

NOVA SCOTIA
ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES
COMMISSION

MONDAY, JANUARY 14, 2019

BMO Centre
Bedford, Nova Scotia

PROVINCIAL ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION

Dr. Colin Dodds, Chairman
Ms. Carlotta Weymouth
Mr. Michael Kelloway
Mr. Paul Gaudet
Mr. Michael Baker
Mr. Glenn Graham
Mr. Peter M. Butler
Mr. Leonard LeFort
Ms. Angela Simmonds

WITNESSES

Ms. Mary Ann McGrath
Mr. Patrick Sullivan
Ms. Tracy Stuart
Ms. Sandra Watson
Ms. Kerri Robson
Ms. Hope Edmond
Ms. Lois Miller
Ms. Phyllis MacKay
Mr. Alan MacLeod, Jr.
Mr. James Simon
Mr. Kody Blois
Mr. Wayne Shellnutt
Mr. David Barrett
Mr. Aris Lavranos
Ms. Ailyn Clow
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7:00 P.M

CHAIRMAN
Dr. Colin Dodds

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ladies and gentlemen it's just a few minutes past seven o'clock. Thank you so much for coming and good evening. My name is Colin Dodds, I live in Halifax and I am the Chair of the Nova Scotia Electoral Boundaries Commission and will chair this evening's public consultation.

First let me acknowledge that we are on the unceded lands of the many First Nations of Nova Scotia.

I would like to ask each of the commission members to introduce themselves, starting on my left.

[The commission members introduced themselves.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. We have a full commission with us this evening. As many of you know if you were here last September, we presented a draft set of boundaries. At our last meeting I provided a context for that meeting, in terms of how the commission was established and the controversy surrounding the interim and final reports of the 2012 commission. I don't intend to do that again this evening, but if there are any questions on this, I would be pleased to clarify.

The commission was tasked in its terms of reference with producing boundaries for a 51-seat House of Assembly and at least one other. Subsequent to our public consultations, which we did in September, we did produce an interim report, which was tabled with the Attorney General on November 28th last year. It proposes four alternatives, including a 51-seat House. In that particular scenario, part of the current Bedford electoral district is moved into Hammonds Plains-Lucasville.

The total number of electors as of June 29, 2018 was 743,500 for Nova Scotia, and the average on the current set of boundaries of 51 seats is 14,578. This represents an increase of about 30,000 electors since 2012.

As I think many of you know, we've had continual population shifts to the urban areas of the province. We are planning to use an updated data set hopefully using December 31, 2018 data for the final report. Failing that, we'll be using November data.

What the commission would like your input on tonight are the four options that we reported in the interim report. The first, as I mentioned, is the 51 electoral districts - the current size of the House, but with some adjustments; second, 55 electoral districts, which includes the formerly protected electoral districts of Argyle, Clare, Richmond and Preston with some modification of their boundaries; third, 55 electoral districts, but 56 seats in the House of Assembly. This would include the dual-member electoral district of Inverness, which would have one MLA to represent the geographic electoral district and one MLA to represent the Acadian constituency; fourth, 56 electoral districts, which would include an exceptional electoral district for Chéticamp.

You may also have questions and suggestions about your own electoral district this evening. So on the wall we have maps for Nova Scotia. We also have a series of individual and specific maps. We have three for Nova Scotia, which represent the 51 and the two variants - the variant for 55 and 56. We also have individual maps for many of the constituencies, including the two for Bedford that is being proposed - Bedford Basin, Bedford South.

I know that there are people here from Hants East so we actually have the Hants East map here. We have Sackville-Beaver Bank. We have Hammonds Plains-Lucasville. Again, if you've not had a chance to look at those when we conclude this evening, we will leave them up for some time and you can have a chance to have a look.

For those of you from East Hants, we have been able to confirm that we will be coming to Milford on January 29th. As of this morning that was still in doubt because we had to confirm that our IT crew could be there, but we are looking for Milford at 7:00 p.m. on January 29th. In addition, on January 21st another location that's not on the original list is going to be Bridgewater, so we can cover off parts of Queens, the two seats in Lunenburg and Chester-St. Margaret's.

I have a number of people who have already expressed interest in speaking, so what I intend to do is to call each one in turn, and then when that is over we'll open up for comments from the floor.

The first speaker that has been identified is MaryAnn McGrath. I would ask not only that you state your name, but as far as the transcribers are concerned - because everything is taped and is on the record, then a series of people actually do transcribe that

material, and they've asked that you actually spell your name each time, if you don't mind. Mary Ann, over to you.

MS. MARY ANN MCGRATH: Thank you, Dr. Dodds. I live at 24 Hamshaw Drive in Kearney Lake, which is at the other end of whatever these streets are called these days.

First, I'd like to say that I agree with the 55- or 56-seat configuration. I was disappointed - I'm not representative of any of the disadvantaged or lower population groups in the province, but I fully agree that all citizens were better represented when those constituent groups had a better representation in Province House. I sat there and saw the advantages of it.

You've basically categorized this meeting as a meeting of Bedford and Hammonds Plains with a few additions. I'm here because although I live in neither Bedford nor Hammonds Plains, my community has been dumped in it. I have spoken at the previous meetings and I'm just here to reiterate a few main points.

The main issue is that my community is a tiny little community of 60 homes at the other end of Kearney Lake. We are part of the old City of Halifax and have been for many years. We are part of a larger community that at various degrees of population goes back nearly to the founding of Halifax, and we have always been a community with Birch Cove. We have never been a community with Hammonds Plains, no disrespect to Hammonds Plains, and we have never been a community with Bedford, no disrespect to them. They are lovely communities and I have friends in all of them.

Our constituency of interest is Birch Cove and Halifax. That is our school district, that is the historical community we grew up with, if you would put it that way. We are fully connected. When I look out my windows the only part of Bedford that I can see are the top floors of a couple of apartment buildings on the opposite side of the BiHi. But I can see a good deal of Birch Cove and Wedgewood Park, which is part of my community.

We have no community of interest with Hammonds Plains or Bedford. In fact, as I reiterated in previous presentations, there is high potential for conflict of interest, which would put an MLA representing both my community and a Hammonds Plains or Bedford community in a conflict, trying to represent our tiny little community of 60 homes, while at the same time fairly representing thousands and thousands of other constituents. I know what end of the spectrum we would fall on.

I have put a few notes together, plus the attachment of my previous presentation. I have attached a couple of maps that illustrate where, within the districts of either 29 or 05 we fall, and we are immediately adjacent to the constituency which would include most of Birch Cove, which is our historic association.

I would conclude by saying that I will remind you of what I said the last time: a highway does not divide a community; a highway connects a community. It's discouraging to see major highways continually used to divide communities that are actually connected. I thank you very much for your time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. Does anybody from the commission have any questions? Thanks, and we do have your written input.

The second speaker who has indicated they wish to present is Patrick Sullivan.

MR. PATRICK SULLIVAN: Good evening commissioners, Dr. Dodds. My name is Patrick Sullivan. I am President and CEO of the Halifax Chamber of Commerce and I live in Bedford.

I'd like to thank the Electoral Boundaries Commission for the chance to speak tonight. The Halifax Chamber of Commerce, for clarity, is a membership-based organization of over 1,650 companies that employ over 65,000 employees in the greater Halifax area. On September 5th, I did present to the commission here and I presented you, just to clarify and provide a little summary, that Halifax, with currently 47 per cent of Nova Scotia's population, should be effectively represented.

To provide clarity on that, we believe that Halifax should be represented by 25 to 26 MLAs, considering its population numbers and with growth projections to provide appropriate voter parity.

We want to be clear that the representation for African Nova Scotians and Acadians should be entrenched in the 51 MLAs who currently exist. We believe the number of Nova Scotian MLAs should not increase and if change is required, a decrease is the best solution, given the economic realities of our province today and in the future.

[7:15 p.m.]

My points today will build on my previous points as well as to address the specifics in the draft report from the commission. According to the 2018 fiscal framework presented to Halifax Council from city staff, Halifax will have reached 50 per cent of Nova Scotia's population by 2022. If Halifax was to be effectively represented, based on population, we should see 25 to 26 MLAs. We currently have 22.

This is not voter parity. In fact, following the population estimates, if the commission increases the number of MLAs from 51 to 55 or 56, as presented in three of the options in the interim report, then our representation should, in fact, be 27-plus MLAs and be much greater than the 43 per cent that we currently represent.

It's our belief the commission must face the demographic realities of Nova Scotia and the projected future of Nova Scotia for the coming years. By 2022, Halifax will require five new MLAs to meet the population target by riding. Halifax is growing. Not only that, but when we look at population growth in Nova Scotia to 12 months ending June 30th, we see that Halifax is, in fact, the only area growing at a significant rate.

The Province of Nova Scotia had a population increase of 0.55 per cent provincially, driven by an increase of 1.59 per cent for Halifax and of the 18 counties measured in that study, 12 of them had a decline in population for the last 12 months. Halifax is the only area that is growing, and it is growing for two reasons. If we look at immigration, 3,717 immigrants came to Halifax and 589 went to all other areas of the province.

