

NOVA SCOTIA
ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES
COMMISSION

TUESDAY, JANUARY 15, 2019

**Black Cultural Centre
Preston, 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

Mr. Spencer Colley
Mr. Bobby Taylor
Mr. Jerry Taylor
Mr. Dwayne Provo
Mr. Irvine Carvery
Ms. Bev Doman
Mr. John Withrow
Ms. Dolly Glasgow-Williams
Mr. Alan Ruffman
Ms. Justine Colley-Leger
Ms. Bernadette Hamilton-Reid

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NOVA SCOTIA ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION

7:00 P.M

CHAIRMAN

Ms. Angela Simmonds

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Good evening everybody. It's about 7:05 p.m., so we're going to ask people to take a seat to get started. Thank you for coming. My name is Angela Simmonds. I'm from Cherry Brook and live in North Preston. I'm the Vice Chairman of the Nova Scotia Electoral Boundaries Commission, and I will chair this evening's public consultation.

First, let me acknowledge that we are sitting on unceded traditional territory of Mi'kma'ki.

As many of you may know, the commission was here in September and we presented a draft set of boundaries. Before we begin this evening, I would like to ask the commission members to introduce themselves from the right to the left.

[The commission members introduced themselves.]

MADAM CHAIRMAN: At our last meeting, I provided context for the meeting in terms of how the commission was established and the controversy surrounding the interim and final reports of the 2012 commission. If there are any questions on this, the commission members and I would be pleased to clarify. If not, we will continue to move forward.

The commission was tasked in its terms of reference - I believe the terms are posted along the walls, and we do have some copies here if people want to have an opportunity to view them. We were tasked in these terms of reference with producing boundaries for a 51-seat House of Assembly and at least one other at the time.

Subsequent to our public consultations, the commission did produce an interim report, which was tabled with the Attorney General on November 28th which proposes four alternatives. The total numbers of electors as of June 29, 2018 was 743,500 and the average on the current set of boundaries at 51 sets is 14,578. This represents an increase in electors of over 30,000 since the 2012 report.

There have been many continued population shifts to the urban areas of this province. The commission is planning to use an updated data set for December 2018 for its final report. However, if this data is unavailable, we will use the November data.

In summary, what we would like your input on tonight are the four options that the commission reported in the recent interim report. One, 51 electoral districts - the current size of the House. Two, 55 electoral districts, which include the formerly protected electoral districts of Argyle, Clare, Richmond and Preston. The third option, 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. The fourth option is 56 electoral districts - this includes an exceptional electoral district of Chéticamp.

You may also have questions and suggestions about the Preston area or any other electoral districts. We would be happy to hear them.

On the wall this evening, there are three maps of Nova Scotia showing these options. Additionally, there are maps showing the proposed boundaries for the Preston seat and adjacent electoral districts.

For the Preston seat, the electoral counts for a 55-seat House were 11,055, which is 1.82; and 10,404, which is 0.83 respectively.

In our previous public consultation, we were also asked for input on the concept of members at large to represent the Acadian and African Nova Scotians, as well as using non-contiguous electoral districts, but we received little support for these.

So this evening, ladies and gentlemen, I can now turn the floor over to you, but before we go with an open microphone, there have been two people who in advance have requested to speak, and so after this I will ask members to come to the floor. As they approach the table, I would ask that you use the microphone, state your name so we can have it on record. To assist the staff that transcribe the input received in these meetings, if you would be so kind as to spell your names, that would be very helpful.

Also, if there are any written notes or briefs that people would like to bring to us before they speak or if they don't have an opportunity to speak, then we welcome you to at least submit them on our email and website. That will be available to you once the meeting is finished.

The first person who registered to speak tonight is Mr. Spencer Colley.

MR. SPENCER COLLEY: Good evening. My name is Spencer Colley and I'm from East Preston. I will just give a little bit of history of how we came about having a voting district in Preston.

Back in the early 1990s - I can't really remember the exact date - it was myself, Darryl Gray, the late Mr. Mattie Thomas, and Wayne Adams. We had numerous meetings at Mr. Adams' home, trying to set a district for the Prestons. As a result of those meetings, we did get what we wanted at the time. Then the next election coming up, Mr. Adams and Mr. Gray were in contest - Mr. Gray ran as a Progressive Conservative and Mr. Adams ran as a Liberal. Mr. Adams won.

The next election, it was between Mr. Hendsbee and Yvonne Atwell, and I think Mrs. Atwell won the seat. Those are two Black people from the Black area. The way the boundaries were set that time gave us an ample opportunity to elect a Black person. That changed back two elections ago when Cole Harbour-Auburn Drive was brought in and part of Dartmouth down around the Kennedy Drive area, which took a lot of that away from us.

The way it was back then - my strong suggestion is that we go back to that format because we had people in the Black community in two cases who won elections in the area. The way it stands now, by changing it, bringing in Auburn Drive, which is no part of Preston as far as I'm concerned, and the amount of people living there would be like 80/20 - it's not helping us at all. Even part of the Dartmouth boundary is not helping us. So I'm strongly suggesting that we go back to where it was back before it was changed, before the last change.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions from members? Thank you. The next person is Bobby Taylor.

[7:15 p.m.]

MR. BOBBY TAYLOR: Good evening. My name is Bobby Taylor. I'm from East Preston. In terms of what you were saying you wanted to hear about, I don't have an issue with us having a seat. That's an ideal thing.

My only concern is, looking at the maps, we're losing a lot of space. In terms of politically, in a lot of the areas that are East Preston now that have predominately white people living there, I don't think that should play into the decision for the simple fact that the land belongs to us. We shouldn't have to trade our land for a vote. That's not fair. The map has nothing to do with votes, and everything to do with shrinking Preston.

So for me, just looking into it a little bit, this happened years ago with Highway No. 107. Until Highway No. 107 went in, this was all Preston. After Highway No. 107 went in,

everything on the opposite side became municipality. We weren't compensated for that in any way, shape or form. It was basically stolen.

In theory, what's basically going on is, you're using invisible lines to shrink our community. So in terms of a vote, yes, we need to have a seat, but we shouldn't have to lose any part of our community to do it because it belongs to us. So if we're going to vote, we should vote on all of our land. We shouldn't have to give up anything else to have a say because that's not a fair trade.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Are there any questions from any of the commissioners? Mr. Gaudet.

MR. PAUL GAUDET: One question with regard to the community and the land that you are making reference to - what are the boundaries of that piece of land?

MR. BOBBY TAYLOR: That's really up for debate because if you go back to what we were originally given, we're nowhere near what we're supposed to have, because what we were given was called the Preston Township.

MR. PAUL GAUDET: Excuse me?

MR. BOBBY TAYLOR: The land that we were given originally was called the Preston Township.

MR. PAUL GAUDET: Given by the provincial government?

MR. BOBBY TAYLOR: Given by the King.

MR. PAUL GAUDET: Going back a long time.

