
TO: CITY MANAGER **DATE:** 2008 January 16

FROM: DIRECTOR PLANNING & BUILDING **FILE:** 45000-05

**SUBJECT: BC ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION – PRELIMINARY
REPORT ON FUTURE ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES**

PURPOSE: To provide a summary of the BC Electoral Boundary Commission’s proposed electoral district and boundary changes, under both the Single Member Plurality (SMP) and BC Single Transferable Voting (BC-STV) electoral systems.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **THAT** Council express its support to the Electoral Boundaries Commission (EBC) for four electoral districts in Burnaby, and the EBC to change the name of the Burnaby-Willingdon electoral district to Burnaby-Metrotown
2. **THAT** Council request the EBC work with the City to further refine the boundaries of the electoral districts so as to preserve the continuity of existing neighbourhoods in Burnaby.
3. **THAT** a copy of this report be forwarded to Burnaby's four Members of the Legislative Assembly, the Cities of Coquitlam and New Westminster, and the BC Electoral Boundaries Commission.

REPORT**1.0 BACKGROUND & CURRENT SCHEDULE**

In 2006 September, the City of Burnaby received correspondence from the BC Electoral Boundaries Commission (EBC) inviting input on the provincial electoral boundaries – both under the current Single Member Plurality (SMP) electoral system and the proposed Single Transferable Vote electoral system, also known as BC-STV. The BC-STV electoral system proposal arose from the recommendations of the independent Citizens’ Assembly on Electoral Reform, established by the Provincial government in 2003.

As Council will recall, the Electoral Boundaries Act requires the EBC to review the electoral districts in British Columbia every second provincial election, and to make recommendations for changes to the district boundaries. The EBC identifies any boundaries that need adjustment due to population changes, provides names for new districts, and as needed, recommends increasing the number of MLAs to ensure effective representation. The Electoral Boundaries Commission

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Act permits the EBC to propose an increase in the number of electoral districts, from the current 79 up to a maximum of 85.

In Fall 2006, the EBC sought public input from municipalities, community leaders and residents regarding their views on community needs and challenges, and any recommended electoral boundary changes. Overall, more than 500 people participated in the EBC's consultation sessions, and more than 150 written submissions were received.

On 2006 December 04, Council approved a report that outlined the current review of provincial electoral boundaries by the EBC, and presented the City of Burnaby's preliminary position on local representation under the two electoral systems. A copy of this report was sent to Burnaby's four Members of the Legislative Assembly and to the EBC to aid them in their review of electoral boundaries.

On 2007 August 15, the EBC submitted its Preliminary Report to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, outlining recommended changes to the province's electoral boundaries under the current SMP system and the proposed BC-STV system. In conducting their review, the EBC considered the geography, demography and history of the communities being reviewed, and attempted to balance various community interests.

In the late summer/early fall, the EBC was expected to hold a second series of public hearings throughout the province to solicit additional feedback on the proposed boundary changes. Public hearings were held in several municipalities including Vancouver, North Vancouver, Abbotsford and Prince George, and a public hearing was also scheduled to take place in Burnaby on 02 October 2007. However, due to a 2007 September 13 announcement by the Provincial government that it planned to introduce new legislation that would change the EBC's mandate, the commission cancelled its remaining public hearings until further notice.

On 2007 October 24, the Provincial government introduced Bill 39 to address changes to the Electoral Boundaries Act. However, as the legislature adjourned its 2007 November 29 session without passing the bill, the EBC announced that it would resume its consultation process (under its existing mandate) in 2008. As such, the EBC will resume public hearings in the Lower Mainland, Cariboo-Thompson, Okanagan, Columbia-Kootenay and Vancouver Island regions in 2008 January, and then submit any amendments to its Preliminary Report by 2008 February 15. Members of the community are invited to submit written or telephone submissions to the EBC until 2008 January 23. This brief consultation period will allow the EBC to meet the 12 May 2009 deadline for the provincial election to be held in conjunction with a referendum for the BC-STV.