If we look at births versus deaths, Halifax had a net 825 births and all other counties in Nova Scotia combined had a combined 1,793 deaths versus births, for a net decline in organic growth.

Halifax is the major economic growth generator for the province, providing 56 per cent of gross domestic product and 51 per cent of our major project spending. We are advocates for voter parity and we do not want to see our members across Halifax and Nova Scotia feel that they are under-represented because of district size and/or ratio.

The Halifax Chamber and its members are in full support of providing cultural and linguistic representation for African Nova Scotians and Acadians across our province. We feel these groups can be incorporated without additional MLAs, either through the redistribution of current representation and/or through general representation. We did not feel it was our place, as the Halifax Chamber, to provide specific guidance on ridings and which ridings should be placed where. However, given the proposals provided by the commission, we feel we must comment.

We believe the recognition of the cultural significance and contribution of the two communities I mentioned is broader and should be ingrained within the broader culture of government and by all MLAs, rather than expecting specific MLAs to represent these groups.

We were quite surprised to see such a simplistic solution developed by the commission with the additional seats in under-populated areas and a return to essentially the protected ridings. Providing seats for Nova Scotians that represent an average of 7,000 electors disenfranchises voters in average ridings.

In addition, if there is real concern about Acadian voices in the Legislature, then why have almost 12,000 French first-language speakers in HRM been neglected? We still believe that MLAs in the province should not exceed 51 seats, but if we must increase seats, when reviewing the electoral maps included in the commission's report - and we

fully acknowledge that we are not experts - it seems that areas in Cape Breton and southwest Nova Scotia could easily be combined while still respecting voter parity. Specifically, the additional ridings considered in the southwest of Clare and Argyle could be combined to provide the requested Acadian riding around Yarmouth with approximately 13,000 electors. The riding in Richmond and Guysborough could also be combined in some way to reduce the number of additional seats required.

The potential riding in Chéticamp with the option of a dual voting process seems to be a significant departure from the rest of the report. A riding of 2,556 electors seems to completely disregard the guidance the Supreme Court has provided in the past in the Carter decision. It does, however, raise the topic of non-contiguous ridings and why this was not considered for Acadian or African Nova Scotian ridings. If there was a process suggested for voting in the Chéticamp riding that could work, why could it not work in other areas?

In summary, we're very concerned with the commission's proposed riding additions for a few reasons. Halifax is currently under-represented in the provincial Legislature and these proposals would not improve this representation today, and we'll see it continue to get worse in the future.

This proposal is built for the past, not the future of Nova Scotia with an increasingly urban population, which includes both African Nova Scotians and Acadians. Adding additional ridings that have a significantly lower population of electors harms the electors in other ridings.

To quote the Supreme Court of Canada's 1991 case reference re Provincial Electoral Boundaries (Saskatchewan), that effective representation entails relative parity of voting power, "A system which dilutes one citizen's vote unduly as compared with another citizen's vote runs the risk of providing inadequate representation to the citizen whose vote is diluted." Where the unequal weighing of votes is not required to ensure better government, dilution of one citizen's vote as compared with another's should not be countenanced.

If the commission insists on additional seats, four additional seats are not necessary. The commission raised the potential of a novel voting scheme in Chéticamp. If this is possible, why did the commission not consider non-contiguous voting districts?

Finally, cost of additional seats is not seemingly to be considered in the report. There may be a belief that taxpayers' funds are limitless, but adding additional seats has costs today and in the future. Our estimate for four new seats is close to an additional \$1 million per year to the Nova Scotia budget for a questionable benefit.

The suggestions provided by the commission are not forward-looking, but rather looking to the past for today's answers. We strongly encourage the commission as an independent group to act as the quasi-judicial group they are and recognize the model that

they proposed does not recognize the realities of the population of Nova Scotia today or in the future.

The reason this commission was called was because of a successful legal challenge. My fear is that further legal challenges are coming if voters are disenfranchised in this area. Again, dilution of one citizen's vote as compared with another's should not be countenanced.

I'd like to mention, we will be asking our chamber members for their support for our letter of response to the commission's report and we'll be suggesting that they additionally provide information to the commission. Thank you very much - I really appreciate your time this evening.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Are there any questions?

MR. MICHAEL BAKER: Mr. Sullivan, thank you for coming out. We have had speakers talk about the difference between the roles of an urban and rural MLA. When a rural MLA returns to his or her electoral district, there is excessive travel, which is not necessarily faced by somebody from metro. What would you say would be the argument?

MR. PATRICK SULLIVAN: I think there are a couple of things. To some extent perhaps you can provide suggestions to the provincial government, but my understanding is that all MLAs receive the same amount of expense money for travel, for offices. In ridings that are exceptionally large, it would seem to me that providing additional monies to an MLA to have two offices in a region would be a real benefit and eliminate the need for seats. Clearly, travel is an issue, but we do have significant opportunities for communication, and I think providing different levels of budget could put offices in various communities.

An MLA in Halifax has perhaps a lower cost of doing business because they don't have to travel quite as much. I mentioned Clare and Argyle. If there were two offices in Clare and Argyle, I think that would adequately meet the needs of voters, but again, I don't think that requires a change to electoral boundaries. I think it requires a change to expense policies inside the provincial government.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mike, for that question. The third speaker is Tracy Stuart Cameron.

MS. TRACY STUART: My name is Tracy (nee Cameron) Stuart - Stuart is my married name. I'm coming tonight representing my hometown of Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia. I was born and raised in Shubenacadie and from there I went through all of my education - elementary school through to high school. I went on to be very active in my community, an active member in sports. I went on to become a two-time world champion and Olympic medalist in rowing.

My real grounds and my start was in this community and in this village. We were very much part of the East Hants corridor and district. The glue that held us together was our school district and our teams in sport. Also, having gone to high school in Hants East, all our social activities and events were through the school. It was this whole corridor from Shubenacadie straight through to Enfield. That's where we belong, that's how we identify ourselves - our whole social status is glued together, we've never been apart. Everything from sport to music to art and culture, we belong together. It's what made me stronger as an athlete, that we stayed together. I didn't have to travel to Truro. I played with my teammates from school in all community-level events.

I'm here today to recognize that it's such a strong social corridor there and to break that apart or to belong to a different district, I fear we wouldn't be represented and that it is divisive in territory whereas, as far as I can remember, it has been such a stronghold.

I'm hoping you'll consider keeping these social ties and sport ties and cultural ties together. Thank you for your time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: As I mentioned, we are planning to come to Milford on January 29th. Congratulations, by the way - you are also an Olympic bronze medalist, I understand.

MS. TRACY STUART: Yes, right, thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: In our current proposal we have the East Hants - we can talk about that later. Thank you very much.

The next speaker is Sandra Watson.

MS. SANDRA WATSON: I don't have any prepared remarks, although I did send an email earlier this week. I am agreeing with what Tracy had to say about our community. We're a community from Enfield through to Shubenacadie. As I mentioned in my email, I am President of the Milford Recreation Association.

What we promote with the Milford Recreation Association is facilities for the use with the whole of the East Hants community, providing recreational opportunities through sporting fields and tennis courts. We have a number of groups, many groups from the whole of the corridor that use our facility. We don't see ourselves as just Milford, we see ourselves as East Hants.

As Tracy mentioned, we have two schools - a middle school that draws about 700 students from Enfield to Shubenacadie every day into our community, as well as about 900 students who come in every day from Enfield through Shubie to the high school. They are using our facilities. We use the facilities throughout East Hants. We see ourselves as East Hants. We're drawn to the business centre which we consider to be Elmsdale. We use many facilities and services throughout the corridor for doctors' appointments, shopping, so on

and so forth - it's all done in East Hants. We do not turn to Truro, we do not turn to Brookfield, we do not go to Musquodoboit to do any of these functions. Our intense focus is being in East Hants.

I think I also mentioned in my email that our motto is East Hants: We live it! Well we are it - our communities are part of that community. We don't see ourselves as separate. As much as it may look easy to just slice us off and put us with Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley, we are not going to get a benefit from that. We don't feel we are going to be fairly represented by that. We would then have an MLA who is trying to do their business for Musquodoboit, Colchester, parts of East Hants, and in fact, parts of Milford and parts of Shubenacadie - not the entirety of Milford, not the entirety of Shubenacadie; parts of those communities would still remain with East Hants.

[7:30 p.m.]

I don't think that that is a solution in the long term for this situation, where you have voter numbers exceeding the 14,000, or in our case we are above that. There must be another opportunity or there must be another option that you can look at, keeping us where we deserve to be, with East Hants.

I want to thank you and I'll probably speak a little more to this when you do come to Milford. I'm very happy to hear that you've been able to accommodate our request to come to Milford.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You offered the space as well.

