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Calgary, Alberta [REDACTED]

2009 Sep 21

Judge E.J.M. Walter
Electoral Boundaries Commission
Suite 100, 11510 Kingsway Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T5G 2Y5

Sir:

Purpose of the Electoral Boundaries Commission

There is a structural issue in the Alberta electoral landscape that impinges on the work of the Boundaries Commission. Alberta appears to be the only province of Canada in which Parliamentary Democracy does not bring about periodic changes in government. Indeed, there must be very few, if any, of the numerous jurisdictions around the world that follow the mature British model and in which government has remained vested in one political party for so many decades. This is perhaps a major reason for voter apathy and the low turnout in Alberta provincial elections. A small minority of the population can give one party a recurring plurality in a unicameral legislature. This is not healthy in the usual construct of Western democracy, in which elections renew institutional vigor and communal well-being, and provide meaningful consequences for incompetence.

The ethno-cultural and socio-economic background mix of Albertans does not differ from most other provinces (except Quebec) to an extent that would explain the failure of elections to produce desirable checks and balances and changes.

Although the Boundaries Commission is not charged with modernising our electoral system to, for example, proportional representation, or a single transferable vote model, or Australian-style compulsory voting, or Swiss-style referenda, it should be incumbent on you to consider the outcomes of the electoral system over the last four decades, and whether entrenched boundary anomalies properly serve the interests of all Albertans.

xc: Dr Keith Archer, Banff

In the 21st century, is it not possible to cast aside early 20th century Alberta politics, and achieve the fairness of a one person - one vote - equal franchise system? The electoral division tabulation on the back page of your recent flier shows population variances from +60% to -37.5%. In some ridings there are small variances attributable to population migration - in and out. But the largest franchise imbalance is an agrarian bias that favours the will of rural Albertan voters over the will of urban Albertan voters. Cumulative variance of up to 97% is wrong in modern democracy, and this likely contributes towards the failure of periodic equilibration of political power in Alberta.

The notion of physical distance across electoral divisions means far less in the era of telecommunications and the Internet than in the horse-and-buggy days that preceded that last change in Alberta's government. If there is need to accommodate the inconveniences of distances across electoral territories, the Province can set up video links and electronic vehicles for dialogue between voters and prospective or elected representatives. The Province could enhance postal voting or electronic ballots. But above all the Province should, in the 21st century, be seen to respect the fundamentals of valid representative government.

I hope the Boundaries Commission will take pause to contemplate the purposes of parliamentary elections in Alberta, Canada, and then proceed to consider what Dr Archer and others have called the democratic deficit. Perhaps the Commission might then conclude that its current mandate is futile - no more than a smokescreen to maintain the status quo. Please recommend that at the next election, we have a population-wide referendum on this question -

*Do you want Alberta to have **a one person - one equal vote** electoral system?*

This letter expresses concern about electoral outcome imbalances and does not arise from any partisan political affiliation.

Yours truly,


R. Lewkonja

xc: Dr Keith Archer, Banff