This report summarizes the EBC's Preliminary Report recommendations as they affect the province in general, and Burnaby and its neighbouring municipalities more specifically.

2.0 CRITERIA FOR REVIEWING BOUNDARIES

In undertaking its electoral boundary review, the EBC uses the Supreme Court of Canada's instructions to consider sparsity, density or relative rate of growth, special geographic features, and community or diversity of interests when setting electoral boundaries. The EBC's work was also based on the principle of representation by population, in which electoral districts cannot have a population deviation greater than 25 percent from the electoral quota¹. In its review of electoral boundaries, the EBC is also allowed to consider *special circumstances* for exceeding the electoral quota — however only if necessary to ensure effective representation.

The EBC's analysis of current electoral boundaries revealed that the number of electoral districts in BC having deviations greater than 25% had increased from 6 out of 79 in 1999, to 17 out of 79 in 2006 (applying the most recent census data). Since the provision of *very special circumstances* could not be applied to all 17 electoral districts deviating from the electoral quota, the EBC concluded that it had to undertake a full review of the current electoral boundaries in BC. The results of this review process and changes to Burnaby's electoral boundaries are outlined in sections 4.0 and 5.0 below.

3.0 PROPOSED ELECTORAL DISTRICTS UNDER THE SINGLE MEMBER PLURALITY (SMP) ELECTORAL SYSTEM

3.1 British Columbia

BC currently elects one MLA for each electoral district using the SMP electoral system, also known as First-Past-the-Post system. The candidate with the most votes (a plurality of votes) wins the seat for the electoral district, and the party with the most seats forms the government.

As presented in their Preliminary Report (dated 2007 August 15), the EBC proposed that the number of SMP electoral districts in BC be raised from 79 to 81. This reduces the number of electoral districts deviating from the electoral quota from the current 17 (out of 79) to only two (out of 81). The two regions that deviate more than 25% from the electoral quotient are located in the North Region.

The EBC consequently proposed that there be one less electoral district in each of the North, Cariboo-Thompson, and Columbia-Kootenay Regions, and that there be one more electoral district in each of the Okanagan, Fraser Valley, Surrey, and Vancouver Regions. The EBC also proposed that there be five districts in the Burnaby and New Westminster Region, and four districts in the Tri-Cities (Port Moody, Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam) Region — an increase of half a district in each region. The EBC did not propose any changes to the number of electoral

¹ Electoral Quota (or Quotient) is defined as the number of people each MLA will represent in their electoral district. Under the current SMP system, the population of BC is divided by the number of seats (79) and the resulting quotient (51,694) provides the guideline for how many people should be included in each district. Under the proposed SMP system, an increase in the number of seats to 81 provides a new quotient of 50,784.

districts in Richmond and Delta, North Shore, and Vancouver Island and South Coast Regions, although boundary modifications were proposed in many cases.

The legislative changes that were introduced in Bill 39 may have required the EBC to ensure that no region in the province incurs a net loss of seats. This change of mandate would have preserved the existing number of MLAs in the three northern regions, while making use of the new boundaries proposed by the EBC. The proposed changes would have also allowed the number of new MLAs to increase by up to eight; resulting in the next Parliament having 87 Members. The EBC would have also been asked to address BC-STV allocations and boundaries for all 87 Members of the Legislative Assembly. However at this time, these changes were not made as the legislature adjourned without passing the bill, and the EBC’s mandate remains the same.

3.2 Burnaby and Neighbouring Municipalities

Under the current SMP electoral system, there are four electoral districts in 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 Figure 1, *attached*). The shared district with Coquitlam (“Burquitlam”) was justified in the past, because low population figures in the north-east quadrant of Burnaby did not merit the creation of a fourth electoral district in this area.

