



Jonathan X. Côté
Mayor

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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