

Submission to: Electoral Boundaries Commission

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**Submitted by: Fairley Yeo
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Mr. Chairman, Members of the Commission appointed to review the Electoral Boundaries of Prince Edward Island.

My name is Fairley Yeo. I am a lifelong member of District 25, West Point-Bloomfield. I live in the farming community of Knutsford, which is situated on the north and south sides of the O'Leary Road. This road comes through the Community of O'Leary and travels west through the community of Knutsford.

It is proposed that O'Leary and Knutsford will be in separate ridings. This is a prime example of dividing "Communities of Interest".

I have come here tonight to strongly object to the proposal to slice District 25 into two parts and to amalgamate them into the now District 26 and District 23. This would eliminate District 25 and thus eliminate the M.L.A. for this district.

As a result of the last Electoral Boundaries Commission Review, West Prince County Members of the Legislative Assembly (old 1st, 2nd and 3rd Districts) were reduced from 6 to 5. This proposal would reduce the number of M.L.A.'s to 4.

Most of the voters in District 25 work in the primary industries of Fishing and Farming. The heart of this area is the Community of O'Leary, from which most of the business of the area is carried out. This is where the Hospital, Doctors, Pharmacies, Fire Dept., Sports Centre, Elementary School, Churches, Access P.E.I., Shopping, Warehouses and Farm Supplies are situated. This constitutes a "Community of Interest", as described on Page 14, Paragraph VI (lower case) in Interim Report. If one looks at the Fire Dept. maps, Hospital Board boundaries, Bloomfield and O'Leary Elementary School Districts, Alberton or Tyne Valley is not "A Community of Interest" for District 25.

An exception should be made for a rural agricultural area comprised of large agricultural units. It is hard to have a large population base in a rural agricultural area. Farmers and fishermen feed the world. They are the wealth generators of this area. These industries are the engine that generates the economy of P.E.I. Because of this, we deserve to be represented by a M.L.A. in the Legislative Assembly.

District 25 is 100 miles from Charlottetown. It is too far to travel to work and school. For this reason our families and young people are moving from our area to go to University or College, or to find work.

The decision makers for P.E.I. are mainly in the Charlottetown area, i.e.: U.P.E.I.,

HOLLAND COLLEGE, GOVERNMENT OF P.E.I. - AND ALL IT'S DEPTS., D.V.A., ALL THE RURAL ORGANIZATIONS, SPORTS P.E.I., NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS - - and the list goes on. All have their Head Offices there. For a resident of West Prince to be on the Executive of an Organization is next to impossible. The time, and the expense to travel to Charlottetown, discourages good people, who could contribute much to these organizations. As a result, people from this area do not have direct input in the decision making of these organizations..

Now, to propose eliminating our elected representative in Government and having him/her replaced by an extra M.L.A. from Summerside or Charlottetown is a discrimination against the residents of the rural areas of P.E.I. Decisions are made by the representatives who sit in Government, if this area has fewer members we will have less opportunity to have input on decisions affecting this area.

WE WANT AN ELECTED M.L.A. FROM DISTRICT 25 !!!! Someone who knows and understands the economy, the people and the lifestyle of the District.

The urban areas of the cities of Summerside and Charlottetown, towns of Cornwall and Stratford, all have elected Mayors and Counsellors who can speak for their residents and lobby Federal and Provincial Governments for money and services for their voters. This is a representation not available to the rural voters of P.E.I.

When one looks at the present make-up of the Districts in the area it is very good, with the Community of Tignish the "Community of Interest" for District 27, the Town of Alberton for District 26, Community of O'Leary for District 25, Community of Tyne Valley for District 23 and Community Miscouche for District 24. These Districts could remain as is.

When one looks at the voters of District 25 in 2003 at 2,584 and District 23 at 3,033, these Districts are adjacent to each other, with a total of 5,617. By moving some boundaries in this area (50% of which is 2,808) this would leave these two Districts as viable, both under the allowable variance of -25% (look at Cascumpec-Fortune Cove) (Coleman -West Devon) This is just an area where some changes could be made in these five Districts to let us keep 5 M.L.A.'s, and still be within the allowable variance of +/- 25%. It would, also, have the voters within their "Community of Interest".

When one looks at the fact that changes were made in the 1960's and then not again until 1994, to be changing all the boundaries and the names and numbers of each Electoral District across P.E.I. after only 10 years would be making more confusion again. If one looks at a voter turnout of 85%, the message must be getting out as to when and where the voters are to vote. There does not appear to be a reason to make major changes in the Electoral Boundaries across P.E.I.

One must, also, look at the structure of the Districts Riding Associations. The volunteer workers in the Districts for all political parties, who work within their respective party. These are the people who are the fundraisers, they keep their

party together; select, nominate and support candidates; plan and run the election; set up polling booths and count the ballots. Each time there is a change in the boundaries, it causes issues within the structure of the District Association. After three elections, the Districts are just becoming strong cohesive units again. To change now, will be starting from square one before the next election. Older party workers will be discouraged and just will not bother. Many volunteers will be lost to all parties. This will not be good for the election process across the Province. This is an issue that must be considered when planning change.

Some suggestions are:

1. Take another look at West Prince County and at what changes can be made to keep District 25 and it's M.L.A.
2. Look at "Communities of Interest", especially in District 25.
3. Look at the distance from West Point to Kildare.
4. Do not make it a numbers game. Dividing the number of voters across P.E.I. by 27 is not looking at the diversity of P.E.I., i.e. rural versus urban.
5. Add 2 more M.L.A.'s for Summerside and Charlottetown. It would be money well spent. M.L.A.'s work hard for their Districts.
6. Check voters lists from last elections to be sure all eligible voters are counted.
7. Check to see if students from rural areas voted in Charlottetown and were counted there.

Thank you,

Fairley Yeo