MS. SANDRA WATSON: That's right, free of charge, come on in. We'll see you on the 29th.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I wanted to say I could actually go back and look at the previous reports for East Hants. Back in 2001, you had 15,978 electors; by 2011, it was up to 17,300; and then for 2018, 18,362. That puts you at 1.26, which of course, is why we're looking at moving you. That's something to bear in mind when we meet.

MS. SANDRA WATSON: And we do see that, we are a growing community. But at this point in time, there must be other alternatives than to split Milford and Shubenacadie into two pieces - because that's literally what you're doing, as the gentleman mentioned. Using a highway as your dividing line really isn't fair because that really, truly does run through Milford. You're going to see one part of Milford still go to East Hants and then the rest of us in Colchester, potentially, and the same with Shubenacadie - you are dividing that community as well.

It would be one thing - and I'm not suggesting that you take either one of us because neither of us want to go, but if you're splitting two communities, how does that make sense?

Should issues arise and we have to contact our MLA and it's a Milford issue or a Shubenacadie issue, then we're asking two MLAs to involve themselves. We're going to have to expect that both MLAs are going to feel the same way about the issue and represent us in an equal fashion. I don't see that that's a reasonable solution for us. I don't think we would be as well represented as we have been throughout the years as East Hants.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, we can talk further. Thank you very much. Any questions? Paul.

MR. PAUL GAUDET: I'm not exactly familiar with the East Hants concept. Could you clearly define the territory that we're talking about - from what village to what village?

MS. SANDRA WATSON: It's actually from Enfield through to Shubenacadie but part of East Hants extends out further, even into Mount Uniacke and other outlying communities. But the natural dividing line for us has been the Shubenacadie River, because there's actually an Enfield-Halifax County and Enfield-East Hants.

MR. PAUL GAUDET: It would include Mount Uniacke also.

MS. SANDRA WATSON: Mount Uniacke is in our district at this time, yes. We stretch very far, we have a lot of territory, I guess. That's it for questions? Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. As I say, we have the map that is in the interim report and you can very clearly see the highway dividing the areas.

The next speaker is Kerri Robson, if Kerri is here.

MS. KERRI ROBSON: I'm also here to speak about East Hants. I'm just going to build a little bit on Tracy's and Sandra's comments. I come forward tonight as someone who grew up in the Milford area. I grew up in Milford, I went away for university, then moved all the way to Shubenacadie and then back to Milford, so I kind of cover the gambit of what we're looking at here.

In addition to that, I can bring before this committee my experience as a parent of three children in that area, as a person who went to school herself in that area, and as a business owner in the area. Currently I own a law firm, Carruthers MacDonell & Robson, which is in the Shubenacadie area. I've been there since 2003 and a partner there since 2009.

I can really speak to this committee - and again, I'm building on what Sandra and Tracy have already said - about how integrated Shubenacadie and Milford are with the rest of the East Hants corridor. This is the area that our children go to school. The high school - Hants East Rural High - is in Milford. The middle school - Riverside Education Centre -

is also in Milford. It draws from Enfield to Elmsdale, Lantz, Milford, and Shubenacadie for the children's base.

What effectively this suggestion is doing is carving off the areas of Milford and Shubenacadie that have those two schools within them. In addition, as Tracy alluded to and spoke to, our sports teams are all through that corridor, the children all play together. Our shopping district is in the Elmsdale area.

Our business really takes place in East Hants, and as a business owner I can speak to that. In addition, we have a Provincial Court in Shubenacadie, which is a Family and Provincial Court, which draws the client base. It covers all of East Hants, as well as out to Kennetcook, Rawdon, and the surrounding areas.

As well, there's a strong connection - and Sandra touched on this as well, but by using that highway as a divide, you effectively divide the communities of Milford and Shubenacadie. You split those communities in two, so not only are you carving off a piece of the corridor, you're splitting two communities in two with respect to the representation.

I chaired the school options committee two years ago when they were looking at closing schools in the area, and I can tell you that the connection - specifically in Shubenacadie between the Sipekne'katik First Nation and the Shubenacadie village centre is a strong and historical connection. Essentially, Sipekne'katik First Nation is on one side of the highway, which would remain in East Hants under the current suggestion; the community, the village centre, is on the other side of the highway.

These are important, historic connections in this area, and to divide along the highway lines just doesn't make a lot of sense when you look at the history, the background, and what this community looks like.

In addition, when I chaired that school options committee, I can tell you that Margaret Miller, the MLA at that point in time, was an extraordinarily important person as part of that committee and bringing the issues forward, having them heard, and presenting them to the school board. The committee took up an immense amount of time - I'm sure I'm preaching to the choir at this point - but I can't even wrap my mind around what that would have looked like trying to deal with two MLAs and, as Sandra said, with possibly very different outlooks on the issue. That issue essentially would have a much different level of importance to those two MLAs.

I understand that the committee is coming to Milford on January 29th, and I'm thrilled to hear that. As a parent and also a local coach, I won't be there - I'll be off in a basketball gym somewhere coaching kids from that entire corridor area - but I am pleased to hear it. I wanted to come forward tonight to put to this committee that the suggestion that is currently on the table does not make sense and frankly, I don't think would allow

for effective representation to half of those two communities that are essentially being carved out under the current proposal.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Are there any questions? As I think you know, Ms. Miller was in Truro when we presented. Paul.

MR. PAUL GAUDET: I didn't get the two communities that would be left out.

MS. KERRI ROBSON: Under the current arrangement, essentially it would carve out half of Milford and half of Shubenacadie. Thank you for your time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much for your time. The next speaker is Hope Edmond.

MS. HOPE EDMOND: Hello everyone. My name is Hope Edmond. Today I am here on behalf of Hants East Rural High, located in Milford, Nova Scotia. I am the co-president of the Hants East Rural High Student Council. Hants East Rural High was built in 1957, home to the musical artist Classified, and athlete Tracy Cameron who just spoke.

Hants East Rural High draws students from Enfield, Elmsdale, Lantz, Upper Nine Mile River, Milford, Belnan, Shubenacadie, and Indian Brook. Also, Hants East Rural High is ranked number eight in the Province of Nova Scotia based on its teachers, but it ranks No. 1 to the students and community members of East Hants. This is the website that students use to rate their teachers. This shows many positive things, such as student satisfaction.

I am proud to say that I am a student at Hants East Rural High. Walking through the halls of Hants East, you can really admire how much character and history the school has since it has been there since 1957. It is really more than just chalkboards and desks surrounded by brick walls. Hants East means so much to all of its current, past and future students.

Hants East Rural High is located in the Milford Station and really is the core of East Hants. Changing the electoral boundaries wouldn't just have an impact on the community but on our school as well. Hants East Rural High has always tied together our community - from members of the community coming out to support hockey, soccer and basketball games, to coming to watch a dance or musical performance in our auditorium, which not a lot of other schools have. At our boys' hockey games, sometimes the student council sells our school's apparel and the community has always wanted to buy our clothes in support of our high school. Sometimes they are Hants East alumni as well.

In East Hants we have the East Hants Minor Baseball Association, East Hants Minor Hockey, soccer and so on. We really think of our community as a whole, not just each, like Elmsdale, Enfield, Lantz and all of us individually.

This year's student council has been hosting gift-wrapping fundraisers and is now planning a spring fair open to our community because we know how much support Hants East has and we know how much community members love to be involved. Students have grandparents and parents who have graduated from HERH, and we want to follow in their footsteps.

Segregating the heart of East Hants will not keep our community whole. Changing the electoral boundaries in East Hants will leave many parents in question - if I have a concern with my child's education, who will I contact? They may contact the East Hants MLA, then they will put them in contact with the Colchester MLA and maybe the Colchester MLA will not help them in the same way that an East Hants MLA would.

Changing the electoral boundaries in East Hants will also propose many questions by students. One main concern is if an MLA representative who does not work or live in close proximity to the corridor of East Hants, would they really care and take our concerns at our school as top priority?

We have built connections with all our students, from Milford, Shubenacadie, Lantz, Elmsdale, Enfield, Indian Brook and so on. Hants East Rural High has grown in a positive way over the past few years and our students are really working together as a whole.

Over the past few years, Enfield, Elmsdale and Lantz have been growing tremendously, while Milford and Shubenacadie are not. Perhaps changing the electoral boundaries would isolate Milford and Shubenacadie even more.

I understand the reasons behind changing electoral boundaries, but Milford and Shubenacadie have been part of East Hants and losing those two communities is like losing part of our history. It is not the fault of those communities that people want to live in our great community of East Hants, thus increasing our population. If anything, we should think of this as a great testament as to how we can grow together, not separate us.

We take pride that we are students of HERH and community members of East Hants. Thank you so much for taking the time to listen to somebody who can't even vote yet, but next year.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. Any questions? I think you've been the youngest respondent so far.

The next speaker who has indicated they wish to present is Lois Miller, please. By the way, there are three seats here out front if those of you at the back want to come forward. It doesn't matter which one.

[7:45 p.m.]