MR. BOBBY TAYLOR: That's originally what we were given. Since that time, basically the entire City of Dartmouth has been established on it. I mean, there's no going back - that's sour grapes, I guess, so to speak. But in terms of how it was taken, this is the way it was taken. You change boundaries. You say, okay, here's a carrot, but at the end of the day, you're not telling us everything because what hasn't been mentioned is we're losing Porters Lake, essentially. So right now, Porters Lake is Preston and this proposed change would remove it.

So for me, I'm just saying if you're going to take land from me with an invisible line, I'd like to be compensated in some way, and a vote is not fair. That's not fair compensation for what we're losing. That's basically it. I don't care that Porters Lake is there - that doesn't matter to me - but it belongs to us. So I don't think that politically you should be able to take it from us. That's my concern.

It's not about the vote, because who would disagree with that? But I don't want to sell my community for nothing because as it stands in the history of Nova Scotia, this vote isn't really going to mean a whole lot. Again, it's one vote in a House of 55 or 56. That's my thing. Even though we're gaining a vote, we're still losing - and we always lose.

MR. PAUL GAUDET: Was the land expropriated?

MR. BOBBY TAYLOR: Pretty much - expropriated for the good of HRM.

MR. PAUL GAUDET: For development?

MR. BOBBY TAYLOR: For development or for whatever, but we don't even have municipal roads in East Preston. Do you know what I mean? Having our land expropriated - getting a bag of groceries is not compensation, but that's what they were given, and essentially, that's what's happening now. You're taking stuff and you're saying, well, you can have a vote. It's essentially the same thing.

The people that were involved the last time it happened are gone now. The people that were in charge in the Black community are elder people - they don't want to fight anymore. Again, this is why it happened in the 1970s. All the people who were in their 30s and 40s in the 1970s are not here now. They're not putting up a fight, but at the same time - I actually had to do a lot of research to figure out what happened.

There aren't a whole lot of people who know. Not a whole lot of people talk about it. It's just a process that happens and it has been happening in the Black community for its entire existence. I mean, all these communities on the wall, they're not Black communities anymore, but they were at one time. They all get expropriated. They all get split up with imaginary boundary lines and then eventually disappear.

MR. PAUL GAUDET: Am I right in saying that a piece of land went as far as the rotary? I read that somewhere.

MR. BOBBY TAYLOR: Yes.

MR. PAUL GAUDET: By mysterious means, it shrank.

MR. BOBBY TAYLOR: But it's not mysterious. They just took it. There was nothing mysterious about it. They took it. I mean, expropriation really is just a fancy word for extortion. It's take it or else - only there was nothing else for us. We didn't get anything. The Black community didn't get anything for Westphal or Cole Harbour or Colby Village or any of that stuff. They just took it, and essentially this is how they do it - with political boundaries.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Mr. Taylor, thank you for your comments. I'm just wondering - you mentioned about Porters Lake. Would you say that you are agreeing with some of the changes or you would rather the last map? The last when we were here in September . . .

MR. BOBBY TAYLOR: No, I don't think Porters Lake should leave the boundary. I kind of think big picture, so for me in terms of what that would mean is that would essentially cut us off, because right now we go all the way to the airport. If you take Myra Road, we don't - so we're boxed in. That shuts down our growth as a community. All of our possibilities or anything that we would potentially want to do and all of the resources that go with it.

Right now, there's a game sanctuary in the middle of our community - we didn't have any say in that. It's a whole vast, expansive land that we can't use because somebody said it's for animals.

MR. LEONARD LEFORT: Just a small question. If I recall discussion that was going around when we drew the boundaries, we were trying to look at the concentration of the Black community, the Black population, and I'm wondering now when you're saying you're losing Porters Lake, if that community is mostly a white community or a Black community.

I think it's feasible to think that we would be able to return to those boundaries, but we were trying to make sure that the concentration of the population would be African Nova Scotian so that you would be able to elect the member that would be closer to represent you. Do you know what I'm saying?

MR. BOBBY TAYLOR: I know what you're saying, but . . .

MR. LEONARD LEFORT: You're talking about the land and we were talking about the people.

MR. BOBBY TAYLOR: I understand what you're saying, but that line on that piece of paper is not about votes. Do you know what I mean? There are ways to give Black people the vote without taking their land.

MR. LEONARD LEFORT: But we want representation and to make sure that you're well represented and the ones that are speaking for you are of your culture.

MR. BOBBY TAYLOR: Well that's just as easy as putting a rule in place to say that there has to be a Black seat - the Black community has to pick somebody. So that just means the Black community gets together and votes. That's all that means. They just get amongst themselves and pick a person to represent them. That's all that has to happen. You don't have to change a line on anything to do that. It's that simple.

The government has the power to do whatever they want - that's all they have to do. All they have to do is say, okay, East Preston, North Preston, Cherry Brook and all the other Black communities that are left, get together and pick somebody to represent you. It's that simple. That's it. It doesn't take any boundary changes. Nothing has to happen. All you have to do is just say, this is what's going to happen. That's it.

MR. LEONARD LEFORT: I don't know if we have the power to do that.

MR. BOBBY TAYLOR: But at the same time, it doesn't take power - it just takes common sense. If everybody can agree that Black people need to have a seat and they need to have a voice, then that's all you have to do - you mandate it. The government does it all the time. They do it when they take land from us. They just say, we want it so we're taking it. So why can't they say, you deserve to have a seat so here it is. You don't have to change any boundaries to do that, period. You don't.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you for your comments. Are there any other questions?

Those were the two people who sent their names in to speak, but if there is anybody else who has any comments or suggestions - can you come forward? Good evening.

MR. JERRY TAYLOR: Good evening. I'm Jerry Taylor. I have a question. What is the population of the smallest district that we have in Nova Scotia?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I think it's Clare and Argyle - 6,669.

MR. JERRY TAYLOR: I didn't want to take away from the last speaker. The thing that I have to say - is it more important to have a Black representative and put that down as something to be proud of and all that stuff, or is it more important to have someone who properly represents us? That is the issue that's being missed here. It's not that we're saying we're racist and everybody who represents us has to be Black. We speak English or French like everybody, so the representation has to be legitimate. That's it.

So the idea of rushing and saying, you've got to have Black representation. That's fine - we're already Black. That's not going to change. The fact is that the whole frustration of it the whole time - I've been involved in it for a while - is that you're telling us that we want a Black representative. No, we want an appropriate representative. We want someone who represents us who speaks on our behalf and who is interested in us and works with us and represents us in the political place, who speaks for us.

That's probably all I have to say. I think we're going in the wrong direction - because I didn't hear the Black community say, if we don't have a Black representative,

we're not going to vote. We actually have two people representing us now who are not Black. They have to do their job or they're not going to be representing us again.

One of the things that's heartbreaking - for an older person doing this for a while - is that we were a minority group in Nova Scotia, but we were in the majority in Preston. Now we're a minority in our own community. Think about that. And it's done by you and the government. It's not by us. So for you to come and say you're going to help us - no, you've done damage. The damage is done.

[7:30 p.m.]

So the idea that we would have a Black representative is not really the answer. The answer is the things that Bobby was just talking about, that sort of thing - the destruction of all the Black communities in the political sphere, how the Black communities are being destroyed. Look at beautiful Beechville - down to a few homes. If we sit here and just pretend it didn't happen - no.

