
TO: CITY MANAGER **DATE:** 2006 November 28
FROM: DIRECTOR PLANNING & BUILDING **FILE:** 45000-05
**SUBJECT: BC ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION ELECTORAL
BOUNDARY REVIEW**

PURPOSE: To outline the Electoral Boundary Commission's review of electoral boundaries in BC, and to present the City of Burnaby's preliminary position on local representation under both the Single Member Plurality (SMP) and BC Single Transferable Voting (BC-STV) electoral systems.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **THAT** the City advance a preliminary submission to the BC Electoral Boundaries Commission as outlined in Sections 3.0 and 4.0 of this report;
2. **THAT** a copy of this report be forwarded to Burnaby's four Members of the Legislative Assembly, the City of Coquitlam, and the BC Electoral Boundaries Commission.

REPORT

1.0 BACKGROUND

The BC Electoral Boundaries Commission (EBC) was established under the Electoral Boundaries Act. The Act requires the EBC to review the electoral districts in British Columbia every two years, and to make recommendations for changes to the district boundaries. If the EBC identifies any boundaries that need adjustment due to population changes, they must provide names for these districts, and if needed, recommend increasing the number of MLAs to ensure effective representation.

The last review of the provincial electoral boundaries occurred in 1999. At that time, the City of Burnaby requested that four electoral districts be established solely within Burnaby. These four districts were intended to complement the City's four-quadrant structure that is reflected in the Official Community Plan. Based on the review and recommendations of the EBC, minor changes to boundaries were adopted that retained three electoral districts in Burnaby, and a fourth district shared between Burnaby and the City of Coquitlam. This shared district was justified on the basis that population numbers in Burnaby's north-east quadrant were not sufficient to merit the creation of a fourth stand-alone district.

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In September 2006, the City of Burnaby received correspondence from the EBC inviting input on the provincial electoral boundaries – both under the current Single Member Plurality (SMP) electoral system and under the proposed Single Transferable Vote electoral system, also known as BC-STV. The EBC will be preparing two sets of boundaries; one for the SMP electoral system and a second for the BC-STV system, and is requesting public input on future boundary adjustments.

The BC-STV electoral system proposal arose from the independent Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform, established in 2003 by the Provincial government. The mandate of the Citizens' Assembly was to assess models for electing Members of the Legislative Assembly and to issue a report recommending whether the current model should be retained or another model should be adopted. In December 2004, the Citizens' Assembly released its report recommending that the province adopt the BC-STV electoral system. A referendum on whether or not to adopt the BC-STV system will be included in the May 2009 Provincial election. The outcome will determine whether the proposed BC-STV boundaries will be implemented for the May 2013 election.

This report outlines the EBC's review of electoral boundaries, and presents the City of Burnaby's preliminary position on local representation under both the SMP and BC-STV electoral systems.

2.0 CURRENT SCHEDULE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES IN BC

The EBC is currently engaged in developing initial electoral boundaries. The EBC expects to complete a preliminary review by March 2007, to table a preliminary report of findings with the Legislature on 15 August 2007. Since detailed 2006 census statistics will not be available until April 2007 at the earliest, the EBC will be basing its initial boundary review on proprietary 2006 population estimates that have been provided by BC Statistics.

Public hearings in response to the EBC's preliminary report are set for the fall of 2007, at which time there will be an opportunity for public comment on the preliminary findings and for submission by the City of specific comments and recommendations to the EBC.

The EBC must complete its final report and recommendations by 15 February 2008 to meet deadlines for the provincial elections to be held (in conjunction with a referendum for the BC-STV) on 12 May 2009.

3.0 ELECTORAL DISTRICTS IN BURNABY – SINGLE MEMBER PLURALITY (SMP) ELECTORAL SYSTEM

The EBC's work is based on the principle of representation by population, in which no electoral district is permitted to have a population deviation greater than 25 percent from the electoral

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quota¹. In its review of electoral boundaries, the EBC is required to consider the influence of geography and demography, and the need to balance the community interests of the people of British Columbia.

Under the existing SMP system, the EBC has established four electoral districts for Burnaby, three of which are solely contained within Burnaby and one which includes a portion of Coquitlam. These are: *i*) Burnaby – North, *ii*) Burnaby - Willingdon, *iii*) Burnaby – Edmonds, and *iv*) Burquitlam (see Figures 1 to 4, *attached*).