MS. LOIS MILLER: Good evening, Mr. Dodds, members of the commission, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Lois Miller. I'll probably be your oldest speaker today, but you won't say that. (Laughter)

MR. CHAIRMAN: We don't know. (Laughter)

MS. LOIS MILLER: I currently live in Fletcher's Lake and I grew up and went to school in Fall River. I'm here this evening to speak not about Hants East, although I wish I were, the other speakers have made those cases so well. I'm here to urge the commission to leave the small community of Lakeview as it is, within the electoral boundaries of Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank. It is currently poll 2 in district 50. Just for Mr. Gaudet, I don't know your area so I wouldn't be able to find the small communities, but Lakeview is a small community, a few minutes' drive from Waverley. It is off the Cobequid Road, close to Windsor Junction and Fall River.

Now I found it difficult to follow the maps online because my vision isn't good and it was difficult to read that and impossible for me to read these ones because my prosthetic knee won't let me kneel down to read them. Can you just confirm, Mr. Dodds, that in some of the proposals you are proposing to remove Lakeview from Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank and add to Sackville-Cobequid, is that correct?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm not sure on that. I don't know if there's anybody else on the commission who could confirm that. I'll tell you what, I'll have a look - I'll get on my knees and have a look at the map. (Interruption) Somebody has indicated that yes, that is the case.

MS. LOIS MILLER: It was really difficult to read those maps. I can see no advantages for this change but only some disadvantages.

First, I'll speak to the number of voters. The number of voters to be transferred is actually very small. I'm not sure what your numbers show. In the last election, there would have been 363 voters in 2017. I think that would have very little effect on the number of voters in your proposal for either Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank or Sackville-Cobequid. It would make Sackville-Cobequid a little larger and my electoral district a little smaller, but I think both of them are around the 15,000 number of voters. I don't think that would make a significant change either way.

The only apparently positive effect would be to make the map for Sackville-Cobequid look a little more pleasing. When you look at the map Lakeview is kind of a small triangle, south of Sackville-Cobequid. If it were added to this map of Sackville-Cobequid it would, in fact, make that map more regular in appearance by squaring off the southern boundary.

Communities in Nova Scotia were not founded - nor are they sustained - by their shape on a map. They are sustained by tradition, economic opportunities, cultural and educational ties. I just want to mention a few of those and I know there are people who live in Lakeview who are here this evening; they'll likely mention many more. The Lakeview-Windsor Junction-Fall River Fire Department serves Lakeview. I actually called them today to make sure, even though the name - you just never know, LWF Fire Department. But yes, one of their firefighters told me definitely they serve Lakeview.

I was able to find today - with some difficulty because this non-school board is very reticent to give out any information - I was able to find out that children and youth from Lakeview attend schools in Waverley and Fall River, so children, youth and parents from that area have ties with their neighbours in the neighbouring villages of Waverley, Windsor Junction and Fall River.

Lakeview residents actively participate in events at the LWF - that's Lakeview, Windsor Junction, Fall River - Community Hall in Fall River, and also at the Waverley Legion. The Lakeview-Windsor Junction-Fall River Ratepayers Association provides recreational and community-based activities for the residents of Lakeview. In fact, I clipped a letter that I read yesterday from the president of the LWF Ratepayers Association. It appeared in *The Laker*, which is the community newspaper that serves Lakeview, Windsor Junction, Fall River, et cetera. The association has supported - and their president noted this - the Lakeview Homeowners Association and Lakeview Park, among other programs.

I have observed through my work with organizations in this area that Lakeview residents are accustomed to raising local issues with the MLA who represents their neighbours in Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank.

I know your commission is meeting now instead of 2021 or 2022, let's say, primarily because the courts determined that in setting electoral boundaries more priorities should be given to ties of history and culture than to numbers of voters. I think many Nova Scotians agree with that way of setting priorities; I do. So I recommend keeping the small community of Lakeview part of its traditional electoral district, Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions? Paul.

MR. PAUL GAUDET: To reassure you, my brother had a house right in that area in Fall River so I'm quite familiar with the area.

Our concern here is that the roads, by some kind of magic, have a way to confuse the issues. I think it's the reason why these gatherings are very important to set the record straight because otherwise if you follow the roads, sometimes you're way off base. But

communities - as you mentioned, it's very important. It's highly important for the community to express their views because they really know the area.

MS. LOIS MILLER: I agree. Thank you.

MR. PAUL GAUDET: Thank you for your presentation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. The next speaker I have on my list is Phyllis MacKay, also I think from Lakeview.

MS. PHYLLIS MACKAY: Good evening, commissioners, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you to all the Lakeview supporters who are here this evening. My name is Phyllis MacKay. I live in Lakeview and I'm making a presentation on behalf of the Lakeview Homeowners Association.

Lakeview's historic boundaries are part of the tri-community of LWF, which is comprised of Lakeview, Windsor Junction and Fall River. We are against any changes that might affect our current boundaries to the detriment of our community of interest. Even though Lakeview's boundaries have been chipped away and parts given to Lower Sackville, the community of Lakeview remains an integral part of LWF.

Lakeview receives fire protection from Fall River. Students from Lakeview attend schools in Fall River. Lakeview residents participate in community events in Windsor Junction and Fall River - sports, seniors' activities, music jams, Windsor Junction's Keloose celebration, and church group activities. There are community centres in Fall River and Windsor Junction which host various activities throughout the year and serve all three communities.

Lakeview treasures its close connection with the other two members of our tri-community of LWF and does not wish to be separated from our community of interest for any reason. Thank you for listening.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Any questions? Ms. MacKay.

MS. PHYLLIS MACKAY: As Lois says, Lakeview is between Lower Sackville and Windsor Junction. Lower Sackville has - there really isn't a relationship there.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The next speaker is Alan MacLeod.

MR. ALAN MACLEOD, JR.: Thank you, Dr. Dodds and commissioners. I really can't add much more to the issue of Shubenacadie and Milford being removed from East Hants. I think it has been very well stated tonight by Ms. Watson, Kerri Robson, Tracy Stuart, as well as the representative from Hants East Rural High.

I can say that as a business owner in Shubenacadie - I'm a co-owner of the Ettinger Funeral Home, our business has served the East Hants corridor for nine years. We're very entrenched in the socio-political landscape there in that the founder of Ettinger Funeral Home and his son were both MLAs for Hants East.

We serve the surrounding communities, but there's a distinct sense of community within East Hants between Enfield and Shubenacadie that everyone that is part of that community is very much aware of; it is part of the fabric of who we are. It's our identity. It's part of the business landscape, as well as the Shubenacadie River, which runs straight through the heart of Shubenacadie, right through to Enfield. It ties us together.

The First Nation, as Kerri stated so eloquently, is part of Shubenacadie. My eight-year-old son goes to Shubenacadie District Elementary and is very much part of the community there as well. I guess I'm simply just chiming in with the others.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Could you spell your name so we've got it, because MacLeod can spell various ways.

MR. ALAN MACLEOD, JR.: You're right. My name is Alan MacLeod, and I'm Junior. My dad and I - senior's here tonight too. He'd be up here talking if I let him. (Applause)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. The last speaker that is indicated on my list is James Simon. After James has spoken, we can open up the floor.

MR. JAMES SIMON: Good evening. Unfortunately, I only had about an hour to look at this. I didn't know about the meeting. I was away from the province in September, so I didn't have a chance to review this. I am from Lakeview and I want to support what Lois and Phyllis both said related to the boundary issue.

I was looking at the September notes and according to the notes there, what you said was there would be no change in the Sackville-Cobequid proposed boundaries. The Waverley-Fall River district, there were no changes proposed to that either at that time. That was for the 51-seat version. The 55-seat version and the other ones had - Phyllis had noticed that there was a change.

[8:00 p.m.]

I won't go through all of the various community things which I agree with. Sackville riding had a 1.06 ratio and Waverley is a 1.03 ratio for the 51-seat. For the 55-seat, Sackville is 1.16 and Waverley is 1.08. It actually makes it worse by moving.

MR. CHAIRMAN: By increasing the number of seats, yes.

MR. JAMES SIMON: By increasing the number of seats, you actually make it worse.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's right.

MR. JAMES SIMON: Lakeview has been part of the municipal planning strategy, which was just reviewed and accepted by the city about a couple of years ago. We have used a consistent boundary with the city for the city councillor and the MLA for that part of the district, so any kind of changes would increase the difficulty for dealing with any kind of representation. There are a number of other things I could talk about, but I think we'll just leave it at that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions for Mr. Simon? Hearing none, thank you very much. Now we can open up the floor. I think Mr. Kody Blois wants to speak.

MR. KODY BLOIS: Thank you. I was in Truro on January 5th to speak about the Hants East issue. Obviously, we've already heard from a number of people here today. Not everyone is going to get the chance to speak, I suspect, so if everyone from Hants East who is here tonight could just stand to give the commissioners a sense of the people who are concerned about this issue. I would say that probably represents half the room here in Bedford on a cold winter evening. I would argue the other people are from Lakeview. They seem to be very passionate about their issue as well.

