

REPORT

Office of the Mayor

To: Mayor Cote and Members of Council,
Regular Council Meeting

Date: June 27, 2022

From: Denise A Tambellini Intergovernmental
and Community Relations Manager

File:

Item #: 2022-496

Subject: Proposed Redistribution of Federal Electoral Districts 2022

RECOMMENDATION

That Council request staff to issue a letter to the Electoral Boundaries Commission for British Columbia (BC) expressing concerns with the proposed redistribution of federal electoral districts to create two electoral districts in New Westminister: New Westminister-Bridgeview and Richmond East.

PURPOSE

The Electoral Boundaries Commission for BC is proposing realigning the Federal electoral boundaries for New Westminister and creating two separate electoral districts. Staff are recommending a letter be sent to the Electoral Boundaries Commission for British Columbia expressing concerns with the proposed redistribution.

SUMMARY

The Chief Electoral Officer will be applying the representation formula found in the Constitution to determine the new allocation of seats across Canada. They are proposing an adjustment of boundaries to create two electoral districts in New Westminister: New Westminister-Bridgeview and Richmond East. This is intended to equalize population between the districts. The Electoral Boundaries Commission for BC proposes the inclusion of parts of Delta to the Richmond-East district and parts of North Surrey to New Westminister-Bridgeview district. Staff are recommending a letter be sent to the Electoral Boundary Commission for BC expressing concerns with the proposed redistribution.

BACKGROUND

The Constitution of Canada requires that federal electoral districts be reviewed after each decennial (10-year) census to reflect changes and movements in Canada's population. The current federal redistribution process began in October 2021. It is led by independent commissions working separately in each province to establish electoral boundaries. The Chief Electoral Officer is tasked with applying the representation formula found in the Constitution to determine the new allocation of seats. Elections Canada provides administrative and technical support to the commissions.

A representation order describing and naming Canada's future electoral districts is expected to be completed in September 2023. Changes to electoral districts will be applied in the first general election called at least seven months after the representation order is proclaimed; changes will not come into effect until April 1, 2024, at the earliest. The change process is attached for information (attachment 1)¹:

Justice Mary Saunders is chair of the three-member commission. The proposed boundary changes around the province were mainly in response to the "significant but uneven" growth of B.C.'s population. The map of the existing and proposed changes are included for information (attachment 2) and can be found at this link.

https://redcoupage-redistribution-2022.ca/com/bc/phrg/index_e.aspx

The Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission looks at the boundaries of federal electoral ridings every 10 years, following the census, to adjust as needed for population changes in various areas. The 2022 proposal would see one new riding added in B.C. – Vernon-Lake Country in the North Okanagan – and other boundaries adjusted.

When the Electoral Boundaries Commission last went through its [boundary redrawing exercise in 2012](#), it also proposed moving Queensborough into the Richmond East riding. The idea met with opposition from the City of New Westminster and residents – and, in the end, it was not approved. The resolution of Council from 2012 is included for information (attachment 3).

