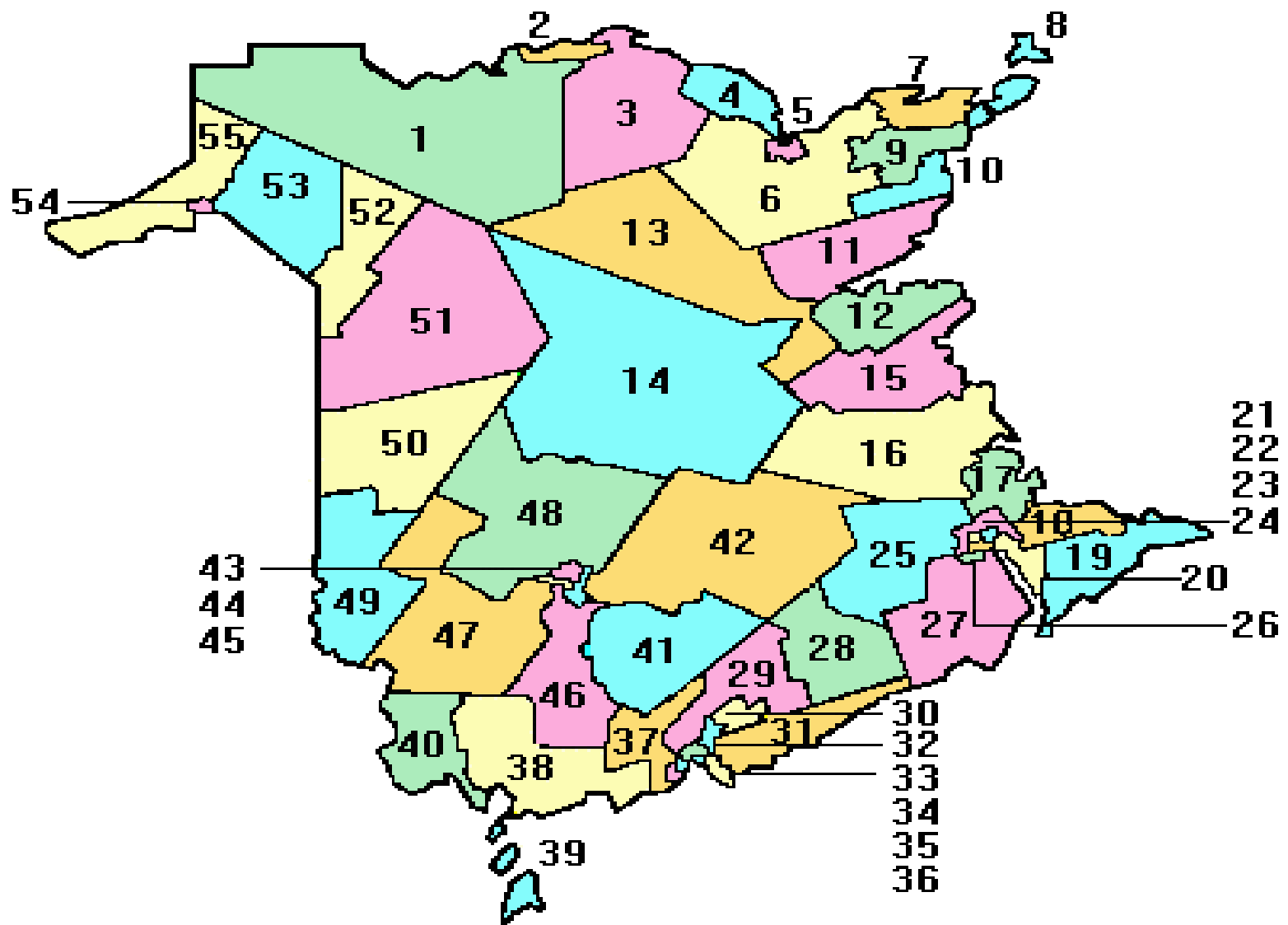


# NEW BRUNSWICK COMMISSION ON LEGISLATIVE DEMOCRACY







## THESE TWO ARE *NOT THE SAME*...

New Brunswick                      55 electoral districts

Ontario                                      107 electoral districts

New Brunswick                      750,000 population

Ontario                                      12,500,000 population

New Brunswick                      35% Francophone

Ontario                                      5% Francophone

New Brunswick                      50% rural

Ontario                                      15% rural

December 19, 2003

Premier Lord announces the Commission

Wide ranging mandate includes reform of :

*the legislature*

*electoral boundary drawing*

*fixed election dates*

*voter turnout*

*government appointment process*

*direct democracy*

*party democracy*

*enhancing public participation generally*

*a new electoral system*

- *Principles and Values*

both:

generic and abstract

*and*

associated with a particular place and culture

- General values Commissioners identified early on to be reflected in New Brunswick's electoral system:
  - proportionality
  - local representation
  - substantial opposition
  - fairness for small parties
  - voter choice
  - efficient/effective government
  - representation of women, aboriginals, regions

- Commission ultimately narrowed these down to four central values:

*local representation*

*fair representation*

*equality of the vote*

*effective government*

*Values contextualized to the New Brunswick experience*

***local representation:***

- approximately one-third of NB'ers live in unincorporated districts. Their MLAs take on many roles normally assumed by municipal councilors.
- Election of MLAs from counties until 1970. We heard that movement to single member districts provided better local representation.