Since the last electoral boundary review in 1999, however, population growth in the north-east quadrant of Burnaby has increased significantly, with new growth around the Lougheed Town Centre and at UniverCity on Burnaby Mountain. The creation of a fourth district in north-east Burnaby is therefore supported by population figures in this area, as well as by many written submissions that were received by the EBC during their consultation process. The commission therefore proposed the establishment of four districts in Burnaby – each encompassing its own town centre area (Brentwood, Lougheed, Metrotown and Edmonds). To ensure effective representation in each of these four districts, the EBC proposed modifying the existing electoral districts in Burnaby, and suggested the following (see Table 1 and Figure 2, *attached*):

Table 1: Existing and Proposed Electoral District in Burnaby

Existing Electoral District (EED) Name	Proposed Electoral District (PED) Name	PED Population*	PED Deviation from Electoral Quota**
Burnaby-North	Burnaby-Brentwood	51,274	+1.0 %
Burnaby-Willingdon	Burnaby-Willingdon	50,957	+0.3%
Burnaby-Edmonds	Burnaby-Edmonds	50,339	-0.9%
Burquitlam	Burnaby-Lougheed	50,229	-1.1%

* Based on 2006 census figures.

** Deviation must be less than (+/-) 25% from Electoral Quota.

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As a result of the boundary modifications proposed for Burnaby, the following district (riding) changes would result:

- The proposed Burnaby-Brentwood riding would encompass the Central Administrative/Deer Lake area of Burnaby (currently a part of the Burnaby-Willingdon riding).
- The new Burnaby-Willingdon riding would extend further into south-central Burnaby; including a portion of the Royal Oak Plan area.
- The proposed Burnaby-Lougheed riding would exclude Coquitlam, and instead include the Cariboo Community Plan area and surrounding lands.
- The new Burnaby-Edmonds riding would be influenced by boundary modifications in the other three ridings; causing it to exclude a portion of the existing Burnaby-Edmonds riding (i.e. north of 6th Street).

Notwithstanding the division of some neighbourhoods, the establishment of four districts wholly within Burnaby is ideal, in that MLAs would be better able to represent community values and interests unique to Burnaby. For example, the proposed Burnaby-Lougheed district would 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 that community. For these reasons, it is recommended that the City supports the EBC's establishment of four districts within Burnaby, but requests that the EBC works with the City to further refine the electoral boundaries in order to preserve existing neighbourhoods and communities. Large arterial roads and highways should be used to define the boundaries of electoral districts wherever possible. It is also recommended that the EBC be requested to change the name of the Burnaby-Willingdon district to Burnaby-Metrotown. This alteration would allow for greater naming consistency with other districts in Burnaby, and would allow the electorate to more readily identify with the town centre in their area.

In proposing four electoral districts in Burnaby, the EBC also proposed four electoral districts in the Tri-Cities. The portion of Coquitlam that was formerly within the Burquitlam electoral district was added to the new Port Moody-Coquitlam electoral district, previously known as Port Moody-Westwood.

The City of New Westminster was able to keep an electoral district within its municipal boundaries, because the City's population deviates only +15.3% from electoral quota. The New Westminster electoral district, along with Burnaby's four electoral districts, would comprise the larger Burnaby and New Westminster SMP Region that is proposed.

4.0 PROPOSED ELECTORAL DISTRICTS UNDER THE BC SINGLE TRANSFERABLE VOTING (BC-STV) SYSTEM

The BC-STV is an electoral system based on multi-member electoral districts with more than one elected representative in each district. Under this proposed system, the total number of MLAs to be elected to the Legislative Assembly would be the same as under the current SMP system. However, the BC-STV system would allow the size of districts and the number of

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MLAs elected per district to vary across the province to reflect local and regional conditions. In establishing BC-STV districts, the EBC concluded that it is most effective to group the proposed SMP electoral districts into workable BC-STV electoral districts, in order to preserve existing geographic regions and administrative units (such as municipalities) wherever possible.