So this has to be a truthful commission. This has to be something - not criticizing you personally, but you're being used to maintain something that is false and wrong. The Black community has continuously been eaten away at while we are fighting amongst - not so much amongst ourselves, but while we're fighting it. We're in a fighting mode about it all the time while the government - and they're bullies - business, and others profit.

Me talking today is not going to change any of that, but the point is, having a Black person represent us - we've been there and done that a few times - wonderful people. I'll speak on Ms. Atwell in particular - wonderful. Mr. Adams - not bad either. The point is, that's not the answer. Why did it happen?

So maybe turn the page a little bit in your work that you have to do and say, why did they bring us here - what problem are we trying to cover up? Theft of the Black community's land. That's the problem. It's as simple as that - theft. Okay, I'm done.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Are there any questions from any of the commissioners? The next person who wanted to speak.

MR. DWAYNE PROVO: I think the previous two speakers did touch on a few things that are really sensitive to our community and things that we've talked about since we've been kids and our parents have talked about since they have been kids in terms of how the community has been treated, how property has been taken - right from the roots of it, how we survived in our communities based upon people giving away land for food and all that stuff.

But not to get into all that because I think right now I just want to talk a little bit more about what was said at the end of young Mr. Taylor's statement. I think he's on the right track.

What the Black community really misses and we don't really have - we don't have any real political capital. There is none. Because you have no political capital, there is not really a big impetus to be able to do things to improve the lot in life for African Nova Scotians. As a result, we still have situations where whether we talk about education, whether we talk about justice, whether we talk about employment - it doesn't matter, the situations are still pretty bad. In education, things are getting worse.

Part of that is because when you have political Parties, their main goal is to be able to seize power. That is what it's about. At this particular point in time for the Black community - doesn't matter whether it's in Preston, Sunnyville, Yarmouth or Digby, it's really not relevant. The reality is, in Preston if every Black person voted for one person, it still doesn't mean that person would win the election in terms of our historic culturally Black communities.

So the reality becomes, what are we really trying to do? Are we trying to give real voice here to try to make changes for the lives of African Nova Scotians or are we just trying to look at trying to fill a seat so we can make it look like we're actually giving voice to a system and trying to change the lot in life for the future of our kids? If we're truly trying to change the lot in life for the future of our kids, I believe that it has to be something where African Nova Scotians from the Preston area - if you're looking at it from that perspective - have to have the voice and be politically relevant to the Parties that we're talking about.

You become politically relevant to those Parties if they feel that they need your vote. At this point, they don't need your vote for anything. If we're electing one member - and one member, I would say, would be less than what's needed, but even one member - at least there's one member in one seat that could potentially change the balance of power in the House, in a minority government or however it might work. I would suggest it would probably have to be more, but a start is a start.

If the African Nova Scotians themselves actually elected that individual, then the needs - whether we talk about educational needs, employment needs, social needs, things of that nature - would then, things would have to get done to help improve the lot for our African Nova Scotian community, and specifically in Preston. We're at a situation now where we need to look at ways moving forward because I look at times when we won't be here. Some of us are a little bit older and we think that when we're here we want to look back and say that we've actually left something better for our kids.

I was looking at the maps and everything here - I do understand also what he was saying about eroding of our boundaries and taking away portions of what is important to us

and what was originally Preston. In keeping with that, we already have established ways for which we've used the electoral system to be able to elect people of African descent. So within our school boards, we've been able to do that within the same constituency of our own municipal constituencies.

People of African descent - they have criteria they need to meet and they also vote within that same constituency, but they choose to identify and then vote for that person who is of African descent. You don't change the boundaries. The boundaries are still the same. You don't take away a road of what was originally Preston. Really, be honest, Preston has gotten smaller. We were bigger than that before.

One way to look at it would be using that model that could potentially solve your problem if you're truly trying to look at voice for the Black community. If we're merely looking at trying to make the boundaries smaller to give a possibility of an African Nova Scotian being elected, I think those attempts would probably be futile in trying to really change the lot for African Nova Scotians in Preston.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions?

MR. MICHAEL BAKER: Just one question. When you talk about political capital, can you define that for me so I'm clear? Is it more than a voice in the Legislature?

MR. DWAYNE PROVO: Yes, it's more than a voice. As mentioned before, we do have voices that are in the Legislature currently at this point, but it's about being relevant to the Parties that are within the House. You're relevant when you can actually determine who is in the House.

MR. MICHAEL BAKER: One of the suggestions made at a previous hearing that we had was that there be an African Nova Scotian seat at large in government - not in Opposition, but in government. What would you think of that idea? So not necessarily from Preston, Halifax, Lucasville, but one at large - within government guaranteed.

MR. DWAYNE PROVO: I think during some of the consultations that took place earlier - I think looking at that concept isn't a bad concept when you look at it. I think the breadth of it has to be wider and a little bit broader because we go to the one seat again and the one person, but you're still going to get a little bit of - you're going to have a little bit of capital, but now you spread it out from Digby to Whitney Pier. By doing that, where do your priorities land, for government? It's really hard to do it from that perspective.

I think one of the suggestions that might have been brought up in one of the sessions that was held down in the southwest was that we looked at doing that, but doing it potentially in three regions - not just one. I think it's a good idea in theory. I think it would provide you with that, but in terms of representation, I think that individual would have a hard time trying to satisfy constituents from one end of the province to the next.

MR. MICHAEL BAKER: For sure, and our terms of reference are quite limited. What we hope to do is at least provide an opportunity to enhance that voice.

MR. DWAYNE PROVO: Yes. I'm looking through the terms of reference and I understand about creating an opportunity, but the reality is that based on what has been done before, I think from the Preston community, it has always been we've had an opportunity, but the reality is what's actually happening on the ground, and it's not good for the future of our kids.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Are there any other questions? Mr. Gaudet has a question.

MR. PAUL GAUDET: You mentioned the word "model". I'm not sure that I grasp the notion that you have in mind when you use the word "model".

I'm not sure that I grasp the notion that you have in mind when you use the word "model."

MR. DWAYNE PROVO: Just referring to what was formerly called the school boards, which are now the Regional Centres for Education - the model they had for African Nova Scotian school board representatives in terms of the electoral process, just like we did for our Acadian and CSAP schools.

MR. PAUL GAUDET: You would have something similar at one point?

MR. DWAYNE PROVO: Yes, so what would happen, if you were in a constituency - it doesn't matter which constituency - once you've identified and met the criteria set out to be either Acadian, and had a child in CSAP or someone of African descent, you would be able to vote for that person that was going to be representing you for either African Nova Scotian or Acadian. That's been going for years until we changed the school boards in the last year or so.

MR. PAUL GAUDET: This would be for Preston?

MR. DWAYNE PROVO: In terms of if you're looking for something smaller, you could do that, but still keeping the boundaries, which still allow you that opportunity that you talked about in terms of being able to allow people to represent, because that opportunity hasn't turned into reality for us since 2000.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Are there any other questions before Mr. Provo leaves? Is there anyone else who would like to have a comment?

