creek census data and most importantly the input and feedback received from the citizens of the Municipal District of Willow Creek and stakeholders.

2. Population vs. Number of Electors

The population per division, not the number of electors per division, will be the primary factor in designing division boundaries. The average population per division will be determined by dividing the M.D. population by 7 (the number of divisions). Division boundaries will be designed so the population of each division is within a range of +/- 25% from the average.

3. Future Growth

Division boundaries are to be designed with the intention to last at least three municipal general elections before a major revision is necessary. The potential for future growth will be evaluated using the 2023 municipal census to evaluate the number of current and future residents in order to provide balanced population numbers within each division.

4. Easily Identifiable Boundaries

Wherever possible, division boundaries will be readily identifiable to the public by utilizing roadways, significant natural and man-made barriers such as rivers, ravines, highways or railways.

5. Least Number of Changes

Division proposals developed by the Council, in consultation with the public, should involved the fewest changes possible to accomplish the required adjustments. Maintaining historical community and neighborhood cohesiveness is a primary goal through this process.

6. Block-Shaped Divisions

Insofar as possible division boundaries should be designed relatively block-shaped with sides as straight as possible. This will help ensure that division boundaries are drawn impartially. Division boundaries which are long, narrow, twisted or have saw-toothed or indented sides are more likely to give the impression of being designed in a biased approach to achieve a specific result. Division

boundaries which follow natural terrain features like rivers or intermunicipal boundaries are an exception.

## **Electoral Boundary Review Process**

### Phase 1

Review and adoption of the Electoral Boundary Review Terms of Reference by the Council.

### Phase 2

Administration will provide up to 4 concept maps utilizing 2023 population census data. The maps will be developed based upon the criteria established within the Electoral Boundary Review Terms of Reference.

### Phase 3

Public Consultation and Engagement

Utilizing up to 4 concept maps which will be available for review and discussion by the public, the consultation and engagement portion of this project will include in person open houses, local newspaper advertising of planned open houses, advertising of draft electoral division maps, an online engagement survey and a public hearing conducted at a regular session of Council as part of the review of the Electoral Boundary Bylaw. All phases of the public engagement plan including engagement of Councillors, stakeholders and the general public.

The public engagement sessions will be conducted in Fort Macleod, Claresholm and Stavely.

### Phase 4

The Council will review public feedback received as part of the engagement process and, utilizing this information, Council will review a summary of public feedback and will conduct a discussion for the purpose of narrowing the focus of the project to a final concept map.

### Phase 5

Following the development of a single Electoral Division Boundary concept map the map will be published for Council, stakeholder and general public review.

### Phase 6

A public hearing will be scheduled and advertised for the purpose of considering a new Municipal District of Willow Creek Electoral Boundary Bylaw and Map. At the public hearing the general public and stakeholders may provide input and feedback on the final Electoral Boundary Map and bylaw.

## **Timeline for Electoral Boundary Project Review**

The timeline for the Electoral Boundary Review project is proposed as follows:

Census period: May 4<sup>th</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup>

Phase 1: adoption of TOR – June 14, 2023

Completion of census: July 10<sup>th</sup>

Collation of data: July 17<sup>th</sup> to July 28<sup>th</sup>

Phase 2: Concept maps for council review August 9<sup>th</sup> and August 23<sup>th</sup>

Phase 3: Public consultation and engagement - September

Phase 4: Review of public feedback - October

Phase 5: Production of single boundary map and public consultation period - October 11<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting

Phase 6: Public hearing to consider new MD of Willow Creek Electoral Boundary Bylaw - October 25, 2023

**The Census Data**

To be added to the Terms of Reference upon completion in July 2023.

**Electoral Boundary Concept Maps**

To be added to the Electoral Boundary Project Report as a deliverable under the Terms of Reference.