



## REPORT OF COUNCIL-IN-COMMITTEE

*For City Council – January 9, 2023*

*Additional Item*

**From:** Office of the City Clerk

**Date:** Monday, January 09, 2023

**Title:** Letter to NB Electoral Boundaries and Representation Commission

**Description:**

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Council-in-Committee, at its session held on January 9, 2023 considered an administrative report from the Project Manager Municipal Reform which sought Council direction on a draft response letter outlining the City's concerns and recommendations in consideration of the Commission's preliminary report.

New Brunswick's Electoral Boundaries & Representation Commission has invited the public to submit comments in response to their Preliminary Report. Staff have prepared a draft letter for City Council's consideration which reiterates the concerns City Council previously shared with the Commission, and which also outlines further concerns in response to the Commission's Preliminary Report. These concerns are further detailed in the attached draft letter, and are summarized as follows:

The City's preliminary comments as shared in Council's previous letter, as well as during the Commission's Public Hearing in Fredericton on September 15, 2022:

1. The current Fredericton region ridings are inconsistent with the established electoral boundary alignment for the Province's other major cities;
2. Urban versus rural communities of interest are not fairly or appropriately aligned for the electorate of the Greater Fredericton area; and,
3. City Council specifically requests that four ridings be created that are wholly contained within the 2023 boundaries of the City of Fredericton.

Additional concerns pertaining to the Commission's Preliminary Report:

1. Urban district boundaries do not align communities of interest within the Region's urban centre. The Commission is recommending the configuration of electoral district boundaries such that they are physically split in alignment with major arterials (i.e. Regent Street on the south side and Brookside Drive on the north side). This configuration does not consider the City's urban structure or respective interests of the urban-centered electorate.
2. The urban electorate is disproportionately distributed among rural electoral districts. Of particular concern is the general observation that rural district alignment throughout the Province does not appear to divide rural communities

- into different electoral districts. However, there appears to be less emphasis and consideration on achieving the same in some urban areas including Fredericton. Equal representation is not achieved when the urban electorate is consistently distributed among rural electoral districts in order to achieve ridings with the required population for district quotients.
3. Proposed District 42 Fredericton-York does not allow for projected urban growth. Though the proposed district electorate of 12,464 electors is within the allowable electoral quotient deviation, the Commission may not be aware and thus may not have fully considered that the portion of the City proposed to be located within District 42 is one of the fastest growing areas of the City.
  4. Communities of interest cannot be appropriately represented when divided among multiple electoral districts. Of particular concern is the Commission's proposal to perpetuate the division of the Marysville Historic District, a community unto itself, into three rural ridings. This proposal does not respect communities of interest or local government boundaries and demonstrates a lack of respect for the Marysville electorate. This is particularly true when considering that the opportunity exists to maintain the community of interest for this urban, historic area by instead placing the communities of Stanley, Minto and Chipman, for example, into a single district. This alternate approach would better align urban and rural voters with their respective communities of interest and ensure established communities are not divided among multiple voting districts.
  5. A number of the above concerns could be effectively remedied through rethinking the boundaries as currently proposed. Namely, by shifting the urban and rural electors within the Districts of '38 Fredericton – Grand Lake' and '42 Fredericton – York'. By placing the rural voters of District 38 with the rural voters of District 42, and placing the urban voters of District 38 with the urban voters of District 42, the required electoral quotient would continue to be achieved in each District, while also:
    - i. Aligning urban voters and rural voters within respective electoral districts thus achieving more effective representation for matters of provincial concern;
    - ii. Ensuring communities of interest are combined rather than divided;
    - iii. Mitigating concern that the Districts as currently proposed may not have sufficiently accounted for the City's projected growth within the Region; and,
    - iv. Improve the representation of Marysville which is deserving of fair treatment.

It is noted that in addition to the proposed letter, and pending City Council's direction on this matter, Deputy Mayor Greg Ericson would again represent City Council in presenting these additional concerns during the Commission's second round of public hearings for the Capital Region on January 13, 2023.

The Committee directed that the following resolution be forwarded to City Council for consideration:

BE IT RESOLVED that the Council of the City of Fredericton hereby agrees with the intent of the proposed letter to New Brunswick's Electoral Boundaries and Representation Commission ("Commission") regarding the Commission's preliminary report and authorizes the Mayor to send the attached letter on behalf of City Council with amendments as discussed.