MR. IRVINE CARVERY: Good evening, I have a question for the panel. I've had a chance to review the maps and I see that the revised map for the Prestons is on the 55-seat

plan. Is that the only opportunity for that revised map of Preston with the 55-district plan? That's my question.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Right now, yes, it is. If there is another suggestion or if you want to add to that, then we would be more than welcome to hear.

MR. IRVINE CARVERY: That's where it's at right now, right?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: That's where it's at right now with the revised plan for Preston.

MR. IRVINE CARVERY: I have a problem with that in that your recommendations are going to go back to government, and government isn't going to be too enthusiastic around increasing the number of seats in the province. We know that. It's a matter of cost. It's a matter of a lot of things. By having it as the only option, the chances of having that revised political map for the Prestons, it diminishes the conversation. That's why I came to Preston instead of going tomorrow. I came here so I could hear the conversations from the people of Preston and hear about loss of land, about the political system and changes in boundaries, et cetera. I understand fully about loss of land. I lost all of mine, so I fully understand that.

I want to talk about representation in the House. Mr. Provo hit on it very well. In terms of historically, whether it was back when they first made the changes when Mr. Adams was elected and subsequent to him, Yvonne Atwell. The lesson learned out of both of those was that immediately following those two, the Preston seat has not been represented by an African Nova Scotian, so are our voices being heard there? I don't think so.

In my previous presentation to the panel, I made the recommendation around a member at large to represent African Nova Scotian people, and once elected always sitting on government's side of the House, because we know in Opposition very few of your suggestions and bills, next to none that are of any kind of significance get passed, unless you're sitting on the government side of the House. So, that representative needs to sit with government in order to take the concerns around boundaries, around loss of land, around water, around food security - those issues that are going to be coming to the forefront that are going to negatively impact on our community. We need to be there at the table when policies are developed to ensure that the needs of our communities are met.

[7:45 p.m.]

It's not just the Prestons. We go down into Shelburne in regard to the water situation and what happened there. Preston is with the Land Titles Clarification Act, which is an issue. The shrinkage of the Preston Township is an issue. Beechville is an issue.

I think there are enough commonalities of issues that impact on the African Nova Scotian community that a representative could represent those interests in the House on the side of government.

I'm going to finish off by simply saying that I am concerned around having the revised boundaries for the Prestons only available if there are 55 seats. So, my next question to you - Clare and Argyle and the French seats, are they only available if there are 55 seats, or will they be available with 51 seats? That is my question.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: They are available with the 55 seats and 56 seats.

MR. IRVINE CARVERY: If government decides on staying with 51, then the French seats will also not be attained. Is that correct?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. IRVINE CARVERY: Okay, that gives me a little bit more hope; we've got allies. Not allies - co-conspirators on our side. Anyway, thank you very much.

MR. MICHAEL BAKER: Thanks for coming out, Mr. Carvery. I was referencing your presentation from Bedford.

MR. IRVINE CARVERY: Yes, I was in Bedford. I was here, I was everywhere.

MR. MICHAEL BAKER: Speaking only for myself, not for the commission, I thought it might have merit, but in other presentations it didn't seem to have that gravitas or attraction. When you speak with other community members, are they in favour of it? Some people are reluctant to present publicly.

MR. IRVINE CARVERY: People I talk to, when explained, they say, yes that makes sense, why not? It doesn't distract from our discussion around the Preston riding - because that riding is going to be this riding no matter what. All we're adding to is the fabric of the House by having that member at large.

When I talk to people from that perspective, they ask, why not? If we can be successful in electing a member in the Prestons and we have a member at large, we now have two representatives sitting in the House.

MR. MICHAEL BAKER: And then the other seat.

MR. IRVINE CARVERY: Then there is the other seat. I mean, Mr. Ince has been elected, so why not, you never know, but we have a good chance of having two reps. We were guaranteed one, and we have a good chance of having a second person sitting in the House.

We already know the results of having no one. We already know the results of having one. We have lived it. So why not give another chance at it? I think it ties right in with what Mr. Provo was talking about around the school board elections. Maybe if you want to be so bold, you might want to take the 51 electoral districts and combine a few of them, because you don't need 51 seats in this small province of less than a million people. I think we're over-governed. So we could look at taking some of those seats in regard to African Nova Scotian representatives and combining them, so we could end up with a maximum of five representatives representing the districts where you find a significant African Nova Scotian population.

I don't think that's asking for too much out of 51. It's just less than 10 per cent. It's probably pretty close to our representation in terms of population here. That should be the objective, correct?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Carvery. Good evening.

MS. BEV DOMAN: I live in Cole Harbour, so I'm not here for the Prestons so much, although I am very much interested in what happens to the Preston riding.

Just one small thing I wanted to mention is the title of the Cole Harbour ridings. I think you might have them reversed. I think the Cole Harbour riding that you now call Cole Harbour-Portland Valley does not have Portland Valley in it. Portland Valley is, let's say, the western riding. It's a minor thing, but I wanted to draw it to your attention.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: We will actually be at Cole Harbour Place on Thursday evening at 7:00 p.m.

MS. BEV DOMAN: I didn't know that. I'll be there too.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Is there anyone else who would like to speak?

MR. JOHN WITHROW: Thank you for coming out again and hearing our views. One thing that I wanted to speak about and basically put to rest is the idea that there is some confusion in the Mineville area about what constituency we live in.

At the last meeting, I was here on September 12th and it's recorded in the transcript - it was mentioned that there was confusion with the people in that area - whether their constituency was Eastern Shore or Preston-Dartmouth. I live in that area and I just want to make it very clear there is no confusion. Those people know what constituency they're in. They know who their MLA is. I know that from first-hand experience.

The other point is - there was a suggestion made in that same information that was provided that somehow or other we could cure that problem by taking Mineville out of

Preston-Dartmouth and putting it in Eastern Shore. That, frankly, was just completely ridiculous. It was based on nothing. There were no community consultations, no discussion. If there was, that would never have been brought forward as a remotely plausible idea.

The people of Mineville identify with the Preston-Dartmouth constituency. We go to Lake Echo to the Prestons for church. Education - we have one elementary school in the area, Bell Park Academic Centre. The students from Mineville go to that school, as the students from the Prestons - East Preston and Lake Echo go to that school. They go on to Graham Creighton and they go on to Auburn Drive High School. Every denomination of churches is represented in our constituency. People go where their faith would lead them.

There is no confusion about where we're at. There is certainly no support whatsoever. I was sort of flabbergasted when I heard that statement because I have no idea where in the hell it came from. It just came out of the blue. I know Ms. Dolly Glasgow-Williams put it to rest that night, but I just wanted to confirm again that it's just a one-off. It just came from nowhere.

I see on the map that you've included Mineville in the area, and that's as it should be. I just wanted to confirm that, and how many ridings there are, I'd leave that to your judgment. I mentioned to Mr. LeFort that hopefully you have the wisdom of Solomon to put this all together. That's all I wanted to say in regard to the Mineville area.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you for your comments.

MS. DOLLY GLASGOW-WILLIAMS: I wasn't going to speak but I want to speak on the last speaker. I think it's very important you know the history and I'm just going to go back again, as brother Dwayne has said.