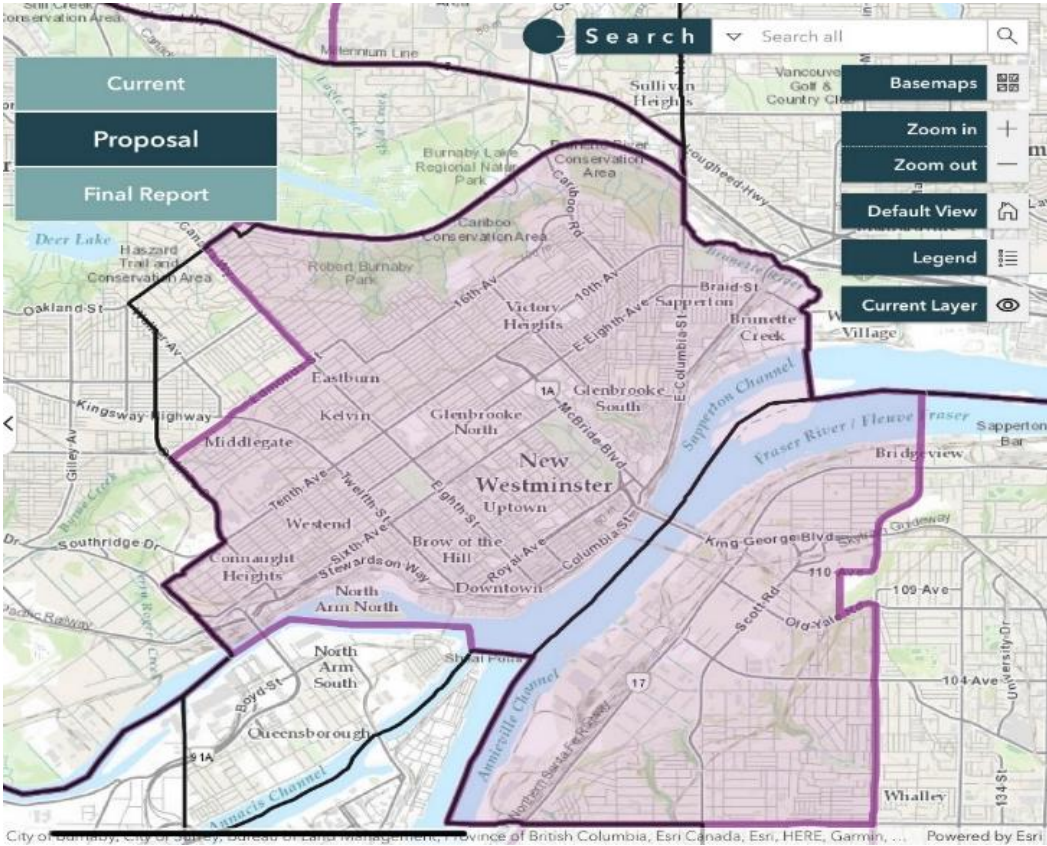
¹ <https://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=res&dir=cir/red/over&document=index&lang=e>

Proposed Electoral Districts

The current electoral district of “New Westminster – Burnaby” is proposed to be divided into two electoral districts as is seen below:

