

April 23, 2015

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

Re: BC Electoral Boundaries Commission Preliminary Report - March 26, 2015

Dear Commissioners Thomas J. Melnick, Beverly Busson and Keith Archer:

The Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce would like to express our strong opposition to the recommendations made in your Preliminary Report with respect to the changes proposed for the Fraser Valley.

Your report states that one of the principles identified by the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act governing your proposals is: *"the principle of representation by population be achieved, recognizing the imperatives imposed by geographical and demographic realities, the legacy of our history and the needs to balance the community interests of the people of British Columbia"*.

In attempting to deal with population growth in Richmond, Surrey and Langley your proposed realignment of the ridings in the Abbotsford area significantly fracture the representation of the communities of Langley, Abbotsford and Chilliwack to the detriment of its citizens and of its elected representatives.

Ridings in the Fraser Valley are currently divided on a north/south orientation that tends to coincide with established municipal boundaries. As a result, elected representatives are able to concentrate more fully on the specific needs of the unique areas and of the population they represent. Your proposal to use a major Highway, Highway 1 in this instance, totally ignores the regulatory, operational, economic, and land use realities of this region. The proposed boundaries tear these communities apart and put them together in a way that creates significant disadvantages depending on which portion of the riding in which you reside.

There are several major distinctions which set these communities apart.

- Regional Governance - Langley is part of the Metro Vancouver Regional District while Abbotsford and Chilliwack are part of the Fraser Valley Regional District. Langley is part of Translink, while Abbotsford is not. There are many different competing priorities as a result of these differences, often in direct opposition of each other. The conflicting interests of these citizens cannot be properly represented in these circumstances by MLAs representing both sides of the same issue.
- In addition, Langley and Abbotsford have different School Districts and policing service in Abbotsford is a municipal force, while Langley utilizes the RCMP.
- Operationally it can be a major disadvantage for an elected representative to maintain a presence in multiple locations. We currently experience that in one of our current ridings, namely

Abbotsford-Mission. Maintaining duplicate organizations, relationships, communications and public contact reduces the effectiveness of representation. The proposed ridings would see our community go from two, to one dedicated representative and from one, to four representatives with a diminished capacity.

- There are several major economic factors as well. Agriculture is a primary economic driver in Abbotsford with an annual economic value close to \$2.0 billion. Abbotsford has a defined urban boundary and works to protect the value and integrity of the Agricultural Land Reserve. The proposed redistribution would see significant portions of the highly productive ALR land move into ridings that have a significant population base outside of Abbotsford. This has the potential to have a detrimental effect on the preservation of the integrity of this valuable asset in light of increased demand for residential and industrial land use.
- The Abbotsford International Airport is a major Abbotsford economic asset located in a proposed riding that, again, would see the major population base and significant influence located in another municipality.
- Our University of the Fraser Valley would also be disadvantaged by being included in the Langley riding. Moreover, Trinity Western University would be split under the proposed changes.

Currently we are well served by our two dedicated MLAs and one who looks after Abbotsford and Mission. In this case it works well because of the close ties between the two communities - we are in the same Regional District and we share transportation, water, sewer and recycling services. In addition, the population in the riding in the two municipalities is more evenly distributed.

The effectiveness of our elected representatives is greatly enhanced by their knowledge of and presence in our community. The new boundaries proposed in your report will not serve us well and, in our opinion, will significantly reduce that effectiveness.

Yours truly,



Allan Asaph
Executive Director

cc: Michael De Jong, MLA - Abbotsford West
Darryl Plecas, MLA - Abbotsford South
Simon Gibson, MLA - Abbotsford-Mission
Mayor and Council, City of Abbotsford