Just before I begin, in Truro the commission had mentioned that maybe something in writing would be valuable, so I have nine copies here of a report that we can just quickly go through. Again, I don't want to beat a dead horse. A lot of people have already talked about this.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Kody, when you're finished distributing, you should state your name and spell it, please.

MR. KODY BLOIS: My name is Kody Blois. Again, what I've handed to you is basically a summary and a reflection of what may have already been said. Just briefly, my background - I'm an articled clerk at McInnes Cooper, a law firm here in Halifax. I'm originally from Belnan, a community just north of Elmsdale. I currently live in Halifax, but my ties remain deep to the community of East Hants. I'm the president of the East Hants Sport Heritage Society and the president of the Come Home East Hants Association. If you read in *The Chronicle Herald* today, you might have seen that we actually tackled a Guinness World Record in 2017. (Applause) We would love to see you in East Hants this summer for a round of washer toss.

Again, my history - my ties run deep. I just want to give you some context to where I'm coming from. We talked about appreciation and the understanding of what the

commission is bound by, the terms of reference, the House of Assembly Act, and of course, the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal decision.

Margaret Miller spoke about this in Truro in relation to the makeup of the municipality. Commissioner Gaudet asked about: what is East Hants? It's a very large geographical area and it can mean different things to different people. There is, what I would consider, three distinct areas within the Municipality of East Hants. As I've listed on Page 3, there is Mount Uniacke, which is an area that includes Lakelands and is essentially a corridor between Windsor and Sackville. As we mentioned last time, once the students of that community hit the high school age, they go to Windsor, to Avon View High School. The hockey boundaries means that these athletes and these young kids are going to Brooklyn and Windsor.

In Truro we had asked, what is the Mount Uniacke perspective? I guess I want to say in the last nine days, I have tried to track down people from Mount Uniacke. It is difficult because we don't have very many ties there. I have a lot of relationships in East Hants; I really don't have that many ties to folks in Mount Uniacke.

I reached out to a woman named Darlene Walker. She's a former principal at the elementary school in Mount Uniacke, and we discussed the issue. I explained what was happening. She mentioned that the Mount Uniacke perspective is generally - they're only 15 minutes from Millwood High School in Sackville. They share a lot of ties to the city. A lot of their workforce, very similar to the corridor, works in HRM. That was her perspective.

When I asked if she would be willing to come tonight - Mount Uniacke is not under review, I guess I would say, it hasn't been considered - she was unwilling to do that. Of course, the petition that I mentioned, which I will pass out to you, that we got residents to sign is neutral in that we're asking the commission to use its discretion to keep us together.

We have talked about that if you're not able to use your discretion, then Mount Uniacke may be a more favourable option. I don't know if you will get the same visceral reaction from folks in that part of the community. Again, it's not about setting communities against communities, that's not what we want. But if the discretion can't be used, that may be one area to look.

The second area is Hants North. It encompasses the communities of Walton, Kennetcook, Rawdon, Gormanville, West Gore, East Gore, Burntcoat, and Maitland. They have a very distinct area as well. Then, as many people have mentioned today, there is the corridor. Enfield to Shubenacadie, and I would also include Upper Nine Mile River - places like Urbana, places like Admiral Rock - they all draw into the school at Hants East. Basically that district is what we would consider the corridor of East Hants.

I will leave this - again, there are other people that want to talk. Historically, socially, politically, and practically, these communities are integrated. Doing the proposed

solutions would serve to fragment that. Politically, as Alan MacLeod mentioned, we've actually got a pretty good track record of placing MLAs from Hants East from these communities: Margaret Miller has ties to Shubenacadie, Robert Carruthers, Cora Etter, Albert Ettinger, and his father as well. So it's actually five out of our last eight MLAs have come from these areas.

Seventy-five years ago, if you were doing what you were doing, I don't think you would have the same reaction. At that time, the communities were generally organized at the local level. There was a distinct Enfield, Elmsdale, and Lantz. Today, because of the ease of transportation, the way we see ourselves, truthfully, we have worked - and I say "we," volunteer groups in the community - have worked to create what I would call a pan-East Hants concept. While we're still recognizing that our distinct communities are there, we're really working to try to work collaboratively across communities.

I just want to point to a couple different things that this decision you're proposing would further isolate those communities. You have a CBC article there that says, "SOS Shubenacadie" - it might not say SOS Shubenacadie, but I talk about it on Page 6. At the municipal level, the flood plains were re-evaluated based on provincial legislation and a large proportion of the Shubenacadie community is now within the flood plain. When you come within a flood plain, that means you cannot develop your community like you would have done before. It means that the property valuation of your community is going to be lowered, and it also means that insurance for houses and things like that are going to go up.

When you talk to a lot of people from Shubenacadie, they're already feeling isolated from the community. This would only further sever and create those ties. The new aquatic centre that's being built in Elmsdale; our pool in East Hants was formerly in Milford; a new one is now being built in Elmsdale - you talk to people from Milford, they feel like that's a lost asset. It's starting to erode the identity of these communities that were so integral to that corridor concept we talked about.

I mentioned looking 10 years ahead. There is a lot of significant growth happening in the Lantz area. I don't know who is going to be on the commission in 10 years, but realistically there could be a population in that tight corridor area that we've talked about to represent its own provincial district in the future.

Again, effective representation. Margaret Miller has already talked about how this riding is doable as it is. Larry Harrison, who would be the MLA that would be receiving these communities, said these communities have no alignable interest to his communities in Musquodoboit Valley and Stewiacke Valley. So again, when it goes back to effective representation, we'd really like to reconsider. We'll see you in Milford. We appreciate that. Thank you so much. I'll pass in the petitions that have been signed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Before you do that - the challenge we have with your population, and I think I gave some history of the growth, you would be, at present, at

18,362. It could be more if we get more recent data. That would place you around 1.35, if not bigger. I haven't done the math, but that's the challenge that we have. I know you made an argument at Truro that there can be exceptionality on the other side. I understand that, but this really does put it way beyond the 1.25; 1.26, 1.27 is one thing, but something in that area is something that we have to talk about. I think we're going to have to look at some options as to what might happen.

MR. KODY BLOIS: Again, the rationale here is that when you look at East Hants, it means arguably three things to three different regions. The corridor, which is where the majority of the growth is, where the young population is - East Hants is the youngest municipality in Nova Scotia, it is going to continue to grow - but that connectivity, that social connectedness is integral. You hear that from the passionate speeches of people that are presenting to you. We're trying to find a way to make that work. I know there are no easy decisions here, but we would ask you to try to explore what ways might be possible.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We certainly want to do to that, which is why we're coming down. If you want to hand out the copies of the petition - whilst you're doing that, I want to open up the floor. I think we have this gentleman next.

MR. WAYNE SHELLNUTT: Thank you very much. I have three points and I'm looking at this whole thing as a Nova Scotian in general. I have a tendency to think the commission should have been directed by the province to reduce the number of members of the Legislature.

When we went through the Halifax reduction from about 30-odd to 16, plus a mayor, HRM has operated, I would say, twice as effectively as it has ever been before because of that number. It depends on the members, but it works extremely well and it's quite progressive. The departments - the CEO runs HRM, the day-to-day stuff, and he does a good job.

One of the things that happened in the last four or five years - this comes under the communications side - is that HRM has gone away from the business where a councillor has to go and talk about every pothole on the street. They call a telephone number and report the darn thing, and as soon as the city gets two or three complaints about that, it's out and fixed. It makes no difference if it's down in Ecum Secum or down in Hubbards, it's going to get done.

When you look at the province further down the Eastern Shore, Guysborough County - small population, fairly big area, a lot of wilderness there. You don't have to look after the trees very much, except for the forest fires. You have communication today of Internet. Maybe our new minister will speed up and improve Internet. You have meetings in the towns and villages and whatever, and you meet people. I've never seen a politician on my property yet, but I run into them all the time at social events - except the federal

fellow, but he's a bit busy with his job. On the provincial side and the city side, I see them all the time and I express my opinions there.

I travel Nova Scotia. Every two years, I make almost a complete tour of Nova Scotia. I know where the good roads and the bad roads are, and you can really see the deterioration of Nova Scotia from the point of view of loss of people. Our tourist accommodation is really second-rate now. Most of our motels and accommodations like that are left over from the 1950s when everything boomed in tourism. We're going backwards.

[8:15 p.m.]

We have, from the political side - it's embarrassing to have so many MLAs when the people who are paying for it are the people from Alberta and British Columbia. We're always getting handouts to subsidize politicians that we don't really need. I think that a lesser number of politicians could do the same job with a good system supporting them. Communication has changed so much now. It makes dealing with the people much easier than it ever was. I'll leave that as it is.

My question to the commission - and it was mentioned by the member from the board of trade, the second speaker - is the business of growth projections. I had done some homework myself in the last few days trying to look at your numbers - where we're going. When you drive around the province, you see the rural areas are disappearing. Have you done any projections? The commission is done about every 10 years.