Our history goes back to the 1700s in the Preston area. As I said the last time, I'm getting tired of coming to these meetings when our boundaries are being changed. One of the things that Mineville - people do not realize - I should tell you a story. My son, Sinclair, bought his house in Mineville, Hebb Drive. When he went to get his deed, his grandfather - my husband's father - John Williams owned a property in Lawrencetown that had been stolen and confiscated. That land from Hebb Drive all the way out to the highway, which is Highway No. 107 now, belonged to the Black community, including the Williams, the West family, and whatever else - you name it.

I don't want to get emotional. I've been getting to the point that I'm getting emotional, but I am because I am so tired of our land, as it has been said - it's about boundaries, yes, but it's also about the land being taken all the time.

Like I mentioned the last time, Samuel Drive is part of Preston Township. That was changed to Westphal without the consent of anybody. They come and say, we're changing

the name. These are the things that have been going on. Like the young people were saying, we've seen it over and over again. We're getting tired of our land being stolen because it is being stolen.

The people in Preston were never compensated for the expropriation of their property. I know for a fact that one of my cousins in the West family is still struggling to get their land. I worked for the Department of Natural Resources and I know for a fact that when land was confiscated in the white community - expropriated - a young gentleman came back from the West Coast and said, my grandfather never gave you permission. They were paid for the land, but the Black community had never been paid for anything when it came to taking our land.

The same with the boundaries. Boundaries are invisible, and I am at the point that I am tired of coming to these meetings, struggling and fighting all the time. Designated seats - we are very capable of deciding who we want as our leaders, and like someone said already, whether we change the boundary to the Prestons - we're still East Preston, whatever, but if you go and count the people in our Preston community, our community is a Black community, but we're out-numbered when it comes to who lives in our community - and not because we don't want you there. We're very inviting.

Don't forget when you come into our community, why should we change our laws and our regulations to appease people? That's what we've been doing over the last few years. Every time you turn around, we have to appease somebody else, but then we get stabbed in the back. With these boundaries, when you go back and check, listen to what was said tonight by everyone that's in the room that's affecting us.

I have grandchildren who live here. I have family that lives out West and want to come back. I say, you can come back and move but we don't know from one day to another what's going to happen. We have 325 acres of land sitting on Governor Street that used to belong to the Preston Housing Fund Board. Government took that land and would not work with the community, so how do we develop when government itself is a problem?

I'm going to say this - no matter what Party you work with or vote with, you have to toe that Party line. Yes, we have an African Nova Scotian in the House, but how much power does he have? You can have all the Blacks in the House you want, but when government does not recognize and respect who we are - with Blacks here or not - but when you walk in the door, regardless of what colour you are, you should represent the person that's coming into the community that's there.

We were 758 Nova Scotians - we arrived here with Shelburne Loyalists. My name is down in Shelburne - a Glasgow name. The Williams name is there. We have been here forever, but people forget that we're here and I am so tired. If people want to move into the community, that's fine, but don't move in and tell us to forget our history.

I'm going to go to Lucasville. Lucasville two years ago was fighting because somebody who moved into the community didn't want - disrespecting the community, whatever. People move into our community and disrespect who we are. They don't come and ask what we want. They think they know what we want. Don't think for me. I am very capable of thinking for myself.

Everyone in my community - my four-year-old granddaughter can tell you what she wants. I don't want people thinking for me what they think I need. We know what we need and what we want, so when you're sitting down making decisions for us - come to the table and ask us. We don't want you picking our leaders. We will pick our own leaders because we're getting tired of someone picking for us. Oh, that's your spokesperson - no, you come and ask us as a group, and we'll tell you who we are. As far as what was said tonight about the different categories, you need to go back and look at what's there.

[8:00 p.m.]

No matter what you do, our land is taken. The Preston Township is gone. In fact, it started at Alderney Drive, so it went to Musquodoboit. People walked into the community - I don't want to be a part. If you don't want to be a part of the Preston Township, then move your house or move your body and go back to where you came from. But we are getting tired of being pushed out and land being distributed, and our history being dismantled because of boundaries and whatever else.

I think it's very important tonight to listen to what was said by the people from our community. Yes, David Hendsbee came in here riding on a white horse, so he thought, to take Mineville out of our community. My mother was raised in Mineville. They owned property in Mineville. That was property. The land that you go through - Lake Echo, that was all part of Preston until we had all politicians coming and changing boundaries without consulting with us.

Whether it's electoral boundaries, whether it's a boundary for whatever, you cannot come into a community and change boundaries. You have to respect the people who are there and sit down with them, whatever the Party is.

When you go back today and listen to what we said tonight, you might change some of the wording on your poster, but look at what was said for the community.

Before you make a decision, there's people who are not here tonight. People are doing other things, but they will send a submission. Listen to those submissions when they come in. I'm just saying, please listen to the community because we're all getting tired. I know I saw Ms. Bernard coming in late. She might want to say something about Lake Loon and Cherry Brook.

I think it's very important to hear from our communities. Thank you very much.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Does anyone have any questions for Ms. Williams? Thank you.

Is there anyone else? Yes, come on up. There's time for both, so whoever wants to can come up.

MR. ALAN RUFFMAN: I hope she will come forward.

My name is Alan Ruffman. In a sense, I'm going to mention a couple of things which do not necessarily concern Preston.

First, I would like to say I have read your interim report cover to cover. I got a little bit confused by the maps because there's different sets of maps. Slight changes in the colour of the paper on those, if you ever do another interim report, would make them a little easier to understand.

I wanted to clarify one thing that Irvine was mentioning. I understand from reading your report that you are virtually obligated by both the Supreme Court decision in Saskatchewan and our own court decision to re-introduce the idea of the four protected ridings. Do you have the option to say to government in your final report, keep the ridings exactly as they are, no changes? Are you not obligated to respond to the two court decisions?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: We can provide it as an option, but we were mandated to come back here by the court.

MR. ALAN RUFFMAN: You're not allowed to include any options in your final report. If I read it correctly, your mandate is that you must make one recommendation.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: In the final report, yes, it is one recommendation.

MR. ALAN RUFFMAN: You have almost said in your interim report that that final recommendation will include four protected ridings related to the three Acadian and one Preston riding. Am I drawing too much from your interim report with that conclusion?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I'll refer to Dr. Dodds.

DR. COLIN DODDS: I think you're inferring a little too much. We were asked to produce 51 seats, so we actually do have some maps with 51 seats. Then we have the 55. In coming back to one single set of maps or single set of boundaries, that could be 51, or it could be less. Our terms of reference allow us to go above or below.

MR. ALAN RUFFMAN: I find myself reacting to the term “protected ridings.” That’s what they are, in fact. They are protecting a particular cultural group to the extent that they may be making it easier for an election of a particular member of that community. I wondered whether a cultural riding is a better term. I do not know. I don’t strongly recommend it. I find myself reacting a little bit to the idea of a protected riding.

We are, in theory, trying to produce an electoral system where every voter has more or less an equal chance to elect a member. This argument of whether you can go a certain percentage above or below when you’re dealing with the four ridings that were previously protected ridings, you may be forced to have somewhat fewer people per riding electing a particular MLA.