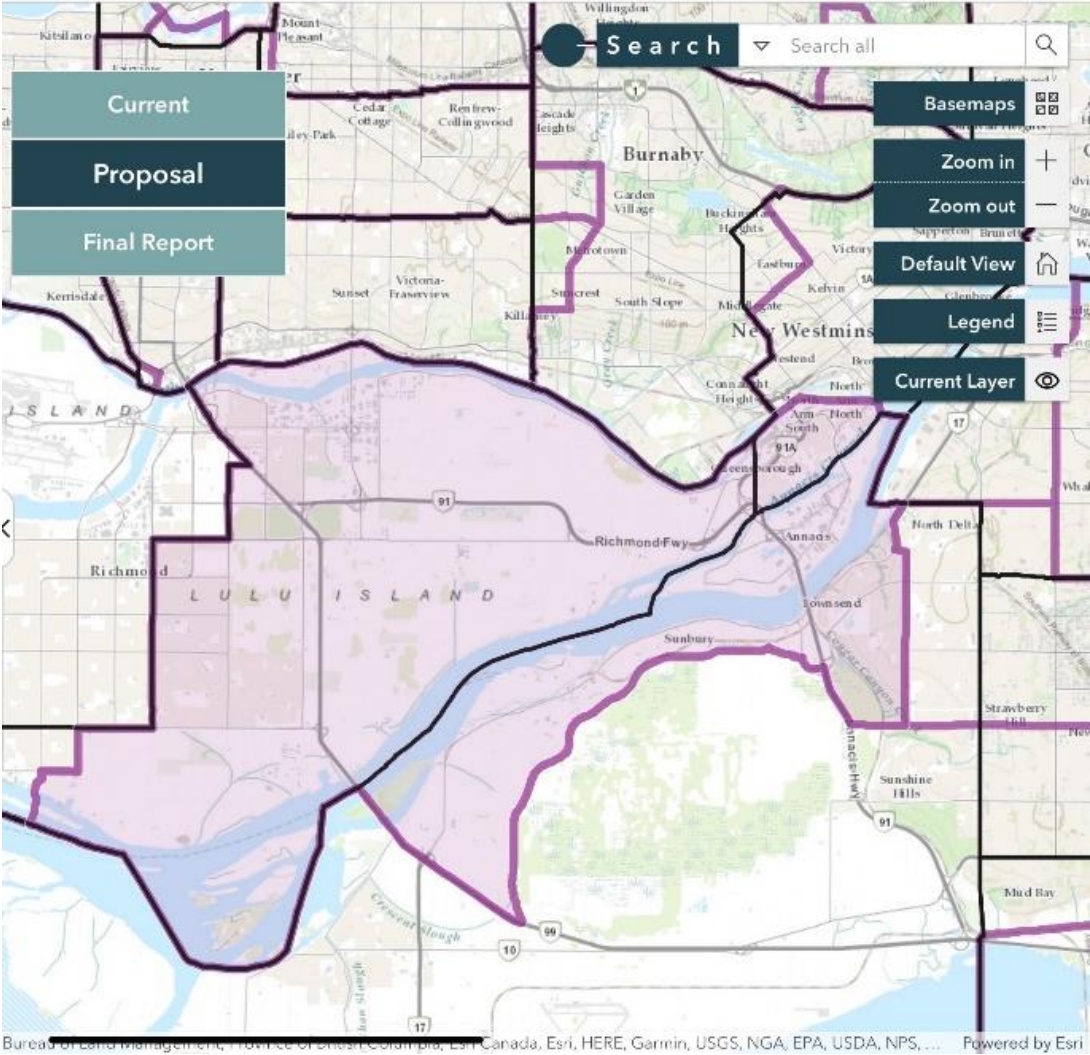
1. New Westminster - Bridgeview Electoral District

Changes proposed for New Westminster include the existing New Westminster-Burnaby riding renamed New Westminster-Bridgeview. The electoral district would lose part of its existing territory in Burnaby – a section of land in the northwest corner of the riding bounded by Canada Way, Walker Avenue, Burris Street, Griffiths Avenue and Edmonds Street – and, in exchange, gain land in North Surrey. The new riding would incorporate the areas at the foot of the Pattullo Bridge and in Brownsville, bounded by 96th Avenue in the south and generally following 126th Street to the east.



2. Richmond East

The proposed changes to the Richmond East electoral district will primarily follow the Provincial electoral ridings, Richmond East – Queensborough, with the addition of parts of Delta, including the western section of North Delta and area in Tilbury bordering the Fraser River.



Public hearing on electoral boundaries set for September in New West

Public hearings will be held around the province to receive input from affected residents, starting in June. In New Westminster, a public hearing has been scheduled for Wednesday, Sept. 14 at 7 p.m. at the Inn at the Quay, 900 Quayside Dr.

Comments and feedback can be sent directly to the commission without attending a hearing – either by email or by using its interactive mapping tool. The details can be found at the Electoral Boundaries Commission's Redistribution 2022 website.²

ANALYSIS

There are advantages for New Westminster in the proposed change.

1. The increase in the number of Members of Parliament (MP) representing New Westminster in Ottawa would be the most significant benefit. This increase may help the current MP advance city strategic issues, especially as the city continues to grow rapidly (Over 11% in the last four years) and face increasingly complex urban issues.
2. The topography and growth of Queensborough, being on an island, would be similar to that experienced in East Richmond. While East Richmond has a significant portion of land that is agricultural, the areas surrounding agricultural land is densifying and there is a significant industrial land base, similar to Queensborough. This may assist affected cities advocating jointly for flood mitigation and climate adaptation resources or resolving issues around densification on a flood plain.
3. And finally the proposed division equalizes the population in both electoral districts. The New Westminster-Bridgeview riding would have 118,422 residents, while Richmond East would have 116,764. With both New Westminster and Queensborough ridings growing rapidly, especially Port Royal, with a 41% increase over the last four years, a rebalancing may be beneficial.

