

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

REPORT

Department Name

To: Mayor Cote and Members of Council **Date:** May 30, 2022

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

Item #: [Report Number]

Subject: British Columbia Electoral Boundaries Commission Reform
Submission - May 2022

RECOMMENDATION

That Council accept this report for information on the submission to the British Columbia Electoral Boundaries Commission.

PURPOSE

This report will outline the work of and submission to the BC Electoral Boundaries Commission regarding the need for increased Provincial representation in New Westminster.

SUMMARY

The BC Electoral Boundaries Commission is working on the electoral district boundaries for the next two provincial elections in BC. These boundaries are important because each electoral district is represented by one elected representative in the BC legislature. Based on community feedback and the rapid growth and issues surrounding New Westminster and other urban cities, increased Provincial representation was requested.

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. The three members of the current Commission (the "commissioners") were 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 wants to hear from British Columbians before publishing its preliminary and final reports. Reports can be made online at this site: <https://bcebc.ca/your-voice/> or in writing to info@bcebc.ca, or by mail to PO Box 9275 Stn Prov Govt Victoria, BC V8W 9J6.

The Commission is accepting input to help it prepare its preliminary report between now and 4:30 p.m. on May 31, 2022. The Commission's preliminary report is expected to be published in fall 2022.

ANALYSIS

Based on community feedback, along with demonstrated rapid growth of 11.2% over the last four years and an increase in complex urban issues in the city of New Westminster, the attached letter was provided to the BC Electoral Boundaries Commission from the Mayor (attachment 1) requesting increased Provincial representation for the city.

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 is working on the electoral district boundaries for the next two provincial elections in BC. These boundaries are important because each electoral district is represented by one elected representative in the BC legislature. Based on community feedback, along with demonstrated rapid growth and an increase in complex urban issues in the city of New Westminster, increased Provincial representation was requested. This report is presented for information.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1. Letter to the BC Electoral Boundaries Commission

This report was prepared by:
Denise A Tambellini Intergovernmental and Community Relations Manager

This report was approved by:
Lisa Spitale, Chief Administrative Officer



Jonathan X. Côté
Mayor

May 11, 2022

British Columbia Electoral Boundaries Commission
PO Box 9275 Stn, Prov Govt
Victoria, BC
V8W 9J6

Dear BC Electoral Commission,

I am honored to be writing on behalf of City Council to request an increase in provincial representation in our city. New Westminister is a multi-ethnic, diverse and densely populated, Metro Vancouver city with a current population of approximately 82,500 residents. The overlapping COVID-19, housing and opioid crisis' has created unique and complex issues exaggerated by the rapidly densifying community. I would like to share some of the unique factors affecting our city to form the basis of our request for increased provincial representation.

New Westminister is in the geographical centre of the Lower Mainland and is the second densest populated city in Canada (next to Vancouver). It is a key urban hub and over 2.5 million vehicles travel through the city per week. The new Pattullo Bridge will be operational within the next few years and will improve accessibility to and from the city. The transportation issues for the city are complex but have significant implications for the Province and the Government of Canada. Along with the five Sky Train Stations, New Westminister also has a regional hospital that serves as a trauma and mental health hub for the Lower Mainland and beyond. The area surrounding Royal Columbian Hospital's two Sky Train Stations continues to attract development. The waterfront along the Fraser River also provides an attractive location for high rise developments with multiple large housing projects. The school district is experiencing significant growth and cannot keep up with the number of students and families in the district and we have seen an increase in marginalized and unsheltered populations.

New Westminister Council has declared a climate emergency. Sustainable transportation and a livable, vibrant city are important for this community to thrive, but there are many factors and stakeholders to consider. The Fraser River, a traditional First Nations fishing territory for many nations, runs through the city. Most railways use the rail track that passes through the city and over \$5 billion in trade is moved this way to the rest of Canada. Almost 100% of vehicles imported from Asia are transported by rail through New Westminister. There are several growing business districts and the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority is expanding operations in the city, along with rail traffic.

With a growth rate of 11.2% over the last four years (Canadian average of 5.2%), the area continues to densify and discourage low density sprawl. New Westminster land is scarce and in 2021, the city had the second highest population density of any census subdivision in Canada at 5,052 people/sq.km, after Vancouver at 5,750 people/sq.km. The Census tract 206.00 (Downtown between 4th St and 8th St) had the highest population density in Canada in 2021. Between 2016 and 2021, Metro Vancouver grew by 7.3%, while British Columbia grew at a faster rate of 7.6%. New Westminster grew even more quickly at a rate of 11.2% and added 7,920 people. This was the fourth fastest growth rate among 21 Metro Vancouver municipalities.

In response to significant growth, Statistics Canada has increased the number of census tracts to 16 from 13, prior to 2016. Several larger census tracts were divided. These include: Port Royal and most of Queensborough, Quayside, Stewardson Way, Downtown west of 8th Street, Glenbrooke South, and Massey Victory Heights. Population grew fastest in Queensborough and Port Royal had the fastest growth rate of 41.7%. While the change is significant, the current municipal densification is in alignment with the City of New Westminster's Official Community Plan and Metro Vancouver's Regional Growth Strategy.

New Westminster is seeing unprecedented growth with complex and challenging issues. There is a need for increased Provincial representation as the number of members of parliament are not keeping pace with the rapid growth and the complex urban issues facing the city. With the extent of change and a growth rate of 11.2% over the last four years, increased provincial representation in our community is essential.

Please let me know if you have questions or require more information. We hope that you will consider our request.

Respectfully,



Jonathan X. Côté
MAYOR