



**TOWN OF CORNWALL  
PRESENTATION TO  
ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION  
March 24, 2004**

Welcome to the Town of Cornwall. We welcome the opportunity to present our comments to the Commission and thank you for considering our comments in your report to the Legislature.

Our presentation will focus on three areas: 1) the legislation; 2) trends in population; and 3) the Town of Cornwall. We expect the Commission is informed on most of the points we will raise, however believe it is imperative these issues are brought forward.

**THE LEGISLATION**

The Town of Cornwall understands the Commission's function is to make a report to the Legislative Assembly setting out recommendations for the area, boundaries, and names of the districts as outlined in Section 9 of the Electoral Boundaries Act (the Act). We understand the Commissions' mandate does not include a review of the number of districts. Our presentation, therefore, will not comment on the number of districts in the Province, currently established under Section 2 of the Act at twenty-seven(27).

We do wish to comment on Sections 3, 4, and 5 of the Act. We find it interesting that the Sections respectively begin with the words **Prince County is divided..., Queens County is divided.... Kings County shall be divided ..**We find it questionable that Kings County should be afforded what appears to be greater security in the number of districts allotted to it. Is this an oversight in the preparation of the legislation or merely a political ploy aimed at protecting ones' turf at the expense of fair political representation for the majority of residents of the Province?

Secondly we wish to comment on the Section 17(2) of the Act. As you know this Section enacts the 25% rule. The Town of Cornwall has two comments on this. The manner in which the Section is worded and the manner in which it was first used really allows for a **1 to 1.67** ratio in the number of voters from the smallest to largest district. We believe this to be unacceptable and not in keeping with the intention of representation by population. The second point is not immediately obvious, but just as important. Given the trends in population it will soon be impossible to divide twenty-seven districts so as to honor both the 25% rule and the stipulated

number of districts per County. To illustrate this point the average Kings County seat in 1994 was 17.96% below the average district size while in 2003 the average Kings County seat was 23.01 % below the average district size. The Commission needs to address this issue

Our final comment on the legislation is we cannot see where the Commissions' report is binding on the Legislative Assembly. We find this totally unacceptable. To avoid the gerrymandering temptations the current Act allows, the Legislative Assembly should be bound by the recommendations of the Commission

## **POPULATION TRENDS**

The Town of Cornwall notes that currently nine(9) of the twenty-seven(27) districts exceed the 25 % rule and that none of these districts exceeded the rule in 1994. It is interesting to note three (3) of these districts are in Kings County and all are more than 25% **below** the average district size. We further note an additional ten (10) districts are at least 15% above or below the average district size. We believe the Commission should honor what we feel is the intent of the Act in your recommendations to the Legislative Assembly. That is, ensure all districts will be fairly represented for the next three general elections when drawing the recommended electoral districts. Do not repeat the example set in the initial district composition which resulted in eight (8) districts within 3% of the 25% rule within three years of the districts being established.

## **CORNWALL**

The Town of Cornwall, in its entirety, is currently located in District 16, North River-Rice Point. This district clearly needs realignment. Its' current number of electors, 4888, is 35.82% above the average district size and if current trends continue will soon be twice as large as the Province's smallest district, currently 2584 electors.

The Town of Cornwall had 3,245 electors eligible to vote during the 2003 municipal election. This represented roughly two-thirds of District 16 and more significantly, over 90% of the average existing district size. It is clear to us the Town of Cornwall deserves more equitable treatment in the Provincial alignment of electoral districts.

It is the position of the Town that the creation of a new riding at this time, named "Cornwall", comprised solely of the Town of Cornwall is realistic, preferable and in keeping with the intent of the Act, specifically Section 17(1). We have the population base to warrant being a district, a growth pattern that will allow us to stay within 10%-15% of the average district size for the next few elections, and a well defined community of interest.

We believe the 25% rule is extreme for a small geographic area such as Prince Edward Island and question whether legislators and the courts were thinking about such small areas when the 25% plus or minus variance was being created and initially challenged. Some people will undoubtedly address the urban/rural split and argue the perceived special needs of their area. We suggest most of PEI would be considered rural by most observers. Even large amounts of land within our cities and towns are clearly rural from a land use and population density perspective .Whether

Cornwall is urban or rural should not be the emphasis of this review. Fair representation in the Legislature based on population is our objective.

In the event the Commission is contemplating a riding other than one comprised wholly and solely of the Town of Cornwall we would appreciate an opportunity to further discuss the composition of such a riding with you.

Prior to outlining our recommendations we wish to briefly comment on Proportional Representation. We realize this is not part of your mandate , however believe this is an opportune time to note the concept of Proportional Representation appears to be under consideration by the Province. Should a referendum result in the electorate approving Proportional Representation before the next legislated review under the Electoral Boundaries Act we are aware the boundaries of all districts will likely be affected .

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Create an electoral district named “Cornwall” encompassing wholly and solely the geographic boundaries of the Town of Cornwall
- Strive to create districts that are within 12.5% of the average district size.
- Strive to create districts that will maintain the 12.5% above or below the average district size for the next three general elections
- Address the difficulties caused by imposing County lines on the districts
- Address the fact the commission’s recommendations are non-binding.