In the 1999 EBC review, population figures in the north-east quadrant of Burnaby were not considered high enough to merit the creation of a fourth electoral district in this area. As a result, a combined district was maintained with Coquitlam (or Burquitlam) to achieve a population size that did not deviate more than 25 percent from the provincial electoral quota at that time.

Since the 1999 review, population growth in the north-east quadrant of Burnaby has increased at an average of 4.5% over the period from 1991 to 2001. Applying this growth rate to the 2001 census population, the 2006 population projection for this quadrant is 42,594. Since this estimate falls within 25 percent of the provincial electoral quota of 51,694², the population in the north-east quadrant is high enough to merit the development of a fourth electoral district solely contained within Burnaby.

A number of other factors can be offered in support of four electoral districts being solely contained within Burnaby's municipal boundaries. As detailed in Burnaby's Official Community Plan, Burnaby is organized around four quadrants with a town centre as the focus of each quadrant. Having four electoral districts within Burnaby that reflect existing communities would allow elected members of the provincial legislature to represent community values and concerns that are unique to those areas.

A fourth electoral district in north-east Burnaby will also allow the electorate in this area to more readily identify with and seek assistance from an MLA who is able to focus on the issues and concerns of one community. Thus, it is proposed that the City strongly reiterate its position that the four-quadrant structure in Burnaby be reflected in the EBC's adjustment of the SMP electoral boundaries, and that four electoral districts be established within the boundaries of the City.

The availability of 2006 census statistics in April 2007 will allow for confirmation of population growth in the north-east quadrant of Burnaby, and will enable the City to confirm recommendations for electoral districts in Burnaby.

¹ Electoral Quota is defined as the number of people each MLA will represent in their electoral district. Under the current SMP electoral system the number of people in BC (population) is divided by the number of seats (79); the answer (quotient) provides the guidelines for how many people should be included in an electoral district.

² The Electoral Boundaries Commission is currently using a May 16, 2005 electoral quota of 51,694 that has been provided by BC Statistics for this purpose.

4.0 ELECTORAL DISTRICTS IN BURNABY – BC SINGLE TRANSFERABLE VOTING (BC-STV) SYSTEM

Under the BC-STV system, the number of MLAs province-wide would remain unchanged from the SMP system. However, there would be fewer electoral districts in total — each representing a larger geographical area and each electing more than one MLA³.

BC-STV would allow the size of districts and the number of MLAs elected per district to vary across the province to reflect local and regional conditions. In sparsely populated areas, electoral districts could comprise as few as two or three MLAs and, in denser urban districts, as many as seven. For example, if five current districts were combined, the new district would elect five MLAs. In order to achieve greater proportional representation, the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform prefers larger districts consisting of five to seven MLAs, where appropriate. Thus, while BC-STV would retain the same number of MLAs province-wide, the new electoral districts by virtue of their larger size, would need to represent the interests of a larger geographical region and a more varied population.

Two hypothetical examples show the electoral map of British Columbia as it might appear under the proposed BC-STV electoral system (see Figure 5, *attached*). The electoral districts shown are for information purposes only. Figure 6, example 1 represents a scenario in which 79 MLAs represent only 15 electoral districts. In this scenario, Burnaby is represented by seven MLAs within a larger geographical area including much of the Coast Garibaldi area. In contrast, example 2 represents a different scenario in which 79 MLAs represent 21 electoral districts, rather than 15. In this scenario, Burnaby is primarily contained within one, smaller electoral district represented by 5 MLAs.

As with the SMP system, there remains a strong desire for Burnaby to retain local representation under a proposed BC-STV system. By establishing one electoral district contained solely within Burnaby's municipal borders (similar to Figure 6, example 2), four or more MLAs would be able to effectively represent and convey Burnaby's issues to the legislature. It is proposed that the City convey its position to the EBC that local representation be reflected in future proposals for electoral boundaries through the establishment of one electoral district for Burnaby under the BC-STV system.

On release of specific proposals by the EBC for electoral districts and boundaries under the BC-STV electoral systems, staff would undertake to evaluate proposals in relation to Burnaby's population and objectives for representation, and prepare a further report for Council's consideration.

