

An aerial photograph of a mountain landscape. The foreground is dominated by a calm, turquoise lake that perfectly reflects the surrounding forest. The forest is a mix of vibrant yellow and orange deciduous trees and dense green coniferous trees. In the background, dark, rocky mountain peaks rise above the treeline. The overall scene is serene and scenic.

# Part 1 – Executive Summary





## Part 1 – Executive Summary

B.C.'s Legislative Assembly currently consists of 79 MLAs, each MLA representing a single-member electoral district.

The *Electoral Boundaries Commission Act* requires that a new electoral boundaries commission be established after every second provincial election (once every eight years), to propose changes to the electoral boundaries based on recent population changes.

### *The commission*

In late 2005 our three-person independent, non-partisan Electoral Boundaries Commission was appointed.

Our commissioners are:

- Bruce Cohen, Chair, a B.C. Supreme Court justice,
- Stewart Ladyman, a retired school

- district administrator and,
- Harry Neufeld, B.C.'s Chief Electoral Officer.

### *The commission's mandate*

The Legislative Assembly assigned two tasks to us:

1. Propose new electoral boundaries for the current single member plu-

rality (SMP) electoral system, sometimes called the first-past-the-post electoral system. We may propose an increase in the number of MLAs, from the current 79 up to a maximum of 85.

2. Propose electoral boundaries, and the number of MLAs to be elected in each district, for the B.C. single

transferable vote (BC-STV) electoral system proposed by the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform in 2004.

We must propose that the same number of MLAs be elected under the SMP electoral system and under the proposed BC-STV electoral system.

### *The legal framework*

In developing our proposals for SMP electoral districts, the *Electoral Boundaries Commission Act* instructs us to be governed by the following:

- that the principle of representation by population be achieved, recognizing the imperatives imposed by geographical and demographic realities, the legacy of our history and the need to balance the community interests of the people of British Columbia;
- to achieve that principle, we are permitted to deviate from the provincial electoral quotient by no more than plus or minus 25 percent; and,
- we are permitted to propose electoral districts with deviations exceeding plus or minus 25 percent where we consider that very special circumstances exist.

In deciding whether to propose an increase in the number of SMP electoral districts, we must take into account:

- geographic and demographic considerations, including the sparsity, density or rate of growth of the

population of any part of British Columbia and the accessibility, size or physical configuration of any part of British Columbia; and,

- the availability of means of communication and transportation between various parts of British Columbia.

We are also governed by the constitutional guarantee of the right to vote, enshrined in the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that: “the purpose of the right to vote enshrined in s. 3 of the *Charter* is not equality of voting power *per se*, but the right to ‘effective representation.’”

Consequently, our legal and constitutional obligation is to propose electoral districts that come as close as possible to the provincial electoral quotient (total provincial population divided by the number of electoral districts), and to deviate from that quotient only to the extent necessary to ensure effective representation.

### *Proposed BC-STV electoral districts*

In May 2009 British Columbians will vote in a referendum to decide whether B.C. should adopt the BC-STV electoral system that was proposed by the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform in 2004. If the referendum passes, the new electoral system will take effect starting with the 2013 provincial general election.

In order that people voting in the 2009 referendum will have a clear understanding of how electoral districts would be configured under the BC-STV electoral system, the Legislative Assembly instructed our commission to make proposals as to:

- the areas, boundaries and names of proposed BC-STV electoral districts; and,
- the number of MLAs for each of those electoral districts.

### *The challenges*

Boundary setting in British Columbia is a complex and difficult task, given our province's geography and very uneven population distribution. The northern two-thirds of the province is sparsely populated, with most people living along or very near the major highways, with vast uninhabited tracts of land farther north. However, in the Okanagan, the Lower Mainland and southeastern Vancouver Island, densely populated urban areas predominate.

The 2006 census and population projections provided by BC Stats indicate that the trend toward greater urbanization will continue – urban centres will grow, at the expense of rural areas of the province. This trend of population growth and movement poses a challenge for our commission, as we struggle with the competing claims of achieving relative voter parity and ensuring effective representation.



### *Public input*

In the fall of 2006 our three commissioners visited 30 communities throughout the province – from Nelson to Fort Nelson, Surrey to Smithers and Port Hardy to Prince George – to hear from residents, community leaders and anyone who wanted to share their views with a commissioner regarding community history, transportation and communications challenges, connections between specific communities and boundary setting. More than 500 people participated in the consultation sessions.

In addition, we received more than 150 written submissions, offering specific, general and, at times, conflicting boundary suggestions.

