

## **ELECTORAL BOUNDARY REDISTRICTING BELIZE**

### **A Historical View at September 2022**

The Elections and Boundaries Commission is empowered and guided by Section 90 of the Belize Constitution to make proposals to the National Assembly on Boundary redistricting. The National Assembly in making the final decision, may accept all or part of the proposals submitted by the Elections and Boundaries Commission. After the redistricting becomes law, the Representation of the People Act (ROPA), Chapter 9 of the Laws of Belize, directs the Chief Elections Officer of the Elections and Boundaries Department to:

- Adjust the Electoral Registers of the Electoral Divisions affected
- Compile new Registers of electors if there are new Electoral Divisions
- Within 30 days publish Provisional Registers

At the end of 10 days the Provisional Registers are revised at a Revision Court located in Magistrate Courts countrywide. The new changes come into effect at the next Parliamentary Election.

The first election after adult suffrage in 1954, the country was divided into six electoral divisions. Since then, the number of electoral divisions have increased. At every increase, physical boundaries of the divisions so affected are altered to satisfy the new descriptions. In 1954 there was an increase from 6 to 9 divisions; so that the 1957 election saw 9 constituencies. Then in 1961 there was an increase by 100%, from 9 to 18 electoral divisions. In 1984 an increase of 10 to 28 and in 1993 by 1 to 29 electoral divisions. In 1993 to 2002 while there were no increases in number of constituencies, electoral boundaries were redrawn or altered. The following divisions were so affected in 1993 to 1998:

**1993** in *Port Loyola and Collet*

**1997** in *Cayo Central and Cayo South*

**1998** in *Belize District:*

Caribbean Shores, Freetown, Fort George, Pickstock, Belize Rural Central

**1998** in *Corozal District:*

Corozal North, Corozal Bay, and Corozal South West

**1998** in *Orange Walk District:*

Orange Walk North, Orange Walk East, Orange Walk Central

The year 2002 saw another boundary redistricting exercise, this time in the Toledo East and Stann Creek West electoral divisions. The boundary adjustments allowed for the villages of Independence and Placencia to be removed from Toledo East and placed in Stann Creek West. As a result, the voters from these two villages were placed back in their respective administrative district, which is Stann Creek.

The last boundary redistricting exercise in 2004/2005 was the first endeavour at narrowing the gap in electoral population between divisions. The wide gap was decreased substantially from a ratio of 4.4: 1 to 1.7: 1, nationally. In the Belize District, the gap was narrowed from a ratio of 3.1: 1 to 1.3: 1. This was accomplished by setting guiding principles to keep adjustments to a minimum and setting a tolerance limit. Also contiguity and geographic referencing were maintained throughout, while ensuring that communities were not split between divisions.