³ Because voters would be electing more than one MLA in an electoral district (or riding) the ballot could list several candidates for each party, as well as independent candidates. Voters could rank as many or as few candidates as they wanted. If a voter's first-choice candidate was not elected, that voter's second or third choice candidate could be depending on the total number of candidates that need to be elected.

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5.0 CONCLUSION

This report presents the City's current position that representation under the SMP or proposed BC-STV electoral systems occur within the boundaries of the City to allow for the effective representation of the Burnaby community to the Provincial legislature.

At this time, this report proposes that Burnaby be represented by four electoral districts under the current SMP system, and one electoral district under a proposed BC-STV system. With the release of the 2006 census data and the EBC's preliminary report recommendations in the summer of 2007, staff would review the information and would prepare a further report to Council on the EBC's specific proposals. At that time, and as necessary, the City could choose to make a presentation to the EBC at one of the public hearings to be scheduled during the fall of 2007.


B. Luksun, Director
PLANNING & BUILDING

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Attachments (5)

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Burnaby North Electoral District

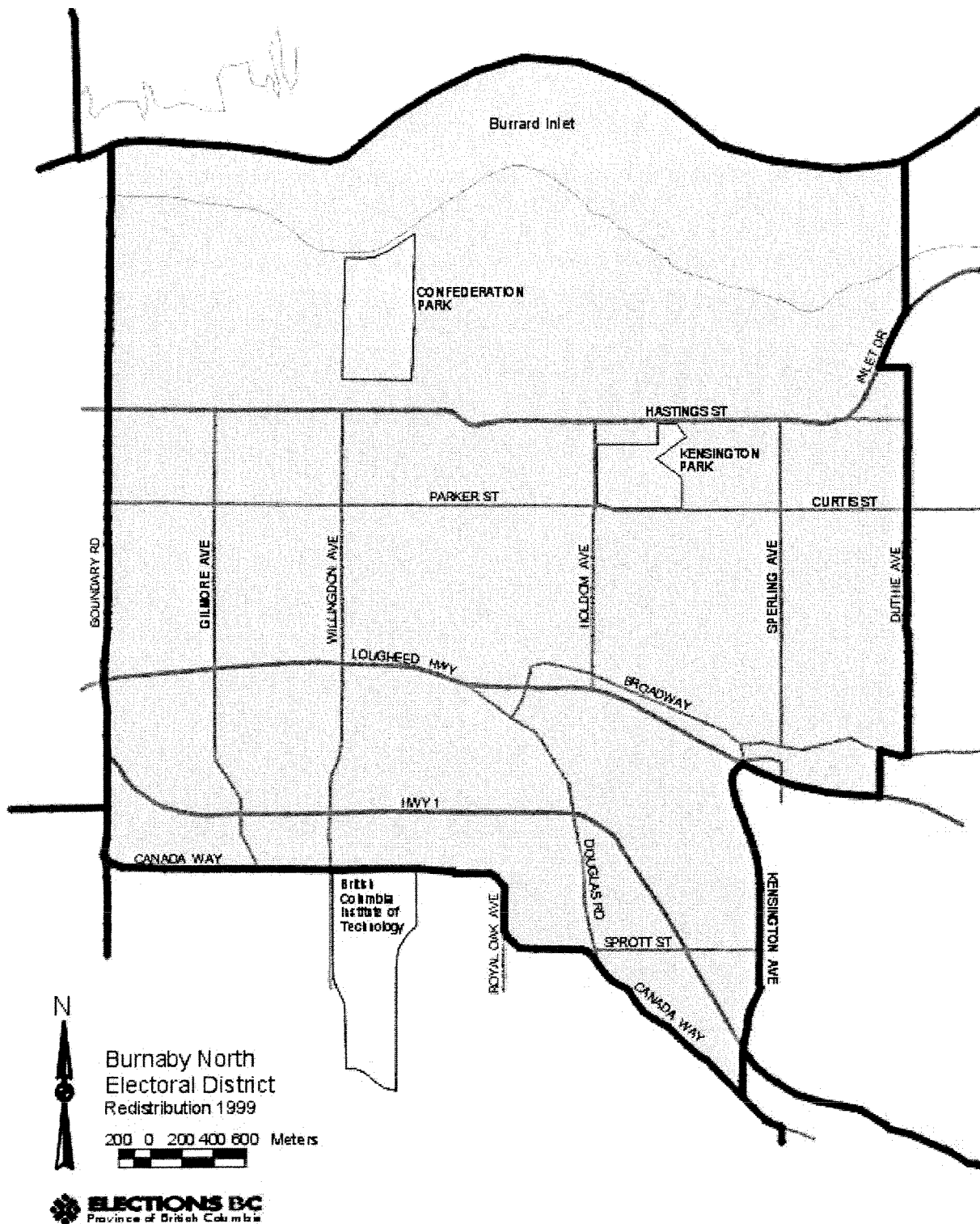


FIGURE 2

Burnaby-Willingdon Electoral District

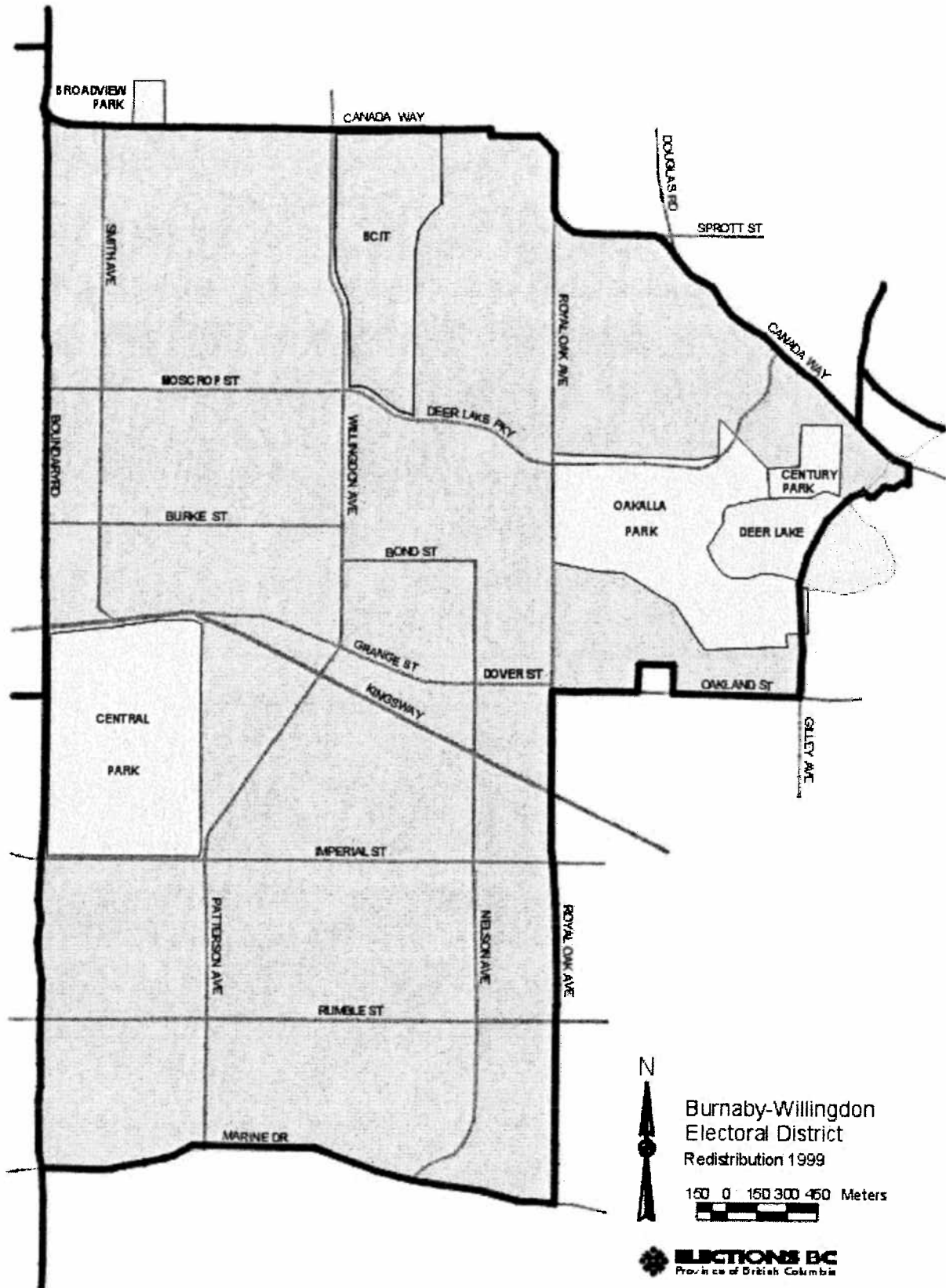


FIGURE 3

Burnaby-Edmonds Electoral District

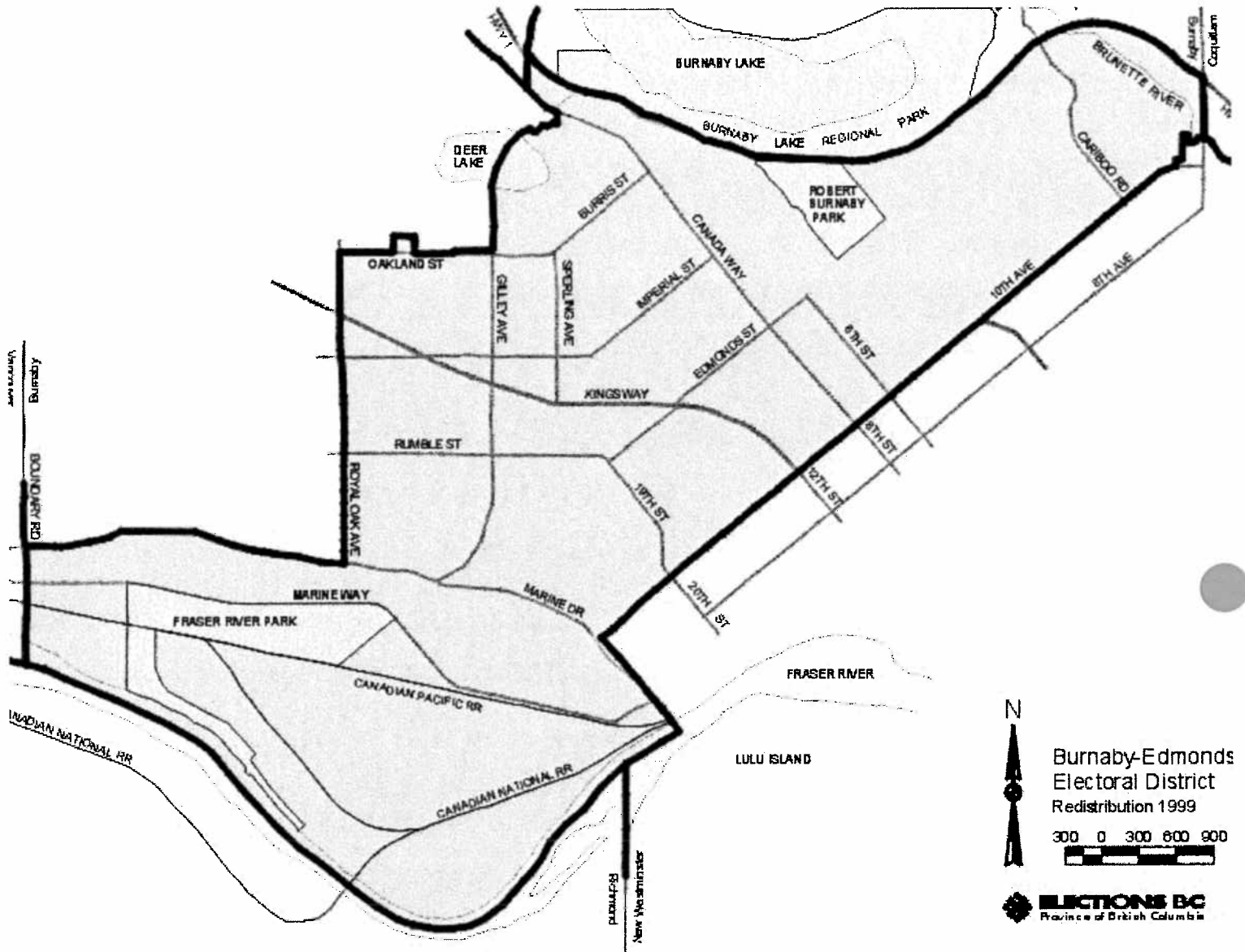
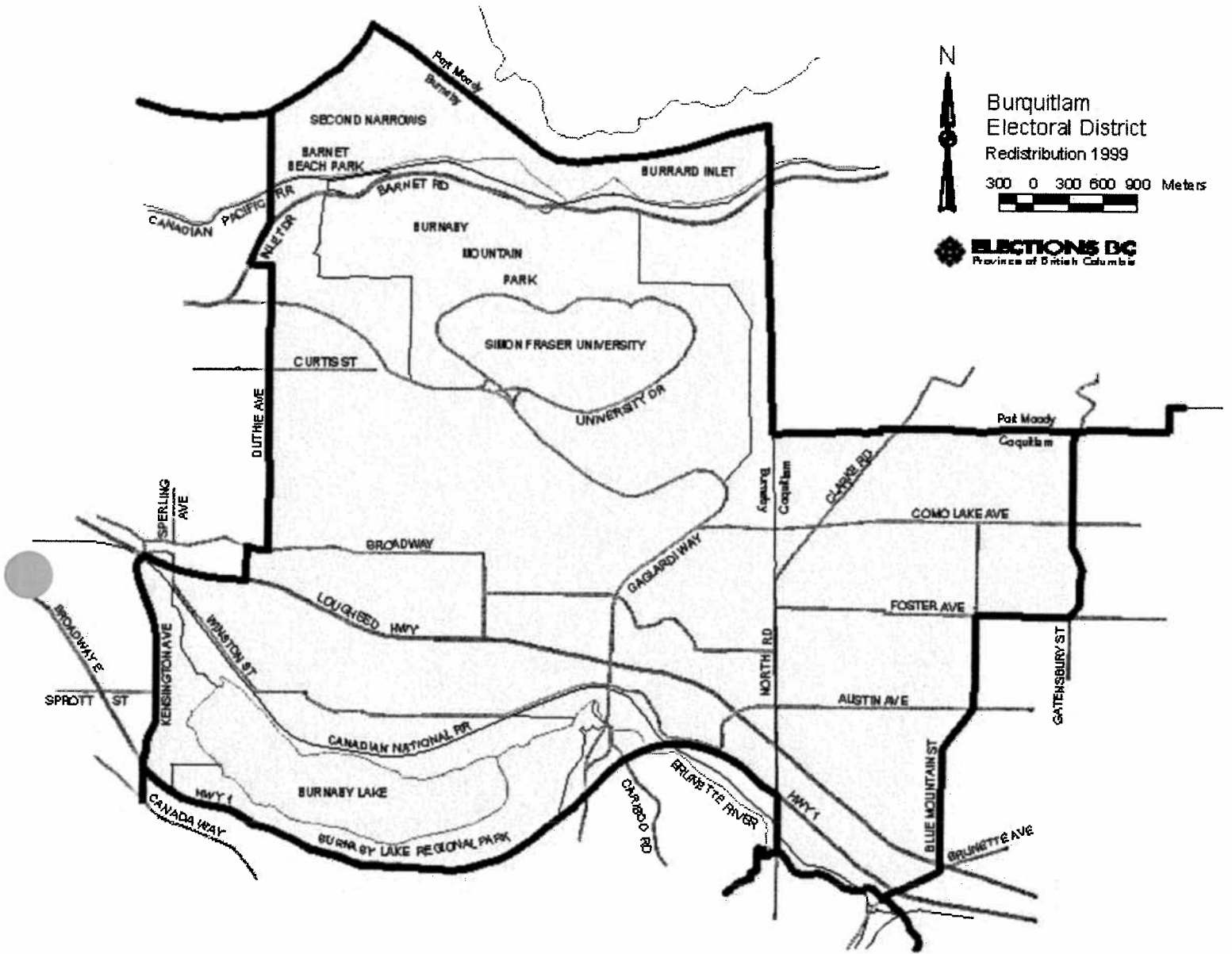