### *The commission's process*

When the last commission reported in 1999, six of its 79 proposed electoral districts had deviations in excess of minus 25 percent – in those six, the commission found that “very special circumstances” existed. Due to population changes since then, that number has now increased from six to 13. In addition, four current electoral districts now have deviations in excess of plus 25 percent.

We have concluded that “very special circumstances” do not exist in all 17 of these districts.

We began (consistent with the practice of previous commissions) by grouping the existing 79 electoral districts into

12 regions. Within each region, we “rebalanced” the population among electoral districts. However, that process still resulted in 10 of 79 electoral districts having deviations outside the plus or minus 25 percent statutory limit, and resulted in numerous important community interests being violated.

We then worked through each region in turn, examining factors such as current and projected population, the history of redistricting in that region, community interests, and transportation and communication challenges. It was an iterative process. We began with 79 electoral districts, and embraced without qualification the statutory authority to increase that number to 85, if we concluded that we should do so.

At each stage, we made decisions about whether the number of electoral districts in a region should be preserved, or whether there should be an increase or decrease. At the conclusion of this iterative process, we concluded that we should propose that the overall number of SMP electoral districts be increased from 79 to 81.

### *The commission's proposed SMP electoral districts*

We are consequently proposing, as set out below, that there be one less electoral district in each of three regions, and that there be one additional electoral district in each of five other regions.

Given a provincial population of 4,113,487, and 81 proposed SMP electoral districts, the “provincial electoral quotient” referred to above equals 50,784. In the tables that follow, the “Deviation” column shows how far each proposed electoral district’s population is above or below the provincial electoral quotient.

### *The North*

We propose that the number of electoral districts in the North be reduced from eight to seven (see map at page 87):

Electoral District	Population	Deviation
North Coast	23,135	-54.4%
Skeena-Stikine	38,199	-24.8%
Bulkley-Nechako	38,243	-24.7%
Prince George	50,893	+0.2%
Fraser-Fort George	41,371	-18.5%
Peace River	41,157	-19.0%
Northland	23,881	-53.0%

### *Cariboo-Thompson*

We propose that the number of electoral districts in the Cariboo-Thompson be reduced from five to four (see map at page 109):

Electoral District	Population	Deviation
Cariboo-Chilcotin	45,104	-11.2%
Cariboo-Fraser	42,170	-17.0%
Kamloops-South Thompson	51,812	+2.0%
Kamloops-North Thompson	50,042	-1.5%

### *Okanagan*

We propose that the number of electoral districts in the Okanagan be increased from six to seven (see map at page 125):

Electoral District	Population	Deviation
Shuswap	53,658	+5.7%
Vernon-Monashee	58,538	+15.3%
Kelowna-Lake Country	51,968	+2.3%
Kelowna-Mission	53,231	+4.8%
Kelowna-Westside	51,850	+2.1%
Penticton	53,777	+5.9%
Boundary-Similkameen	43,052	-15.2%

### *Columbia-Kootenay*

We propose that the number of electoral districts in the Columbia-Kootenay be reduced from four to three (see map at page 145):

Electoral District	Population	Deviation
Kootenay East	39,951	-21.3%
Kootenay South	50,851	+0.1%
Kootenay West	54,025	+6.4%

### *Fraser Valley*

We propose that the number of electoral districts in the Fraser Valley be increased from eight to nine (see map at page 171):

Electoral District	Population	Deviation
Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows	50,474	-0.6%
Maple Ridge-Mission	50,193	-1.2%
Mission-Clayburn	52,874	+4.1%
Langley West	53,231	+4.8%
Langley East	50,805	0.0%
Abbotsford-Aldergrove	50,965	+0.4%
Abbotsford Centre	52,495	+3.4%
Abbotsford-Chilliwack	49,863	-1.8%
Chilliwack-Hope	48,807	-3.9%

### *Tri-Cities (Port Moody-Coquitlam-Port Coquitlam)*

We propose that the number of electoral districts in the Tri-Cities be four (see map at page 191):

Electoral District	Population	Deviation
Port Moody-Coquitlam	51,539	+1.5%
Coquitlam-Maillardville	46,315	-8.8%
Coquitlam-Burke Mountain	46,732	-8.0%
Port Coquitlam	52,692	+3.8%

### *Surrey*

We propose that the number of electoral districts in Surrey be increased from seven to eight (see map at page 207):

Electoral District	Population	Deviation
Surrey-Whalley	51,283	+1.0%
Surrey-Guildford	51,801	+2.0%
Surrey-Green Timbers	51,142	+0.7%
Surrey-Fleetwood	51,985	+2.4%
Surrey-Newton	53,711	+5.8%
Surrey-Panorama	52,060	+2.5%
Surrey-Cloverdale	50,875	+0.2%
Surrey-White Rock	51,128	+0.7%