Challenges

While there are benefits, the potential challenges of this proposed reallocation appear to outweigh the benefits:

1. Queensborough residents often perceive their community to be not only physically separated from the mainland of New Westminster, but that the focus of municipal government is primarily on the mainland. This electoral district division may further reinforce that perception of separateness of the two parts of the city divided by the Fraser River. The cohesion of the city between the mainland and Queensborough is valued by Council and this division does not align with that direction.
2. Having three separate urban municipalities represented in each electoral district may create complications and potential competing interests in the electoral district. The Richmond East riding is proposed to not only include Queensborough but also parts of Delta which includes Annacis Island, Tilbury Island and the riverfront as well as part of North Delta. The New Westminster – Bridgeview electoral district still has parts of Burnaby represented but also the north part of Surrey (Bridgeview) as well. This does add complication for MP representation with not only the sheer number of

² <https://www.newwestrecord.ca/local-news/new-westminster-could-lose-queensborough-gain-parts-of-surrey-in-federal-boundary-shift-5331564>

issues and events but especially for cities which have opposing ideological views on issues. The change may result in challenging work for an MP to adequately represent and advocate for constituents, considering the different potential focus areas of each municipal Council and shared values of the community. Some examples of areas include projects that may expand trade corridors or the use of agricultural land for industrial, commercial or residential use.

3. And finally, with three cities included in one electoral district, MPs may be challenged when representing competing cities for limited Federal funding. Funding opportunities are very competitive and local MPs often assist with advancing support for municipal projects. New Westminster may not be able to compete with the resources of significantly larger cities in the same electoral districts, to advance funding submissions and secure additional resources.

Next Steps

A public hearing is scheduled in New Westminster on Wednesday, Sept. 14 at 7 p.m. at the Inn at the Quay, 900 Quayside Dr.

Staff are recommending a letter be sent to the Electoral Boundaries Commission for BC outlining the challenges with the proposed changes.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications from this report.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL LIAISON

This report was conducted in liaison with the City Clerk's Office and the Office of the CAO.

OPTIONS

1. Council direct staff to issue a letter to the Electoral Boundaries Commission for British Columbia (BC) expressing concerns with the proposed redistribution of federal electoral districts to adjust electoral boundaries to create two electoral districts in New Westminster: New Westminster-Bridgeview and Richmond East.;
or
2. Council provide other direction.

CONCLUSION

The Chief Electoral Officer will be applying the representation formula found in the Constitution to determine the new allocation of seats across Canada. They are proposing an adjustment of boundaries to create two electoral districts in New Westminster: New Westminster-Bridgeview and Richmond East. This is intended to equalize population between the districts, the BC Electoral Commission proposes the

inclusion of parts of Delta to the Richmond-East district and parts of North Surrey to New Westminster-Bridgeview district.

Staff are recommending a letter be sent to the Electoral Boundary Commission for BC expressing concerns with the proposed redistribution.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Timeline for the Redistribution of Federal Electoral Districts

Attachment 2: Current and Proposed New Westminster Electoral Districts

Attachment 3: 2012 Resolution to the Federal Electoral Reform Commission

APPROVALS

This report was prepared by:

Denise A. Tambellini, Manager Intergovernmental Relations

This report was reviewed by:

Jacque Killawee, City Clerk & Chief Election Officer

Emilie Adin Director, Climate Action, Planning and Development

This report was approved by:

Lisa Spitale, Chief Administrative Officer

Denise A. Tambellini, Manager Intergovernmental Relations