

October 26, 2017

FINAL REPORT: Electoral Boundary Commission Released

The **Alberta Electoral Boundary Commission** (AEBC) has released its **final report** on their proposed changes to Alberta's provincial electoral boundaries. The report has been submitted to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly where it will be introduced for a motion to be accepted and debated, and will likely result in changes to the **Electoral Boundaries Commission Act**. Though the final report has been released, the findings are not final until **Electoral Boundaries Commission Act** the has been amended.

The final report largely echoes the proposed changes that were found in the AEBCs **interim report** released in June 2017.

The most significant proposed changes to the existing electoral boundaries featured in the interim report are:

- Consolidating four electoral divisions into three in the central northeast area of the province. Those current four electoral divisions are Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, and Bonnyville-Cold Lake.
- Consolidating five electoral divisions into four in the central west area of the province. Those current five electoral divisions are Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, West Yellowhead, Drayton Valley-Devon, Whitecourt-Ste. Anne, and Stony Plain.
- Consolidating seven electoral divisions into six in the eastern side of the province. Those current seven electoral divisions are Battle River-Wainwright, Drumheller-Stettler, Strathmore-Brooks, Little Bow, Cardston-Taber-Warner, Cypress-Medicine Hat, and Vermilion-Lloydminster.
- Creating a new electoral division to the immediate north and west of Calgary, to account for the significant increase in the populations of Airdrie and Cochrane.
- Creation of an additional electoral division in the City of Calgary, to be called Calgary-North East
- Creation of an additional electoral division in the City of Edmonton, to be called Edmonton-South.

As noted above, the changes from the interim report to the final report are minimal but include a decrease in the geographic size of some electoral divisions and a reduction in the degree of variance from the provincial average population for others. As stated in the AEBC's final report, "the vast majority of the recommendations would continue to produce population numbers falling within 10% of provincial average population size. The AEBC also made alterations to avoid dividing counties and to keep communities of interest together, including indigenous populations. It also made changes regarding the naming of some electoral divisions."

AAMDC Analysis

Consistent with the interim report, there could be an adverse impact on rural Alberta's representation in the Alberta Legislature as three seats are to be redistributed from rural areas and allocated towards urban communities. The AEBC did recognize that rural Alberta's population is growing but that the population of Alberta's urban areas are growing at a faster rate and therefore, justified the redistribution of seats.

Similar to the interim report, the final report contains a minority report put forward by panel member Gwen Day (see Appendix A). A minority report is an opinion that diverges from the rest of the panel's recommendations and puts forward an alternative view point. The perspectives put forward in the minority report aligns more closely with the submission made by the AAMDC during the AEBC's review and speaks to the need to focus on effective representation as opposed to population figures alone.

The AAMDC is very disappointed that the AEBC did not take the majority of recommendations of the association and rural Alberta, more seriously. Though quoted in the report, only one of our recommendations on not fracturing municipalities was incorporated. We are deeply concerned that this continual dilution of rural representation will ultimately lead to weakened rural communities, when indeed the very industries that fuel our economy are rooted in rural Alberta.

The AAMDC understand the AEBC's concern for largely increased populations in the two big cities, and additional ridings there may be justified, but not at the expense of Alberta's rural ridings.

AAMDC will be formally responding to the Alberta Electoral Boundary Commissions final report.

The AAMDC would like to take the opportunity to thank our members who presented and/or provided written submissions to the AEBC. It is important that this process hear the important messages from Alberta's rural leaders to ensure rural residents are effectively represented in Alberta's democratic institutions.

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