In its assessment, the Citizen's Assembly on Electoral Reform recommended that the number of MLAs per BC-STV electoral district should range between two and seven members. In contrast, the EBC concluded that it is most optimal to have between four or five MLAs per BC-STV district, because this approach provides leeway for increasing the number of seats in fast-growing urban areas without having to redraw the electoral boundaries.

In their Preliminary Report, the EBC proposed that there be 20 BC-STV electoral districts represented by a total of 81 MLAs – the same as under the proposed SMP system. Thus, while BC-STV would retain the same number of MLAs province-wide, the new electoral districts by virtue of their larger size, would represent the interests of a larger geographical region and a more varied population.

4.1 British Columbia

Under the proposed BC-STV system, northern BC, as represented by the Northeast, Northwest and North Central electoral districts would have among the lowest number of MLAs (either two or three members per district). In contrast, the Fraser Valley West, Richmond-Delta, Burnaby-New Westminster, Vancouver East, Vancouver West and Capitol Region electoral districts would each have among the highest number of MLAs (either five or six members per district).

4.2 Burnaby and Neighbouring Municipalities

With respect to Burnaby, the EBC proposed that Burnaby-New Westminster's five SMP electoral districts be combined to form a single BC-STV electoral district represented by five MLAs (Figure 3, *attached*). The EBC's proposal to create one five-member BC-STV district was based on the conclusion that New Westminster has stronger community ties with Burnaby than with other adjacent municipalities.

Of those municipalities adjacent to Burnaby, the City of Vancouver (with nearly three times the population of Burnaby²), has been afforded two electoral districts (Vancouver-East and Vancouver-West) having a total of 11 MLAs. In contrast, Port Moody, Coquitlam and Port Coquitlam (with a combined population nearly equal to that of Burnaby's), has been afforded one electoral district having only 4 MLAs (Tri-Cities).

Should the BC-STV electoral system (and its accompanying electoral boundaries) be selected in the upcoming referendum, it would come into force for the 2013 general election. A new electoral boundaries commission would be appointed in the following year to review the

² Population comparisons are based on 2006 census statistics.

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boundaries, and to make any adjustments that are needed to further ensure proper representation of local and regional community interests.

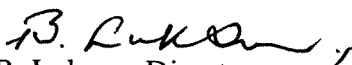
5.0 CONCLUSION

This report presents the City's position that the preliminary electoral districts proposed for Burnaby (under both the SMP and the BC-STV electoral systems) are generally favourable. Under the proposed SMP system, the City would be represented by four MLAs (up from 3.5) within our municipal boundaries. Under the proposed BC-STV system, Burnaby and New Westminster would be collectively represented by five MLAs within a smaller geographic region relative to most other BC-STV districts proposed for BC.

Based on the EBC's preliminary recommendations, this report recommends that Council express its support to the EBC for four electoral districts in Burnaby, but requests that the EBC work with the City to further refine the boundaries of the electoral districts so as to preserve the continuity of existing neighbourhoods within the City.

As well, this report recommends that the Burnaby-Willingdon electoral district be renamed Burnaby-Metrotown to allow for greater identification with the town centre in this area, and to create consistency in naming with the other electoral districts proposed for Burnaby.

The EBC will complete its public consultation process in 2008 January, and then submit any amendments to its Preliminary Report to the legislature by 2008 February 15. This brief consultation period will allow the EBC to meet the 12 May 2009 deadline for the provincial election and BC-STV referendum.


B. Luksun, Director
PLANNING & BUILDING

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Attachments (3)