## Local representation:

- “In our view, it is important for voters to have a strong tie with their representatives, and this is facilitated through relatively small electoral districts.”
- Multi member districts have the advantage of increasing the likelihood that each local area is represented in government caucus.

## *Fair representation:*

- Multi member districts offer greater possibilities for election of members from under represented groups.  
(Only 12 % of NB legislature was female)
- Multi member districts increase the likelihood of non-territorial interests being represented  
(election of MLAs not tied to parochial interests)
- Multi member districts ensure major parties have representation from all regions within their elected caucus
- Multi member regions must be crafted to ensure equitable representation of language communities

*Equality of the vote:*

- Small parties being penalized under SMP,  
NDP receiving 10% of the vote and usually one or zero seats
- Too many wasted votes,  
1987 – Liberals win 60% of vote and 100% of seats
- Too much ‘regionalized’ partisan representation,  
resulting from disproportionality
- Voter turn-out declining

## *Effective Government:*

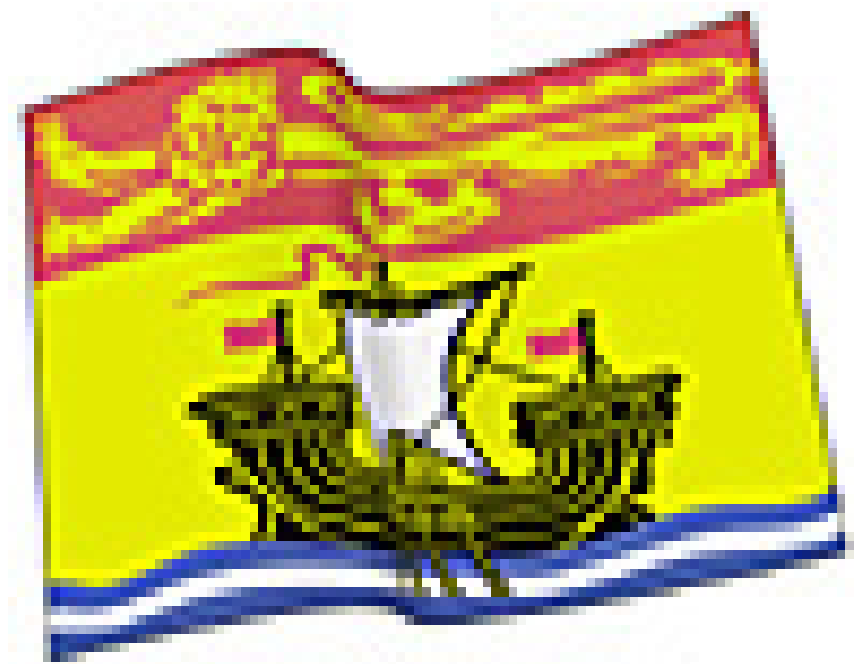
- SMP provides stability of majority governments
- Need for a substantial opposition in Legislature

*In four elections between 1987 and 1999  
opposition parties received between 40 and 53%  
of vote but never more than 20% of seats in the  
legislature.*

*The Commission believes that the current system has generally served the province well, as NB has experienced substantial progress during recent decades and has benefited from strong political leadership. Nonetheless, the Commission believes that the current system can be **improved** by better reflecting the changing democratic norms and values that NBers currently hold.*

## *NB MMP*

- A system designed to meet the democratic needs and aspirations of modern New Brunswick



36 single member constituencies

20 party list seats

elected from 4 regions

Aim for proportionality within each region

Two votes – one for preferred party and one for constituency candidate

Province wide threshold of 5 per cent

Closed party lists (BUT prohibition of leader appointment of candidates, require open vote of party membership)

Prohibition on dual candidacies (can't run both in a constituency and on a party list)

- **HOW NB MMP MATCHES UP WITH OUR VALUES**

*Local Representation*

- \* voters continue to elect a single MLA from their local area
- \* local communities will likely have representation both in government and opposition caucuses

*Fair Representation*

- \* broad proportionality between votes and seats
- \* smaller parties will have a better chance of winning seats IF they have modest province wide support
- \* the major parties will have representation from all parts of the province in their caucuses
- \* provide opportunity to increase representation from underrepresented groups

### *Equality of the Vote*

- \*all votes count equitably in determining election outcomes, the number of wasted votes is minimized
- \*with two votes, voters can express their real preferences both for a government and for a local representative
- \*election results determined by voters and not the electoral system

### *Effective Government*

- \*a more balanced legislature, more opposition members to keep government accountable
- \*a more balanced legislature, coupled with minority and coalition governments and legislative reform, may encourage parties to work together more
- \*life span of the legislature should continue to average in the 3 year range
- \*governments will have representation from all parts of the province

URL for NB Commission Final Report:

[www.gnb.ca/0100/FinalReport-e.pdf](http://www.gnb.ca/0100/FinalReport-e.pdf)

**(pages 31-50)**