



June 4, 2021

Brad Sperling
Chair, Peace River Regional District
Email: prrd.dc@prrd.bc.ca

Attention: Brad Sperling

Electoral Boundaries Commission Act

Dear Brad Sperling and Board:

Thank you for your letter of May 21, 2021, addressed to Premier John Horgan and the Honourable David Eby, Attorney General and Minister responsible for Housing. I have been asked to reply on their behalf.

The amendments to the *Electoral Boundaries Commission Act* (the Act) introduced in this legislative sitting are intended to ensure that the next electoral boundaries commission has the flexibility it needs to exercise independent judgement in balancing representation by population with other effective representation concerns – including those that tend to arise in rural and remote regions.

As your board is likely aware, since its enactment in 1989, the Act has required that to advance the principle of representation by population, the commission should generally strive to recommend electoral districts with populations that are within plus/minus 25% of the average electoral district population. The Act has also always provided the commission with authority to make exceptions to that general rule, allowing the commission to recommend electoral districts with populations outside of the 25% deviation range.

While the bill would remove the prohibition on reducing the number of electoral districts in the three specified northern and interior regions defined in the Act, rest assured that the commission would retain the authority to vary from the principle of representation by population where the commission considers it necessary to provide for effective representation. The bill specifies that in considering whether the need for effective representation warrants exceeding the 25% deviation principle in an electoral district, the commission may take into account special demographic and geographic considerations, including manageable geographic size of electoral districts.

.../2

Brad Sperling
Page 2

The amendments to the Act are intended to be consistent with guidance from Canadian courts, which have emphasized the need for balance: reasonably equal electoral district populations are the general goal, but exceptions from the application of the principle of representation by population may be necessary to accommodate Canada's geography and diversity.

The electoral boundaries commission must be appointed by October 24, 2021. I am sure the input that you have provided to the Premier and Attorney General will also be very valuable to the electoral boundaries commission once it is established.

Sincerely,

Richard J.M. Fyfe, Q.C.
Deputy Attorney General
and Deputy Minister Responsible for Housing

pc: The Honourable John Horgan



PEACE RIVER REGIONAL DISTRICT

May 21, 2021

File: 0400.20.1

The Honourable John Horgan
Premier of BC
PO Box 9041 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E1

The Honourable David Eby
Minister of Attorney General
PO Box 9044 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Via Email: premier@gov.bc.ca

AG.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Dear Premier and Minister Eby:

RE: Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act - proposed amendments

At its May 13, 2021 meeting the Regional Board of the Peace River Regional District (PRRD) expressed concern over the recently announced amendment to the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act.

The Regional Board passed the following resolution:

"That a letter be forwarded to the Electoral Boundaries Commission to express concern that proposed amendments to the Electoral Boundary Commission Act could result in the redrawing of a large geographic area in Northeast BC which may be represented by a single MLA, and request that this concern be taken to the Legislative Assembly, with copies to the Premier of BC, North and South Peace MLA's, North Central Local Government Association, Northern Rockies Regional Municipality, and member municipalities."

The BC Peace Region, although not as densely populated as other regions of the province, is a vast and diverse region. Less legislative representation would not provide fair access and representation for our rural communities.

The Board looks forward to your response.

Yours truly,

Brad Sperling

Brad Sperling
Chair

c. Mr. Bob Zimmer, MP for Prince George – Peace River – Northern Rockies Bob.Zimmer.C1@parl.gc.ca

diverse. vast. abundant.

PLEASE REPLY TO:

☒ Box 810, 1981 Alaska Ave, Dawson Creek, BC V1G 4H8 Tel: (250) 784-3200 or (800) 670-7773 Fax: (250) 784-3201 Email: prrd.dc@prrd.bc.ca
☐ 9505 100 St, Fort St. John, BC V1J 4N4 Tel: (250) 785-8084 Fax: (250) 785-1125 Email: prrd.fsj@prrd.bc.ca