Copied to: City Clerk

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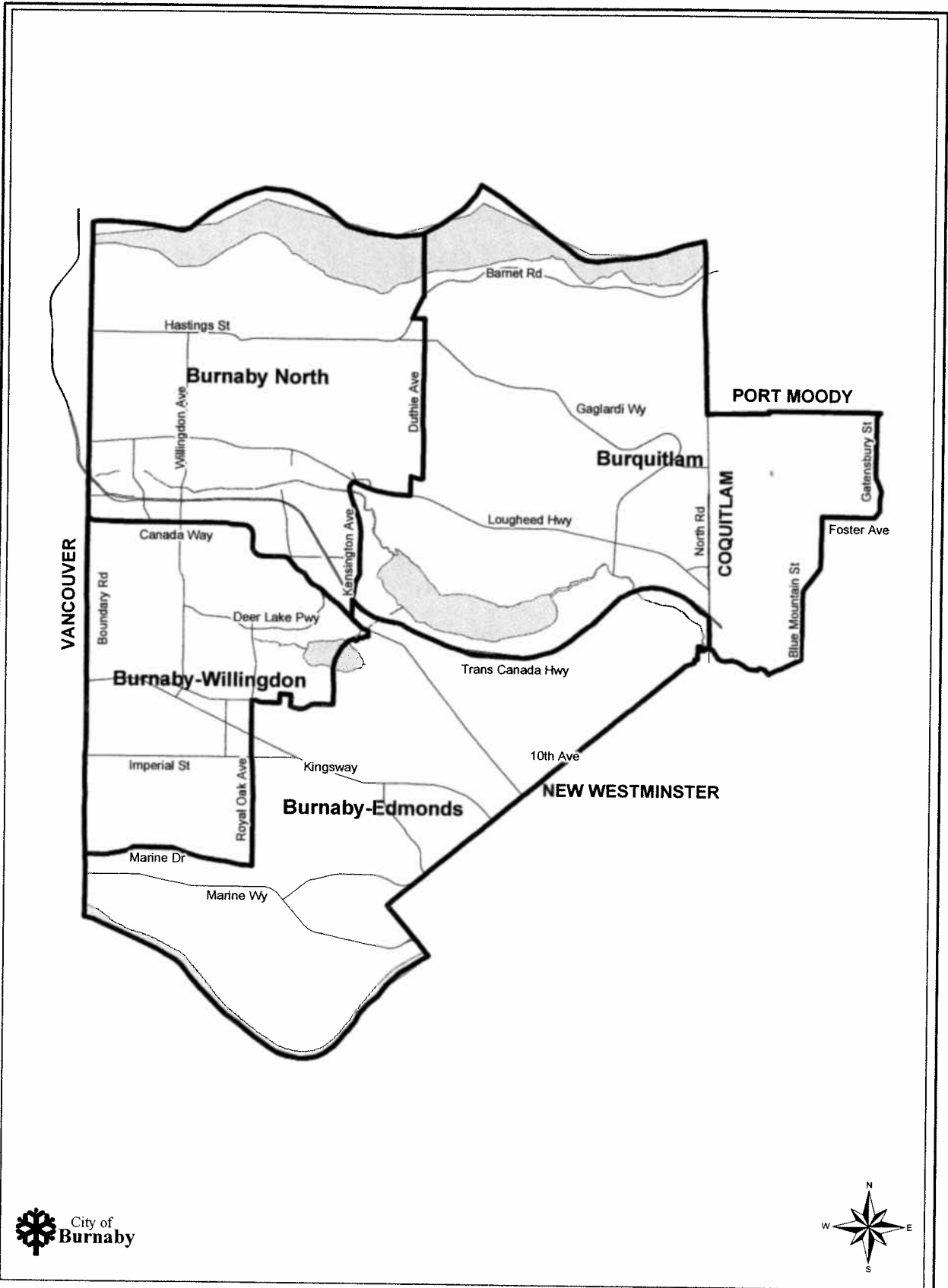
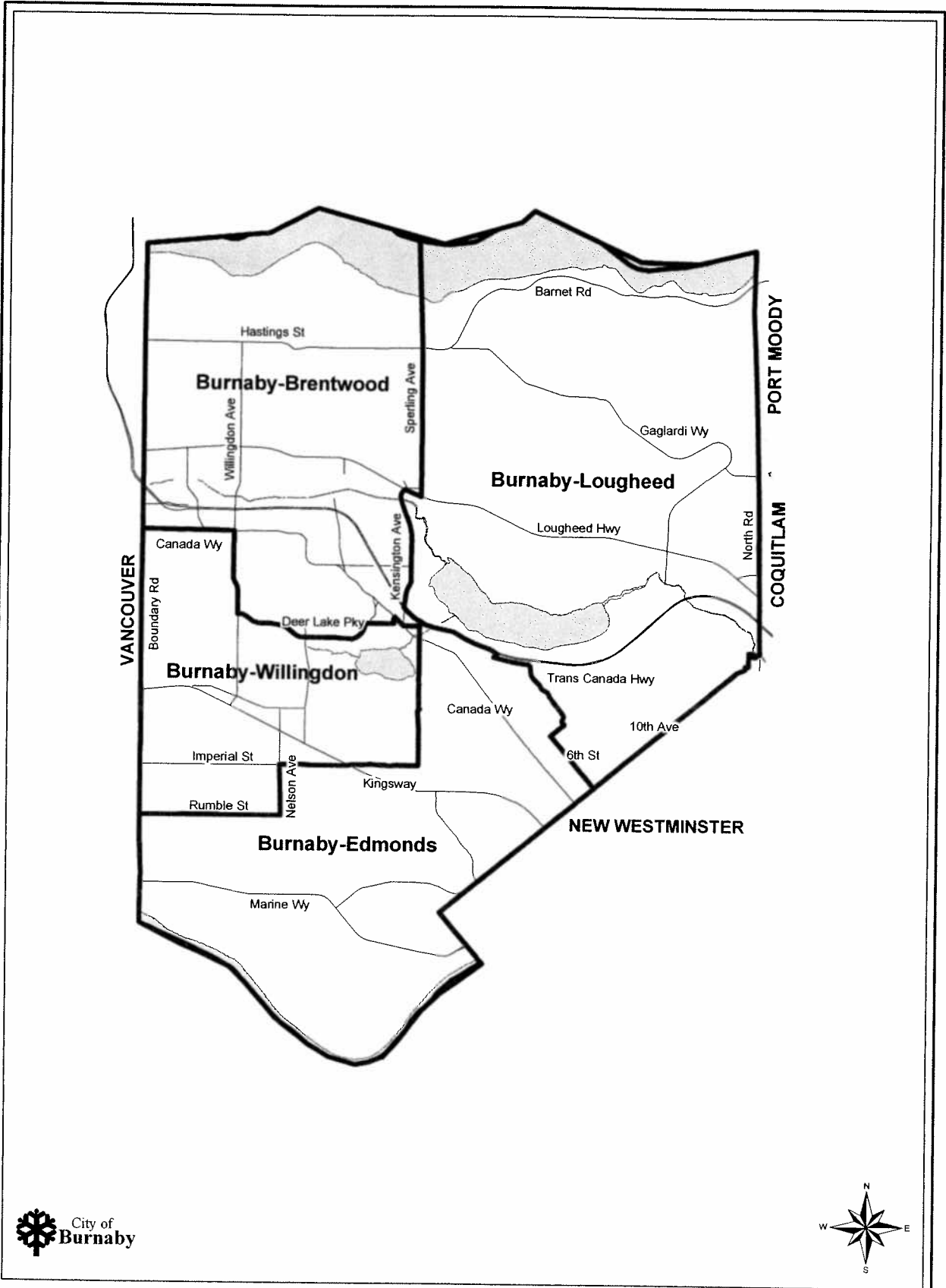