Then you have a Chéticamp riding possibility, which your report spends a lot of time on. I think I understand it fairly well. I think the term would be an exceptional riding. Am I right? If you end up creating a riding out of Chéticamp, it will be not only a protected but an exceptional riding. I have the impression, and people like Jim Vibert wrote in the newspaper that people are viewing that possibility as almost a lead balloon. It has been flown up, but it isn’t going to fly.

I do think that your concern about the Chéticamp area - I especially was attracted to pointing out that that area has suffered two major land losses. I had never thought of the expropriation of the land for the Cape Breton Highlands National Park as affecting a community, but they lost a very large chunk of land. Private owners did get compensated by 1936 or whatever the period of time was. But then they have had further losses of land.

These are losses of land that the same concern and attachment to the land that you hear the Taylors and Mr. Colley saying was there with the Acadian communities as well. The shapes of the lots may be different, and the types of land may be different. In Nova Scotia, there is a strong feeling about land and the protection of land.

As people were talking, I realized how large that Preston Township was. One of the illustrative things, if you ever teach history, would be to lay the boundaries of Preston Township on the electoral district’s boundary that we will have after this next election. You obviously can’t include all of that because you would have most of Dartmouth, but for example, when they were considering the boundary for HRM and the amalgamation arguments that went on as they put Dartmouth and all the counties together, I made an argument that the boundary between one district and another down towards the bottom of the peninsula, down towards the Sambro area, should be a watershed boundary. Nobody lives there, and in effect, from a planning point of view, the water flows this way or flows that way - that is a very natural boundary.

I don’t think watershed boundaries are going to fly at all in electoral districts, but there may be, as you think about the attachment of the Preston communities, the East Preston communities, and probably others to the land and seeing that land disappear

because of government action, be it expropriation in Cape Breton or be it Highway No. 107 or be it the kind of planning - the imposition of the HRM plan on virtually all of the Preston area.

A very, very small thing - I drive back and forth occasionally to Truro, and the big green road signs all spelled Mi'kmaq, with a "q" and I now notice that a number of them end with a "w", Mi'kmaw. Your report has both. I think they're different. Bernie Francis has never answered my mail, so I don't know the slight distinction between those two words - Mi'kmaq with a Q at the end or with a W at the end. If there is a real difference, just make sure from a grammatical point of view that your report is reflecting that properly. I don't know what is correct.

I live in Halifax Atlantic, and I'm unaware of any particular problems with district boundaries there. I'm always amused how Sable Island has ended up as part of the Halifax South End - the deep South End and Sable Island. That goes right back to Confederation. Sable Island is mentioned from the very, very beginning in the setting up of the Province of Nova Scotia and its confederation. I think the particular MLAs have taken great interest in Sable Island. I take great interest in Sable Island because I'm a marine geologist.

The issue now is coming up with Parks Canada, for example, which controls and will regulate the national park that encompasses all of Sable Island. The question coming up is, where should they have an interpretation centre? They cannot have an interpretation centre on the island because it's just not going to be possible for very many to visit it, especially if they have to charter an airplane. Where on the mainland should Sable Island be highlighted by Parks Canada? It's nothing to do with your consideration, but maybe everything to do with what riding Sable Island might be eventually attached to.

I'll just leave that. I have nothing further unless you have any questions.

MR. MICHAEL BAKER: Just a comment - thank you for coming out, Mr. Ruffman. We have heard the protected riding designation doesn't sit well. Many communities don't need protection - they need recognition and respect. This is not the first time we have heard that.

MR. ALAN RUFFMAN: I thought your report was easy to read. It was a lesson in history for me. It is something that I hope, when you produce your final report, that you'll take steps to see a copy in school libraries or public libraries very widely, separate from depending upon your government to circulate them.

The only other comment I would make, sir, is that I was expecting to see more discussion about the Mi'kmaw people. After talking to Mr. Gaudet, I realize that they haven't responded to the provision in the Electors Act, and we in the rest of the electoral process don't think that we can impose that on them at this stage because, as you

introduced your meeting, Madam Chairman, this is unceded Mi'kmaw territory, which includes virtually the whole of the province.

Those are issues that have taken and will continue to take a long, long time to sort out. Whether there should be a member at large, as there is provision for - I think it's a damned good idea that they get involved as a member at large at the legislative level down at Province House, but I also recognize that we're not in a position to impose that.

With the Cheticamp riding, there seems to be great concern about the difficulty of the people who put elections together to somehow make up a list of people who would define themselves as Acadian. Irvine will have exactly the same reaction of, how do you set up a list that you keep up to date of people who would like to define themselves as Black or have good reason to define themselves as African Nova Scotians in terms of electing a member at large? (Interruption)

It's not an impossible thing to do. We certainly tried with school boards. As we are functioning in the digital age, it will become more and more possible for people to sign up for that. But I'm not upset by the idea of a member at large to speak to Acadians. And I'm not upset, Irvine, about a member at large speaking for Blacks. I had not even thought of the idea of that member automatically sitting on the side of the government as a sort of independent but watchful eye.

Thank you very, very much. I do appreciate you stopping on the first part of your marathon.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I want to say thank you for your comments and appreciate them.

Just to follow up in terms of reaching out to Indigenous and Mi'kmaw people, we have done that twice. At this time, we haven't had any communication.

[8:15 p.m.]

I also just wanted to say there is a seat designated to Indigenous people in the House, and there has been since 1992. So as part of moving forward with Truth and Reconciliation, we do hope that maybe the relationship-building, that someone will pick up that seat - but there is a designated seat.

MR. ALAN RUFFMAN: There is a Mi'kmaw who has put his name forward for the nomination for the NDP in the long-held Sackville riding. Stay tuned.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you for your comments. Is there anybody else who wanted to come forward to speak?

MS. JUSTINE COLLEY-LEGER: Hello everyone. My name is Justine Colley-Leger. I want to take this back into the very beginning stages because there is something that is standing out to me that I may not be fully aware of. We have 51 seats currently, correct? We have a seat as Preston, correct? Preston has a seat currently within the 51, correct?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: There is a Preston-Dartmouth, yes.

MS. JUSTINE COLLEY-LEGER: So when we talk about going to 55 with ensuring that Preston gets a riding, we already have that. That's what I want to clarify. Right now we have 51 - we have a seat. We're talking about going to 55, which means that we would get a seat. We already have a seat. Do you understand the confusion?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: It's a fair question.

MS. JUSTINE COLLEY-LEGER: I don't understand how we already have a seat at 51, and that we're talking about adding four additional seats, three being Acadian and one being African Nova Scotian - but we already have that.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: It would be a designated seat for a particular . . .

MS. JUSTINE COLLEY-LEGER: For the particular race of the individual in the seat?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I think that's up to the community or will be up to the people who vote. That is the idea - that there is going to be representation that can make a difference for people in the community.

MS. JUSTINE COLLEY-LEGER: So given we leave the boundary as it is for the 51, because that seems like the general consensus - maybe it's not, that's up for debate. We leave the boundary as is - 51 seats - Preston has a seat. Who we choose to put in that position is up to us, but there is a seat for Preston with the 51.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: There is a seat for Preston-Dartmouth, yes.