***Richmond and Delta***

We propose that the number of electoral districts in Richmond and Delta be maintained at five (see map at page 225):

<b>Electoral District</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Deviation</b>
Richmond Centre	55,942	+10.2%
Richmond-Steveston	60,721	+19.6%
Richmond East	57,798	+13.8%
Delta South	45,774	-9.9%
Delta North	51,628	+1.7%

***Burnaby and New Westminster***

We propose that the number of electoral districts be four in Burnaby and one in New Westminster (see map at page 241):

<b>Electoral District</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Deviation</b>
Burnaby-Brentwood	51,274	+1.0%
Burnaby-Lougheed	50,229	-1.1%
Burnaby-Willingdon	50,957	+0.3%
Burnaby-Edmonds	50,339	-0.9%
New Westminster	58,549	+15.3%

***Vancouver***

We propose that the number of electoral districts in Vancouver be increased from 10 to 11 (see map at page 261):

<b>Electoral District</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Deviation</b>
Vancouver-Hastings	55,595	+9.5%
Vancouver-Kingsway	57,185	+12.6%
Vancouver-Fraserview	57,276	+12.8%
Vancouver-Mount Pleasant	52,628	+3.6%
Vancouver-Kensington	54,967	+8.2%
Vancouver-West End	48,725	-4.1%
Vancouver-False Creek	43,568	-14.2%
Vancouver-Fairview	52,020	+2.4%
Vancouver-Langara	57,047	+12.3%
Vancouver-Point Grey	54,823	+8.0%
Vancouver-Quilchena	56,409	+11.1%

***North Shore***

We propose that the number of electoral districts for the North Shore remain at four (see map at page 283):

<b>Electoral District</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Deviation</b>
North Vancouver-Seymour	52,164	+2.7%
North Vancouver-Lonsdale	54,600	+7.5%
West Vancouver-Capilano	54,238	+6.8%
West Vancouver-Sea to Sky	49,161	-3.2%

*Vancouver Island and South Coast*

We propose that the number of electoral districts for Vancouver Island and the South Coast remain at 14 (see map at page 303):

<b>Electoral District</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Deviation</b>
<i>Northern Island and South Coast</i>		
North Island	53,654	+5.7%
Comox Valley	55,543	+9.4%
<i>Powell River–Sunshine Coast</i>		
Coast	47,109	-7.2%
Central Island	46,214	-9.0%

*Mid-Island*

Parksville-Qualicum	53,318	+5.0%
Nanaimo	53,940	+6.2%
Nanaimo–North Cowichan	52,695	+3.8%
Cowichan–Goldstream	54,946	+8.2%

*Capital Region**Saanich North and*

the Islands	55,201	+8.7%
Saanich West	56,548	+11.4%
Saanich East	51,880	+2.2%
Victoria–Oak Bay	57,571	+13.4%
Victoria-Esquimalt	57,133	+12.5%
Juan de Fuca	56,240	+10.7%

*The commission's proposed BC-STV electoral districts*

We propose that the BC-STV electoral districts be created by combining adjacent SMP electoral districts that respect, as much as possible, important geographical, demographic, historical and community interests. We also propose that the number of MLAs to be elected in each BC-STV electoral district (district magnitude) vary between two and six, and that a district magnitude of two apply only to sparsely populated areas of the province.

We propose that there be 20 BC-STV electoral districts electing 81 MLAs. (see maps beginning at page 333):

<b>BC-STV district</b>	<b>No. of MLAs</b>	<b>Area in sq. km.</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Deviation</b>
Northeast	2	274,752	65,038	-36.0%
Northwest	2	299,269	61,334	-39.6%
North Central	3	130,074	130,507	-14.3%
Cariboo-Thompson	4	136,209	189,128	-6.9%
Okanagan-Shuswap	4	15,387	217,395	+7.0%
Okanagan-Boundary	3	19,013	148,679	-2.4%
Columbia-Kootenay	3	76,132	144,827	-4.9%
Fraser Valley East	4	11,810	204,039	+0.4%
Fraser Valley West	5	2,812	255,668	+0.7%
Tri-Cities	4	763	197,278	-2.9%
Surrey North	4	129	206,211	+1.5%
Surrey South	4	258	207,774	+2.3%
Richmond-Delta	5	993	271,863	+7.1%
Burnaby-New Westminster	5	115	261,348	+2.9%
Vancouver East	5	58	277,651	+9.3%
Vancouver West	6	108	312,592	+2.6%
North Shore	4	10,115	210,163	+3.5%
North Island-South Coast	4	81,344	202,520	-0.3%
Mid-Island	4	5,957	214,899	+5.8%
Capital Region	6	4,745	334,573	+9.8%