Ten years from now and the next time the commission is done, some of those municipalities that you could form or the new regions or areas, they could be half the population they are now - particularly on the Western Shore and particularly on the far end of the Eastern Shore. I tell you, a lot of Cape Bretoners - there are 132,000 people there now, and I don't think there will be 100,000 people there in five years. It's really changing.

If you have done projections based on realistic - people who deal with these things and projections of the population, you'll see it. It's all going to be centred in the Halifax area. Granted, we have to provide highways and all the other communications and things for a person living down in Yarmouth or a person living up in Meat Cove, Cape Breton.

My question is: Have you done any of the projection thing or is it just taking hard facts of the day, which will be obsolete in five years' time?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. I mean, we've gone back in time and looked at the growth that has occurred over the different commissions, as I think I just mentioned with respect to Hants East. But in terms of future projections, we have some idea, particularly in Hammonds Plains, for example, and Bedford - we know of different subdivisions that are

going in. We have some idea, but we don't have any hard data, in fact. We certainly know that there is a decline in the rural population.

In the past, commissions have taken seats out of Cape Breton. They've taken seats out of other parts of rural Nova Scotia, but this time the terms of reference allow us, if we so wish, to either increase or decrease the number of seats. Previous commissions have not had that luxury. They've either been told, this is the number of seats, 52 or 51 - but this time, we actually can look either above or below the current number of seats, which is 51.

We don't have any hard data on projections, but the membership of the commission is drawn from across the province. We each know pretty well in our own areas where the growth projections are.

MR. WAYNE SHELLNUTT: There is a serious change between - I thought Lunenburg County was really growing, but it's actually decreasing, the county as a whole. There is a job centre in Bridgewater. There are high-paying jobs there with the Michelin plant. You start going down the coast, you run into the millionaire fishermen in the Pubnicos - lobster fellows. Then on, you have the wealthy fishermen, lobster guys, and everything else is disappearing. The ferry could disappear.

Anyway, I'll end with - just by chance, I'm finishing up the probate of a will of an elderly friend of mine, and I sold his cottage in Piggott Lake in Hants East in Lakelands. I would say, if you ever visit a municipality that's organized, looks after its residents, and bureaucrats are nice to you, that is one municipality to deal with. They had a gigantic building by Highway No. 102 - you go in that building, boy it's a really sharp place. They organized from the environmental point of view, garbage pickup. I was going to demolish the cottage and all the bureaucrats sorted me out on what I could do and could not do. It is a really well-organized municipality. It was nice to run into that and I support all the people.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You just need to give your name and spell it, please.

MR. WAYNE SHELLNUTT: My name is Wayne Shellnutt. I live in Hammonds Plains.

Just by chance, where I see Nova Scotia more than anything else and the loss of population - I am a member of the Army Cadet League of Nova Scotia. I'm a retired soldier. We have about 26 corps in Nova Scotia. The ones in Cape Breton are disappearing fast. The ones on the French shore, the one we have down there is barely surviving. It's a real shame - mainly because the youth are leaving. On the west side - the Mabou area of Cape Breton - we just closed a corps down there. It's a real shame. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: This gentleman is next. Can I just get a show of hands of who else would like to speak, so I know roughly how we can apportion time?

MR. DAVID BARRETT: My name is David Barrett. We run a family company, Barrett Lumber Company, in Beaver Bank.

The first thing I want to mention - I want to thank you for coming out in Sackville, but I don't know how many people knew about it because only three or four people showed up. So, I'd ask in the future, when you come out to our area, get hold of the social clubs. We've got a big Legion and we have senior citizen groups, and they all have email and social media.

The other thing I wanted to mention is, I just turned 80 and I get tired, and I'm not as involved in the community as I used to be. In fact, coming to this meeting tonight, to be a little bit sharp, I had to have a sleep this afternoon.

The thing is that when issues come up that were really serious about Beaver Bank - I don't know if we're as organized as East Hants, but I was very pleased, because we used to be that way.

The lady in Lakeview brought up - now, you fellows have divided Beaver Bank. Over the years, it seems like everybody wants to divide Beaver Bank. In fact, Barrett Lumber was for 50 years the only industry in the community, and yet they put us in Sackville. We had to have something passed in the Legislature to get it put back in Beaver Bank. But we're like Lakeview - we're split off.

I want to say that we have two MLAs in Beaver Bank. One is Mr. Horne who is here tonight, and he has treated us well, but when you have a split community, the MLAs just can't go - there are five or six meetings a night that they go to connect with the people. If they have a community of interest, then they can connect with the community. But when you have two separate communities - we'd like to have our own MLA, but we're not big enough, so I would like to see us put back in Sackville. That's where everybody goes, all the commercial and everything else is there - the schools, the fire department, and everything else.

When I grew up in Beaver Bank, when I went out to Bedford or somewhere, I had to walk two miles and there was only one house - it was all rural. My heart is in rural Nova Scotia, and I feel very strongly about rural Nova Scotia basically going. Here's something Dad said to me - this would be over 60 years ago: David, nothing ever happens in our area unless the people downtown agree with it. We have HRM, and I consider it just like a sucking thing. It just sucks everything out of the county and out of the rest of the province, and they've got all the power to do it.

We're paying for big convention centres and everything else and they're talking about putting the taxes up 5 per cent, and they forget all about the other 5 per cent Halifax Water is charging us and everything else.

Anyway, what I'm basically saying is 51. You're right about the amount of people because my experience is that when you get a minority starting to control the majority you get anger - especially when you go into the smaller communities. They seem to have a very strong, I call it a Trump effect, because there is an anger. I think he got elected because there is an anger. I'm having it a bit too.

I think there should be 51 constituencies, and I think in the rural areas - I know they're shrinking, but if you take their MLAs away, they'll shrink more because there is nobody with a seat in power in Halifax - they won't even get their voices heard. Our whole province, we should all work together. I hope you do a good job. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you Mr. Barrett. I think this gentleman is next and then this young lady on the front. Are you going to speak?

MR. ARIS LAVRANOS: Hi there, I'm Aris Lavranos. I'm an emergency doctor in Bedford, Sackville and Truro; I work in Digby. I think that everybody here has done a really good job advocating for the grassroots perspective - the ground floor. I think that's very important. I would echo what Mr. Sullivan was saying earlier about how fewer seats in a bloated bureaucracy is probably a better way to go about it.

I'm not sure how many constituents each MLA feels comfortable representing, but I see that there is a large disparity between them. Some have 20,000, some have 10,000. If they can manage at 20,000 even combining some of these communities might make people a lot happier than trying to divide them. I know that with family doctors, the rule is as many as you can handle safely - no more, but certainly no less. So everybody is working really hard. I think that the same approach should be taken with MLAs.

I don't know how much input they have given to concerns from their constituencies about whether they all feel like they're being heard or how many constituents feel as though they are neglected based on the numbers. I know Kelly Regan is really overworked in the Bedford area, but I would just caution that probably 51 sounds like a lot for Nova Scotia intuitively. If you have the luxury and the privilege of being able to adjust that on the lower end of the side, I think that would probably sound very reasonable. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: One of the challenges that rural MLAs would tell you is it's not just the number of electors, it's the distance that they have to travel. We were just in Cape Breton on the weekend so an MLA gave the example, when the House finishes at 1:00 p.m., then he's got a four-and-a-half-hour drive up to Sydney or wherever, and then the work starts with the weddings and the funerals and house parties and so on and so forth.

So it's not just a question of the number of electors. Effective representation often comes from the point of view in terms of the distance that you have to travel. Some of us live in the HRM - I can walk across my electoral district probably in 20 minutes from end

to end and I have the opportunity downtown of bumping into MLAs. You don't have that in Meat Cove and you don't have that in other parts of rural Nova Scotia.

Anyway, please come forward. There are two microphones so if you would each state your name, and if you don't mind spelling it because it makes it easier.

MS. AILYN CLOW: My name is Ailyn Clow.

MR. CADEN FLYNN: My name is Caden Flynn. We are both here today again representing the community of East Hants, but more specifically - as Hope did earlier - Hants East Rural High. We are both Grade 12 students at Hants East. I live in Elmsdale, but as you know, my school and many of my friends are located in Milford. I have grown up in East Hants and I've come to realize that it's an extremely tight-knit and strong community together.

As previously mentioned time and time again by our previous speakers, I don't see the level of community support in many other places that we have. When I reflect on it, it's really something incredible.

As you're also probably aware, young people like me and Ailyn, we're kind of growing up in very uncertain times politically. Just in the past couple of years, we've seen our very education turned into a political device. During those times, students felt very caught in the middle between the ongoing disputes. With this, we feel like we are stuck back in the same position once again. We are caught in the middle - do we slice off a chunk of our community?

While that might not seem like a big deal at the surface level - because I know the job of this committee is to look at the numbers, look at the logistics, and try to determine what's best fiscally and in the government structure, but I want to challenge this committee and anyone else who might be making decisions when it comes to this matter to look deeper than the surface level of what may seem like a line in the sand and what it might do to our school community.

