

Oct. 31, 2022

Secretary
British Columbia Electoral Boundaries Commission
100-1112 Fort Street
Victoria, BC V8V 3K8

info@bcebc.ca

Re: Redistribution of Provincial Electoral Boundaries

To whom it may concern;

The Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce writes regarding the current Provincial Electoral Boundaries Redistribution and the impact on the North Okanagan in B.C.'s Interior.

Specifically, our Chamber has significant concerns about the proposal to divide the City of Vernon between two electoral districts – Vernon-Monashee and Kelowna-Lake Country. Our concerns revolve around the following factors:

- Placing Predator Ridge, Beachcomber Bay, Okanagan Landing and the Bella Vista Highlands into Kelowna-Lake Country will mean that a large portion of Vernon's population will now be separated from the rest of the community at the provincial level;
- All neighbourhoods of Vernon share common municipal services from the City of Vernon, including economic development, planning and infrastructure;
- The interests of approximately 9,000 residents of Predator Ridge, Beachcomber Bay, Okanagan Landing and the Bella Vista Highlands are more in alignment with the remainder of Vernon, District of Coldstream and Regional District of North Okanagan than Lake Country and the more urban Kelowna;
- The City of Vernon is part of the Regional District of North Okanagan and through RDNO, it accesses domestic water, trails and cultural services;
- Any transportation access to Beachcomber Bay, Okanagan Landing and the Bella Vista Highlands is through the City of Vernon;
- Vernon is a single economic and social unit, with businesses supporting consumers in all neighbourhoods, and creating employment for residents throughout the community. Neighbourhoods such as Predator Ridge and Okanagan Landing play a significant role in the local economy;
- Organizations such as the Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce, as well as vital social service agencies, serve all residents and businesses of Vernon.

We appreciate that the Commission is responding to population growth in B.C. by redistributing boundaries, but our Chamber believes it makes sense for the City of Vernon to have a single common representative at the provincial level for the following reasons:

- A single representative will simplify the process for local government to pursue senior government support for joint projects and local services;
- Residents and Businesses Owners will better understand the roles and responsibilities of their representatives within Vernon when there is one electoral district;
- Organizations such as the Chamber can direct limited resources to a single elected representative when advocating on behalf of their membership and community;
- A single Member of the Legislative Assembly will be able to provide effective representation for Vernon.

In the Preliminary Report, the Commission indicates that “the close ties between the communities along Highway 6 (Lumby and Cherryville), Vernon and Coldstream support keeping them in the same electoral district.” We are not suggesting that Cherryville and Lumby be removed from Vernon-Monashee as there is a strong economic and social connection between Vernon and these communities, but the Commission’s argument regarding Lumby and Cherryville also applies to Predator Ridge, Okanagan Landing and the Bella Vista areas of Vernon.

If Predator Ridge, Okanagan Landing and Bella Vista are placed in Kelowna-Lake Country, we are concerned that approximately 9,000 residents of Vernon will effectively have their electoral voice muted by the larger population of Kelowna that will dominate the focus of the MLA.

On behalf of our 600-plus members, we fully support the motion adopted by City of Vernon council May 9, 2022, requesting that “the City of Vernon, District of Coldstream and Areas B and C (of RDNO) remain in the same electoral boundary.” The City of Vernon should not be divided into two separate electoral districts.

If there is any further information that we can provide, please contact us. Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Robin Cardew
President
Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce

Cc. Harwinder Sandhu, Vernon-Monashee MLA
Okanagan Indian Band Chief & Council

City of Vernon Mayor & Council
District of Coldstream Mayor & Council
Regional District of North Okanagan Board of Directors
Okanagan Chambers of Commerce