FIGURE 4

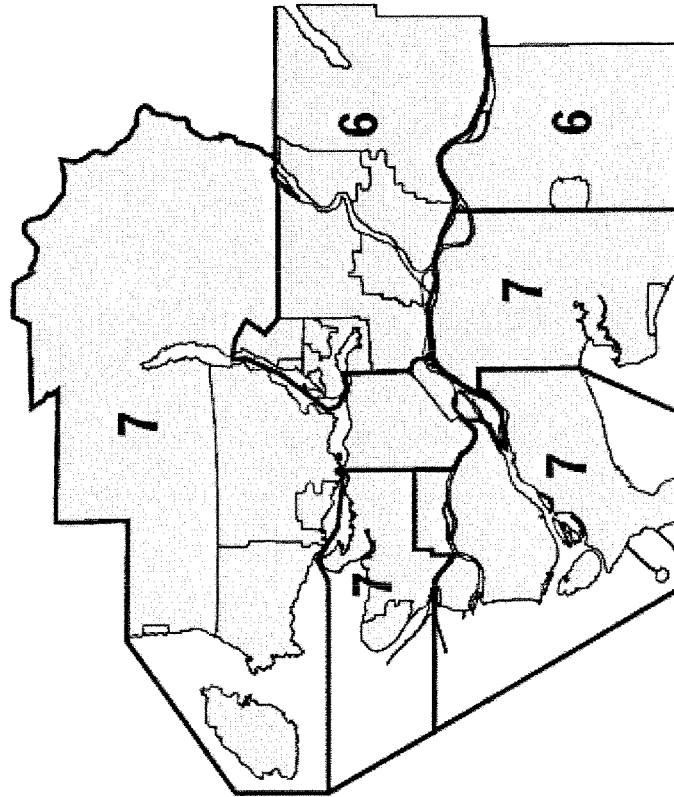
Burquitlam Electoral District



Examples of Electoral Boundaries in the Lower Mainland under the Proposed BC-Single Transferable Voting System

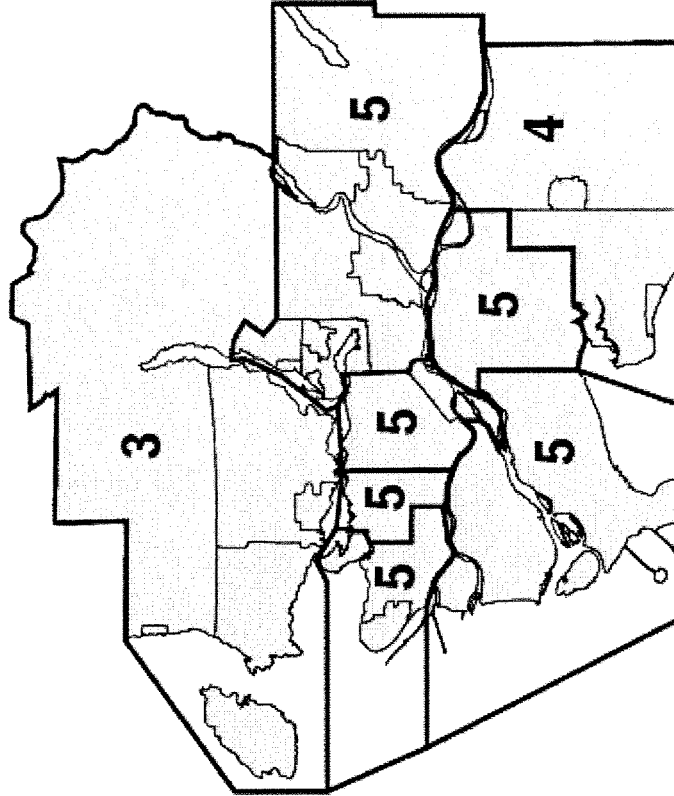
Example 1:

79 MLAs divided among 15 electoral districts province-wide; Burnaby is represented by 7 MLAs within a large electoral district.



Example 2:

79 MLAs divided among 21 electoral districts province-wide; Burnaby is represented by 5 MLAs within a smaller electoral district.



Source: Fair Voting BC, retrieved October 6, 2006 from the Ministry of Attorney General Referendum Information Office website at: www.gov.bc.ca/referendum_info/down/bcstv and the [electoral_map.pdf](#).