I mean, let's face it, young people aren't the best sometimes at conflict resolution or recognizing that we have more similarities than differences. I'm just personally concerned that removing Milford and Shubenacadie from the electoral district will kind of deepen these separations that we see forming.

As well, from a parents' perspective, say you have a child attending Enfield District Elementary, and you also have a child attending Hants East Rural High School. If there's a problem with Enfield District Elementary, you have to talk to the East Hants MLA. However, if there's a problem in Hants East Rural High, you'll then have to work with the Colchester MLA - and not only the physical distance, but the social distance between Colchester and East Hants.

I'm worried and I think a lot of parents and a lot of students are worried that our high school is going to go on the back burner. I mean, we already kind of feel that the infrastructure at the school is already needing an upgrade really badly. With these proposed changes, I think we're all just worried that this is going to deepen.

I guess to close, I just hope this committee can look at this more from a social and political standpoint, rather than just a numbers standpoint. I would really advocate that you consider East Hants an exception to these electoral changes.

MS. AILYN CLOW: Hello again. My name is Ailyn Clow, as I said before. I've been fortunate to live all around East Hants. I've moved five times in my 17 years here. As of the moment, I'm fortunate enough to have the Shubie River in my backyard, so it's nice to feel connected to East Hants as a whole.

Through my career in sports, I've been fortunate enough to represent Nova Scotia as the goaltender for the past four years, and I've travelled internationally with them. I've also been fortunate enough to win provincial championships three years in a row, and I've been fortunate enough to be a national bronze medallist with the suburban team, which is Fall River, East Hants, Bedford, and Sackville as a whole.

When I'm travelling with my sports team, I get asked by coaches of universities, and my peers that I play sports with across Canada and other teams, and they ask me where I'm from, I always tell them East Hants. I don't say I'm from Enfield or Lantz because I'm not. I've been raised in Milford. I've been going to school there for seven years, since I've been 12 to 18, so I'm not from Enfield or I'm not from Lantz. I'm from Milford, Enfield - all across there.

We are also fortunate enough in Milford to have the Shaw Brick and gypsum mine. Our workers there aren't always commuting from Halifax to their workplace, but they live in Enfield and Elmsdale and go to work from there, so as a whole, we really are a community. Everyone there works together. It's a circuit almost. We go to school from Enfield to Milford and they work in Milford and go home to work in Enfield and Elmsdale, so we really are a whole community. Once again, as my peer said, I hope you think of us as an exception. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Who would like to speak next?

MR. SAMUEL SAMSON: My name is Samuel Samson. I wasn't planning on speaking tonight. It's Samson with no "p." I'm a Cape Bretoner and Acadian, so it's "Samson" - the dry Samson - nobody p'd in my name. (Laughter)

I currently live in Halifax for many reasons, but primarily due to having married a wonderful Sackville lady, so I know very much where these gentlemen and these ladies in the back are from. Having a woman that lived just off the road from the Barrett Lumber mills, I know that one really well. As an educator, I see many parallels here with the

question of small schools and large mega schools, which is the way the province wants to go.

I would argue that there is much more a sense of common community in a small school than a big school. By the way, I started my career at HERH so I know the route between Halifax and Milford quite well. I will not call myself a member of the community of the area - I'm more of a CFA. For those who don't understand what a CFA is, that's a "come from away." I lived in Halifax and I travelled back and forth every single day.

I was disappointed, but not surprised by the words of the chamber. I wasn't planning to speak. I was just planning to listen, but having listened to the chamber and a few other members from the business community, I felt I had to speak up, so I typed a few things really quick.

I look to support your proposal of 56 or 55 seats. The chamber presentation is correct in mentioning the growth associated with Halifax in comparison to the rest of the province. I will note that this is unsurprising with the continued effort to centralize all power in the HRM. People seeking services and employment are often being forced to move here. We have no choice. I'm from Cape Breton, and as you know, nobody works back in Cape Breton - we all have to come to Halifax. We have to go to the mainland.

The previous and current governments continue to discourage citizens to stay in their communities. I'm very happy that in Canada here we have a Senate and it's to counteract the impact of the representation-by-population movement. As a Nova Scotian, I am so happy that we have a Constitution and that the House of Commons is not following the advice of our chamber of commerce, which says to go smaller and smaller.

If you're limited to the 51 members that the previous Dexter Government put on to you, I would argue that Nova Scotia only merits about four MPs in the House of Commons, because there's a lot more population in Ontario, Alberta, Quebec, and British Columbia. If it's good for the goose, it should be good for the gander. We should not be arguing that Nova Scotia deserves 11 MPs, which we are guaranteed through our Constitution. Under our Constitution you can't have less MPs in the House than you have in the Senate. That's the reason why P.E.I. still has four MPs in the House of Commons, but if you are limiting it to 51, do the same math as in Ottawa.

Luckily, as an Acadian with a successful Charter challenge by the Acadian population here in 2017 and the Canadian Constitution guaranteeing that provinces cannot have less representation, we are in a situation where you really do need to represent or consider as a commission the interests of the smaller communities.

I implore you to help counter urban assimilation by continuing the valued rural ridings. If you were to go down the route suggested by the chamber and the previous NDP

Government, you might as well just shut the door on those non-Halifax, underserved Nova Scotia citizens who are already greatly ignored.

In a 51-seat Legislature, a mere 26 seats is a majority. Yet, as has been suggested tonight, the region of Halifax deserves 27 seats - so tell the rest of the province to go you know where.

I know it is not under your mandate to make suggestions to government of where to locate ministries, but it was seen as an advantage associated with your task by having many of these government ministries - maybe even the Legislature - move to the various rural ridings, because if we are going to go with the argument that there is not enough population in those rural areas, let's encourage people to go to the rural areas.

Let's say, move the Legislature to Sydney. Move the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to Truro. Move to all the different areas. You will find right away the population growth in those rural areas mitigated very quickly, and your disparity that is being shown by the business community will be disincentivized.

By the way, I have no idea where the suggestion of combining Richmond on Cape Breton with Guysborough on the mainland ever made any sense. That's like asking Halifax to join with Charlottetown to make one riding. I don't know where the guy thought that Richmond was located. It's definitely not next to Guysborough. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's a gentleman at the back. Sorry I missed you before.

MR. ELDON HEBB: My name is Eldon Hebb. I'm the councillor for Milford-Hardwood Lands-Nine Mile River for East Hants. I would like to say that I'm very proud of the people here from East Hants today. My chest swelled right up. Then when Wayne got up and talked, my buttons popped off. He certainly put a plug in for East Hants.

I agree with everything that has been said. As a politician, I guess I look at things differently. One of the things that I'm mainly concerned about is the representation that we may or may not get. Having an MLA for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley, it depends on where they live. They may know something about East Hants, but certainly they wouldn't know the history and what's going on now and where we're going in the future, because a part of Shubenacadie and a part of Milford is just a little place outside of Colchester. Whether they're going to get the concerns that they should be looked after - whether they will or not, we don't know. It could be for this MLA; when another MLA comes in in four years time, it could be a totally different thing. That's what we have to look at as a future.

For me, politics is politics, and if you have one MLA representing one Party and another MLA representing another Party, are they going to work together? We would like to think they would, but if you look back in history - and I can tell you, I've been on council for a number of years and looking back at provincial politics we can see areas where they don't work together. This is a real issue for me because provincial grants that may come

up - Shubenacadie is water and sewer, Milford has sewer - they're due for upgrades. We apply for provincial grants. Is the MLA in that area going to fight for those grants if there's another Party in East Hants? It's a real bobbled situation. It's a situation that I don't think we need to have.

East Hants - the boundary was always the Shubenacadie River, from the Grand Lake through to Shubenacadie, the Shubenacadie through to Maitland, and from Maitland to Walton on the Bay of Fundy. That has always been the boundary. I know it's a numbers game. Municipalities are the same way. We have to try to make things as even and fair as we can.

The biggest concern for these people, I'm sure, is representation. If they could get assurance that they would be represented every four years, it might not be such a big concern, but that's the biggest fear - they're not going to get the representation they deserve.

[8:45 a.m.]

East Hants is a growing municipality and it's going to get bigger - there's no doubt about it. The reason why it's growing is we have the best staff in East Hants and in Nova Scotia for representing municipalities. The council work very well with them. There's a lot of planning that goes into place. We're not only planning that, we're planning for years down the road. That is why the Municipality of East Hants is such a beautiful spot.

It seems like we are now being penalized because we are growing and because we grow in one area and now they're taking pieces away from us on the sides. I don't want to see that and the people don't want to see that.

I know it's a numbers game. How you're going to do it, I don't know, but I think it would be in the best interests of everybody in East Hants if we could leave the boundaries the way they were. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Who is next?

MS. LOUISE MARK: Hello. I didn't plan on speaking tonight.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Your name please, first.

