

REPORT

Mayor's Office

To: Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council
Date: June 26, 2023

From: Denise A Tambellini Intergovernmental and Community Relations Manager
File:

Item #: 2023-443

Subject: **British Columbia Electoral Boundaries Commission Reform Recommendations - June 2023**

RECOMMENDATION

That Council accept this report for information on the recommendations of the British Columbia Electoral Boundaries Commission.

PURPOSE

This report outlines the recommendations of the Final Report of the BC Electoral Boundaries Commission regarding proposed changes to the BC Electoral Boundaries in New Westminster.

SUMMARY

The BC Electoral Boundaries Commission's Final Report recommendations were released in April 2023. The report recommend the increase in electoral districts in New Westminster from two to three. Based on community feedback and the rapid growth and issues surrounding New Westminster and other urban cities, increased Provincial representation was requested by Council and a delegation presented to the commission when the first report was released in late 2022 recommending five electoral districts.

BACKGROUND

The BC Electoral Boundaries Commission is an independent and non-partisan commission appointed to review provincial electoral district boundaries. The

Commission makes proposals to the Legislative Assembly on the area, boundaries, and names of electoral districts to be used in the next two provincial general elections. This ensures that each part of BC has effective representation.

The Legislative Assembly reviews the Commission's proposals and votes to approve them, reject them, or approve them with alterations. If the Commission's proposals are approved or approved with alterations, the government must introduce them as a Bill.

Under the [Electoral Boundaries Commission Act](#), a BC Electoral Boundaries Commission must be appointed within one year of General Voting Day after every second provincial general election. General Voting Day for the 2020 Provincial General Election was October 24, 2020 with the three members of the current Commission (the "commissioners") appointed on October 21, 2021.

The members of the current BC Electoral Boundaries Commission are:

- Justice Nitya Iyer of the Supreme Court of British Columbia (chair)
- Linda Tynan, Local Government Management Consultant, and
- Anton Boegman, British Columbia's Chief Electoral Officer

The Commission may recommend up to 93 electoral districts (there are currently 87 districts in the province).

The Commission heard from British Columbians before publishing its preliminary report in the Fall 2022 and final reports in April 2023. Reports were made online at: <https://bcebc.ca/your-voice/> or in writing to info@bcebc.ca.

On May 30th, 2022 a report was presented to Council on the proposed changes being investigated by the BC Electoral Commission (attachment 1). In November 2022, a city delegation including the Mayor and the Manager Intergovernmental presented to the Commission regarding the challenges Council had with suggested changes which included carving up New Westminster to five ridings and having no one riding with the majority of the population being from New Westminster.

ANALYSIS

On April 3, 2023 the Final Report of the British Columbia Electoral Boundaries Commission was released. The commission conducted 13 public hearings, where they heard from 76 presenters. They received more than 800 submissions. On November 23, 2022, they held hearings for Members of the Legislative Assembly, where they heard 35 presentations. The Commission integrated population, population growth, geography, transportation routes and internet connectivity from a number of sources as well as the history of the electoral boundaries. The report is included for information (attachment 2).

They are proposing six new electoral districts with four in the Lower Mainland using 2021 Census data. This potentially increases the number of Electoral Districts in BC from 87 to 93 districts.

They propose adjusting existing boundaries so that New Westminster residents are represented by three ridings instead of two ridings:

- Burnaby-New Westminster,
- New Westminster-Coquitlam and
- Richmond-Queensborough.

This is perceived to allow for expected growth, keeps the urban core of New Westminster intact and avoids splitting the community into too many electoral districts, which would reduce effective representation. In light of the principle of balancing populations in neighbouring areas, it is proposed to move Coquitlam's Cariboo neighbourhood into New Westminster-Coquitlam.

The community expressed different opinions about whether the New Westminster neighbourhood of Queensborough, which was moved into Richmond-Delta in the 2015 electoral boundary adjustment, should remain in a Richmond riding or return to New Westminster. The Commission proposes keeping it where it is because moving it would neither improve effective representation nor better balance electoral district populations.

New Westminster is proposed to be divided into three electoral districts:

Electoral District	Population	Deviation (%)	Area (sq. km)
Burnaby-New Westminster	53,035	-1.4	9
New Westminster-Coquitlam	58,003	7.9	13
Richmond Queensborough	54,947	2.2	90

Electoral District Summary Description

1. Burnaby-New Westminster

This electoral district includes the New Westminster neighbourhoods of Kelvin, Eastburn, Connaught Heights and the adjacent Burnaby neighbourhoods of Middlegate and Edmonds. Its boundaries follow Imperial Street in the north, Griffiths Drive in the west, Sixth Avenue in the south, and McBride Boulevard, Cumberland Street and Newcombe Street in the east.

2. New Westminster-Coquitlam

This riding consists of downtown New Westminster south and east of Sixth and Tenth Avenues. It includes the neighbourhoods of Queen's Park, Sapperton and Brunette Creek, as well as the southwestern part of the Coquitlam neighbourhood of Cariboo. Its boundaries run along Austin Avenue and Blue Mountain Street in the north and east, and they follow the Fraser River to the south and west.

3. Richmond-Queensborough

This riding encompasses the eastern portion of Lulu Island, including the New Westminster neighbourhood of Queensborough and the Richmond neighbourhood of Southarm. Its western boundary follows No. 3, No. 4 and No. 5 Roads, as well as Shell Road. Its northern, southern, and eastern boundaries follow the Fraser River.

A map of boundaries is included for information (attachment 3).

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications for this report.

OPTIONS

1. That Council accept this report for information on the submission to the British Columbia Electoral Boundaries Commission; or
2. Council provide other direction.

CONCLUSION

The BC Electoral Boundaries Commission's final recommendations were released in April 2023. The report recommend the increase in electoral districts in New Westminster from two to three. Based on community feedback and the rapid growth and issues surrounding New Westminster and other urban cities, increased Provincial representation was requested by Council. A delegation presented to the commission when the preliminary report was released in late 2022 recommending five electoral districts. This report is presented for information.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: May 30, 2022 Council Report, Letter to the BC Electoral Boundaries Commission

Attachment 2: Final Report BC Electoral Reform Commission

Attachment 3: Map of Proposed New Westminster Electoral Districts

This report was prepared by:

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This report was approved by:

Lisa Spitale, Chief Administrative Officer