MS. JUSTINE COLLEY-LEGER: So when we go to 55, and that says we add three plus another African Nova Scotian, we're losing that - do you see where . . .

MADAM CHAIRMAN: You don't lose the seat. It's the change of the boundaries.

MS. JUSTINE COLLEY-LEGER: So maybe it's the way that it has been positioned. For me, it sounds as if - with the 51 that are there, we have our seat. When you add three plus another for an African Nova Scotian, that gives us two. Do you know what I mean?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Yes, it is a valid question.

MS. JUSTINE COLLEY-LEGER: From just looking back, pretending as if I hadn't been here before - we have 51 currently. You're trying to tell me that we're going to break the 51 that we have into smaller pieces, but that's not going to benefit us.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: If you go to 55. If you go to 55 there is a change in the boundaries, and so there is no guarantee it's going to benefit. It's just a change in the boundaries, but it's still a Preston-Dartmouth riding, so you still have your seat.

MS. JUSTINE COLLEY-LEGER: So what you're telling me is that nothing will change for Preston other than the lines will change, yet the Acadians will get more? If any of you want to chime in, please by all means - you all have a microphone. What you're telling me is that currently Preston has a seat. When you move to 55, we may or may not get smaller or bigger, but we're not getting anything more. You're telling me that Acadians get more.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I would have a difficult time saying "more".

MS. JUSTINE COLLEY-LEGER: They have a better opportunity of being represented.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I'm going to refer you to Mr. Gaudet.

MS. JUSTINE COLLEY-LEGER: From my perspective as an African Nova Scotian from the younger generation, you're telling me that with 51 seats that I have a voice, and when we move to 55, my voice does not become louder - it does not change, but the Acadians get more voices?

DR. COLIN DODDS: Could I just comment on this? Go back to 2002 when four seats - Preston and the Acadian seats of Argyle, Richmond and Clare - were designated as protected. We can talk about that too. As Mike Baker has said, we had a lot of discussion about that. Then move forward to 2002 and they were continued to be protected.

Then we move to 2012 when, in fact, the interim report of the commission said, yes, we want to continue to protect these seats within a 52-seat House. That interim report was, in fact, not accepted by the government and the commission was then instructed to go back and come with a 51- or 52-seat House. They came up with a 51-seat House, which is what we have right now, and the last election was fought on those particular boundaries. So what happened was that Clare was merged into Digby. Argyle was merged into Barrington and Richmond was merged into a Cape Breton seat. Preston was merged into Dartmouth.

What the 55-seat scenario looks at is going back to where Preston was, going back to where Clare was, going back to where Argyle was, and going back to where Richmond was. In fact, going back to the interim report of 2012, which mirrored the 1992 and 2002.

What we would say is, the commission is restoring those historic seats - those seats that were first established in 1992.

MS. JUSTINE COLLEY-LEGER: So for the African Nova Scotian communities, if we stay with 51, what you're telling me is that 51 means that we're not protected and 55 means that we are protected.

DR. COLIN DODDS: Yes, but . . .

MS. JUSTINE COLLEY-LEGER: So what does "protected" mean to the commission?

DR. COLIN DODDS: Well, if you go back to why they were protected in the first place back in 1992, it was with the expectation that those seats could, in fact, give more chance for an Acadian or African Nova Scotian to be elected. If you go back to the readings in 1992, that was the logic of the argument.

MS. JUSTINE COLLEY-LEGER: So being protected means that there is a chance that someone that is in that seat looks like me.

DR. COLIN DODDS: Or an Acadian in the three Acadian seats.

MS. JUSTINE COLLEY-LEGER: Or an Acadian in those instances. Isn't that already the case, other than for the Acadians that are merged with those other populations?

DR. COLIN DODDS: No, it's not.

MS. JUSTINE COLLEY-LEGER: So that boundary over there, 51, includes the Myra Road and includes a little bit of Cole Harbour and includes some Caledonia Drive, right?

DR. COLIN DODDS: Yes.

MS. JUSTINE COLLEY-LEGER: There is an opportunity there for someone that is voted in to look like me. It doesn't happen, but there is an opportunity for that to exist. When we move to 55, you're telling me that we become protected so that opportunity is still there that a person in that seat can look like me, if the people vote.

DR. COLIN DODDS: In fact, there is a smaller number of electors so if you take the 51-seat scenario in terms of Preston-Dartmouth, you would have a certain number of -

something like 11,000 voters. I don't have the numbers in front of me. Then if we go back to the 55, by taking those parts of Dartmouth that you've just referenced, then the seat would actually fall in terms of numbers of electors.

MS. JUSTINE COLLEY-LEGER: So in summary, what I'm hearing is that with 51, we keep our land and these invisible lines more or less stay where they are, I still have the opportunity of having someone in the chair that looks like me. But if we move to 55, the Acadian communities that feel as if they aren't represented, have a better opportunity to be represented - and I am still in the same position of hopefully having someone in the chair that looks like me.

DR. COLIN DODDS: No.

MS. JUSTINE COLLEY-LEGER: Because you're saying that it's a better chance because the area becomes smaller so there is a higher percentage of African Nova Scotians in the Preston riding.

DR. COLIN DODDS: Correct.

MS. JUSTINE COLLEY-LEGER: Based on the conversation that has been had here today, people are not asking you to make that riding smaller. Some folks have asked that you not make it smaller - that you do not take out Myra Road, that you do not take out Cole Harbour, that you do not take out Roleika Drive. Some people are saying that.

DR. COLIN DODDS: Yes.

MS. JUSTINE COLLEY-LEGER: If that is the route that you go, whether you choose 55 or 51 does not impact me.

DR. COLIN DODDS: Well that's up to you - I mean, as to how you assess whether it impacts you or not. What we're trying to do as a commission is go back to restore - and if you follow through then what happened in the Court of Appeal decision, and then subsequently the Keefe commission report, we're trying to go back, some people would say, to right a wrong that was done to those four communities. That's all the commission is trying to do.

MS. JUSTINE COLLEY-LEGER: I understand your point of view, but what I'm trying to get across is that systemically this does not seem to favour me as an African Nova Scotian voter. Maybe you understand what I'm trying to say.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I can appreciate what you're trying to say. Even listening to everybody, the role of the commission cannot fix all these problems that have been unjust to African Nova Scotians.

MS. JUSTINE COLLEY-LEGER: I'm not asking you to do that. I'm just trying to have a better understanding of what the benefit is to the African Nova Scotian communities of it being 51 or 55. I've heard the conversation about the members at large. I'm not opposed to it. It sounds like it could be a great idea, depending on how that looks for one person to represent an entire province. From a systemic point of view, African Nova Scotians need the same amount of opportunity to share their concerns and voice their opinions as all the other minorities within this province.

From looking on the outside in, going from 51 to 55, I don't see how that benefits us substantially - like how it benefits other communities that are . . .

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Where would you like to see the boundary line? What suggestion would you have for the commission?