Figure 1:
Current SMP Electoral Boundaries in Burnaby

Data source: Electoral Boundaries Commission, 2007

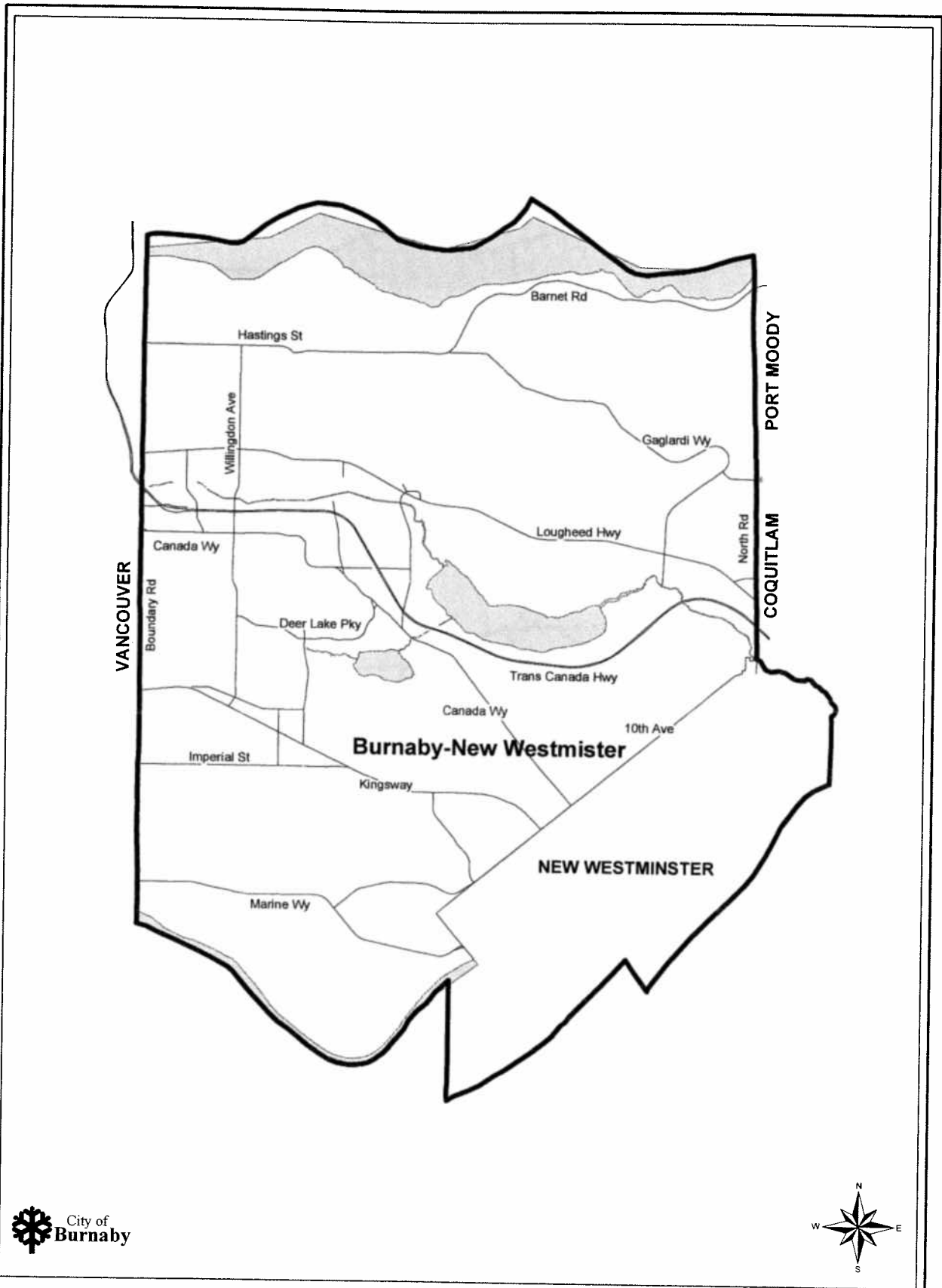
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**Figure 2:
Proposed SMP Electoral Boundaries in Burnaby**

Data source: Electoral Boundaries Commission, 2007

Scale: 1:55,000



**Figure 3:
Proposed BC-STV Electoral Boundaries in Burnaby
and New Westminster**

Data source: Electoral Boundaries Commission, 2007

Scale: 1:55,000