MS. LOUISE MARK: I am Louise Mark. As you can probably tell, I wasn't born here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, I can tell with your accent.

MS. LOUISE MARK: I'm an import. I've been here 29 years, and 26 of those have been in Lakeview. It's the longest I've lived in my life in any one place.

Lakeview is unique. It's small, but it's very special. It has been my extended family for 26 years for myself, my husband and our two children. Our two children went to schools in Waverley and then junior high and high school in Fall River. They were involved with sports, band, athletics, religion, churches - and those are some of the ties that Lakeview has with Fall River and the other areas.

It's intertwined with not only Fall River and Windsor Junction where we get the LWF, but also with Waverley, which is also nearby. LWF, which is Lakeview-Windsor Junction-Fall River, has ties that go back a long time. It has a culture. It has a history. Other people have spoken. There is the volunteer firefighter association, there is the LWF baseball, LWF community, LWF ratepayers. I know I've said it's unique, but it is unique. I do not want to see it change. It's because the people make it. I think this year will be the 26th year there's an annual Canada Day parade, festivities and the children, my children are coming back. They are coming back with their toddlers.

It is a real community, and I want it to remain. I don't want it to change. It has an annual food drive at Christmas time. The children get involved. They go around the neighbourhood. They collect bags of food and it's a very social event.

I don't see an advantage for Lakeview to change, and as I've said, I do not want the boundary to change. I wanted you to know how much I felt, and there are a lot of my friends who can't be here tonight who also feel the same way. Thank you for listening and your time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. This gentleman at the front first, please.

MR. BILL HORNE: Good evening. Glad to be here tonight and glad to hear your conversations. My name is Bill Horne. I was here at your initial meeting in Sackville, and my concern at that time was that I felt that Beaver Bank should have an MLA, if possible, but if it doesn't, the whole Beaver Bank should be part of one constituency.

Over my six years so far, working with the area - Beaver Bank is a very great community - a lot of work done by the community as volunteers, and we work well together. I work well with them and I'm very pleased to represent the area.

I understand sometimes that Beaver Bank has lost part of their community to Sackville. Then it would come back and they'd lose it again. As an MLA, I notice it's not easy sometimes working with the second MLA, that part of Beaver Bank. We're different Parties. We are acquaintances, so I know the gentleman that's there. It would make it a lot easier for the constituents and the residents if there was just the one MLA because they

don't always know who their representative is. So I'm here to ask again that you consider keeping Beaver Bank together.

Secondly, I want to - not get rid of a group - I want them to have a better representation whoever it may be in the future. I'm here now also as - and I didn't come with this particularly to say - Lakeview is part of Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank. They have very close ties, as you heard, from a number of constituents, talking about Waverley. They used to be Waverley, and the search and rescue unit sort of was in Waverley and then moved to Lakeview. Also, it's a small population, and we would not want to lose that community from the present constituency of Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank.

So I strongly urge that you try to solve both my problems - the problem of losing one and maybe a second one, and whether we would like to keep one of them, the Lakeview one, and I personally would like to see Beaver Bank having its own constituency as a riding or in with one other group to make it wholesome, 100 per cent Beaver Bank, and the other part of another riding.

I'll let you decide on that, and I thank you for the time and effort that you are putting in. It's extremely difficult. I'm hearing a lot of good references about East Hants or Hants East - I'm not sure which way is the proper pronunciation. I've had some dealings with some of the members in that area and find them very cordial and a lovely community to be involved with. I'm realizing a lot tonight, just from what you're saying about how important it is to keep communities together that have been together over many years. I'm realizing how important it is for East Hants to stay as one group.

With that, I would like to say thank you again for your time and efforts. I wish you the best of luck. I might say one more thing. I shouldn't be saying this, but I think we would be better off if we had a smaller number of MLAs. I'll just leave it at that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. Second row - if you would come forward please.

MR. KEITH MCLEAN: Keith McLean from Lakeview. I guess I'm about the oldest - I came up here to see if I could beat Lois. Anyway, I was born and brought up in Lakeview, and we've been chopped to pieces so much the last few years. Sackville pushed our boundary way in there a few years ago because a developer wanted smaller lots, so we couldn't have smaller lots.

Anyway, we've been connected with Windsor Junction and Fall River ever since I've known and through hockey, baseball, whatever - the LWF and the fire hall. Even in 1952 - I don't know if you remember the Windsor Junction Pirates. Anyway, we won the Suburban Junior Hockey League in 1952. That goes back a while. Windsor Junction, Lakeview and Fall River used to play in that.

Now to split up Lakeview more is just terrible. It breaks you right up to see your village go to another area after it had been the same here all these years, to have these activities with everybody. Even if now Barrett's says they want to go to Sackville, how many numbers is that going to be?

What I'd like to see is our boundary go to Sucker Brook, a natural boundary. That's our historical boundary, which is where it should be. That's where Lakeview used to go to until a few years ago. Lakeview was developed in 1891 - one of the oldest areas around. Now it's being chopped to pieces just because of numbers. I think it's a lot better to have your community together than bother about these numbers so much, by splitting up a few numbers here and a few numbers there.

Anyway, I'd just like to say it would be a terrible thing to move Lakeview into another area. I'd like to see it stay where it is. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: This lady at the back here. Thank you.

MS. PAM WEBBER: My name is Pam Webber. Like a lot of people, I wasn't planning on coming up. I actually currently live in Middle Sackville. However, I moved there because of a divorce. My ex-husband and I lived in Lakeview for 22 years together, and two years apart. So a financial situation - I had to move to a mobile home. We're keeping our house in Lakeview. He and I own it together. We currently rent it to a family member.

I've talked to my daughter about this meeting. She's 16. She actually still goes to Lockview High School. She's supposed to be going to Sackville High School. I drive her to school every morning before I go to work, which is inconvenient, but I don't want her going to Sackville High - to a huge population like that. My son is 21 years old. He is in Newfoundland, but every time he comes home he goes to Lockview High School to visit his teachers.

It is a small community and we're very proud of it. I spent most of my life there. When I was 18, I actually moved to Middle Sackville from the Eastern Shore with my parents. When I got married and went to Lakeview, I thought, oh boy, this is a new place for us. But even though I live in Middle Sackville again, actually off of Beaver Bank Road in Century Park - my heart is in Lakeview. It's Lockview High School. It's Waverley Memorial. It's the people in the community. Darrell Samson's wife taught both my children in Primary, and Darrell Samson actually taught me Political Science and French in high school on the Eastern Shore.

You can't change that. The LWF - without the "L", as I spoke up quite a bit today about that - what do you have left? You can imagine what I'm thinking - it doesn't work. LWF is LWF. It's Lakeview-Windsor Junction-Fall River. There is no WF. That's us. Please consider that and do not change it.

[9:00 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Any further speakers? Please come forward. We are at 9:00 p.m.

MS. SHANA PARADIS: My name is Shana Paradis. I wasn't planning to come up tonight, but I wanted to speak of Lakeview from a newcomer's perspective. We've only been there for a very short period of time - five years. We purchased the house, a big part on the school district that we're in: Waverley Memorial, George P. Vanier and Lockview. I want my kids to be a part of that community. It's tight. It's close-knit. We go to the community centre, Keloose. We've met the best neighbours we've ever had.

It's just such a beautiful neighbourhood and it seems like such a shame to take us away from what I'm understanding is a really insignificant number. I'm not really up to date on politics, but I'm very upset. I just discovered this today and it just seems so silly to separate a community that has been so ingrained together for 100-plus years, and you're just going to rip us away for the sake of a couple of numbers. It just seems foolish. I know my children are upset that potentially they might not go with their friends.

So, I just wanted to put a newcomer's perspective on the situation. It's upsetting - it really is. That's really all I have to say. I just wanted to put it out there.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, it is shortly after 9:00 p.m. so I just wanted to tell you the next steps. Tomorrow night we're in Preston. Then we've got Halifax-Dartmouth. Then we're going down to Digby, then Wolfville. Then as I mentioned, on the 21st we're going to Bridgewater and then Hants East on the 29th.

Our final report is due April 1st this year. Our terms of reference mandate that the commission produce only one set of boundaries, so although we've been talking about four this evening, it's one set. But of course we realized that within that one set, there are a lot of issues with particular boundary lines.

We have not changed boundaries simply for the sake of it. We want to try to keep as many as we possibly can. This time, we have been looking more at community boundaries more closely, so we have made some changes, but you've given us a lot of food for thought this evening.

I do want to thank you for coming out on a very cold night. If you need to get in touch with us, we have a website: www.nselectoralboundaries.ca – and a Facebook page. I want to thank our technical staff this evening who follow us around continuously, and Julia Kinsman, our office administrator. (Applause) Thank you. I apologize for all the noise. It's not always easy to find a facility that's large enough to accommodate this type of audience we expect.

Again, thank you very much, indeed. We will be seeing some of you at future meetings.

[The commission adjourned at 9:04 a.m.]

DRAFT