MS. JUSTINE COLLEY-LEGER: I don't think that the boundary lines should become smaller. I think that if you move to 55, then there should definitely be two people representing African Nova Scotians - one in Preston and maybe a member at large. My work that I do is provincial within the African Nova Scotian communities and it's almost impossible for one person to connect with all the African Nova Scotian communities. There are too many of us. You would have to have two people - whether that's someone from Preston and a member at large, that way we get our protected seat, but we also get an actual voice. That's what I would recommend.

I don't think the boundary needs to get smaller. I don't think we need to have 55 seats for African Nova Scotians to have an opinion or have a voice. That's up to us to vote properly within what we already have. But systemically, these changes that are being made, I don't see them benefiting us the way that they're benefiting other people that live in this province.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: With a member at large, a person from the community could not vote in their riding but would have to vote for the member at large.

MS. JUSTINE COLLEY-LEGER: Can you repeat yourself?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: For a member at large - if we stay how it is now, as Preston-Dartmouth, and then we have a member at large, the constituency only votes for the member at large or the person in Dartmouth. You can't do both, so how do you think that might fall out in this situation?

MS. JUSTINE COLLEY-LEGER: Without having much time to think about that question, I would like to see someone represent Preston and then a member at large represent the other African Nova Scotian communities in the province. The reason why I say that is because most of the African Nova Scotian population is in the Preston

communities, so they should have a voice, but I don't want to leave out the rest of the African Nova Scotians that live across the province. They should also get a voice.

If we move to 55, you've got to give us two seats - because we already have a seat and you're going to tell us that you're giving us another seat so that the Acadians get their three and we get our one? We already have one. We should have two. That's basic math - one plus one equals two. That's all I have to say. If you have any questions for me, please feel free to ask them, but I just want to leave that with you - that we need to make sure that if you're going to give us a seat, give us more than what we already have.

[8:30 p.m.]

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Just to follow up, I know we've talked about the dual membership, and I don't know if one of our commissioners wants to speak about that to give a better understanding.

MR. MICHAEL BAKER: Justine, thank you for coming out. One of the roles of the commission - we're very limited in our terms of reference - but it's to listen and to give voice. If we weren't here, we wouldn't hear it first-hand from the community, so thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Ms. Weymouth has a question.

MS. CARLOTTA WEYMOUTH: Good evening, Justine - nice seeing you again. It came across in one of their notes from the last time that one of our people that was speaking - it had been said at one time that having a member at large who was aligned with the government - and I think the person who said that is still here - how do they voice the concerns of the people? How would you see them voicing the concerns of the people if they're elected in Preston and they're doing a dual and they're split? How do you think they're going to represent?

MS. JUSTINE COLLEY-LEGER: Are you talking about if someone from the Preston communities is the person elected as the member at large representation?

MS. CARLOTTA WEYMOUTH: Yes.

MS. JUSTINE COLLEY-LEGER: The same way that we communicate now: through technology. If the rest of the province wants to vote for someone from the Preston township to be their representative, then I guess we have two people from Preston representing African Nova Scotians.

MS. CARLOTTA WEYMOUTH: But what happens if they're split?

MS. JUSTINE COLLEY-LEGER: What do you mean by split?

MS. CARLOTTA WEYMOUTH: Say it's you and I, and I'm representing the outer areas of the African Nova Scotian communities and you're representing Preston and I don't agree with what you want for there, so then we end up splitting our vote. (Interruptions) But it's two of us.

MS. JUSTINE COLLEY-LEGER: You're saying that not within the communities, but more so once you're actually in the House - is that what you're talking about?

MS. CARLOTTA WEYMOUTH: Yes.

MS. JUSTINE COLLEY-LEGER: Well, you're talking about two individuals with two different types of personalities. Not all two people see things from the same point of view, and I think that's the purpose of the House. It's for people to voice their opinions and hopefully find allies within the room.

Sometimes two African Nova Scotians aren't always going to view things the exact same way, but that's an opportunity for conversation between those two individuals - plus the other 53 or 49 or however many other people there are in the room.

I hear what you're saying - that if we have members at large and we have someone from the Preston riding, they may not always see eye to eye. Well that's just real life. I can't control that, and the voters can't control that either. Hopefully we vote people that - I don't understand your question. I hope I answered your question. Two people that don't get along - I can't control that. I voted them in - I don't know what you want me to say to that. Any other questions?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Ms. Colley-Leger. We're going to get ready to have Mr. Provo speak and then maybe one or two more speakers, but it's getting close to 9:00 p.m. Come up to the microphone and state your name again for the record.

MR. DWAYNE PROVO: Dwayne Provo. I just want to make a comment on Justine's response to the fact that you someone from member at large and you have someone from Preston. They have two distinct responsibilities. One is responsible for the other communities outside of Preston and the one elected in Preston is responsible for the constituency of Preston. Two people, it's separate. They have their own responsibilities. Is that good?

MS. CARLOTTA WEYMOUTH: I'll play the devil's advocate here tonight so that we can find out whether they want two people or one person.

MR. DWAYNE PROVO: My understanding, based upon what I'm hearing, it's two - so one at large and then one in Preston. That's my understanding from this.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you. We'll just have one more speaker. I would welcome anyone after this speaker to write in submissions.

MS. BERNADETTE HAMILTON-REID: Good evening. I'm Bernadette Hamilton-Reid. I had the pleasure of living in Preston - actually in Lake Echo - for 25 years. I'm also a Beechvillian. Beechville has been mentioned a few times. As we argued and shrunk up, that's still my hometown. That's still where my mother goes to church and where I still worship.

The confusion or concern over what's going on - and I can't speak for Preston because I don't live here now, but I am African Nova Scotian, so I speak for the people that I represent. Dr. Dodds, you mentioned back in 1992 when historically it was a Black seat riding, we had Wayne Adams and Yvonne Atwell. When the boundaries changed since then, there has not been Black representation in the Prestons.

Just for Justine's sake, Preston does not have a seat, per se. It has a riding, but it's not a designated seated where we are guaranteed to have somebody of African descent be elected. We've had African Nova Scotian representation. We've had African Nova Scotians in the Parties run against somebody of European descent and they've lost. They've lost primarily because of the population base and because Preston does not have the highest population compared to when it comes out to voting. Statistics also show that African Nova Scotians don't vote as much as we should, so we have work to do in our own community.

But with the boundaries that are in place, there is a very low chance of an African Nova Scotian being voted in against a European as the boundaries exist today. That is why the current MLA has been there for the last four terms. That has not changed because of the way the boundaries are set up. You can have the name "Preston," but it really doesn't represent the Prestons.

When you talk about the Prestons and what this community knows, it's what they've already said: East Preston, North Preston, Cherry Brook, Lake Loon. If there was a designated riding that specifically said that is what the riding is, then you have a higher percentage of that and you would elect an African Nova Scotian person. But as soon as you add Myra Road, Mineville - and we love those communities. My children went to school at Bell Park, Auburn, and Graham Creighton, so we know that we have integrated very well with those communities. We also know that systemic racism and prejudice still exist, and we still have a lot that we have to fight against. We can't deny that.

That goes on in politics. It goes on everywhere we go. We talked about it in education, the prison system, social services. You talk about how as African Nova Scotians we are still disenfranchised, and we are still marginalized. In order for you to have a designated, guaranteed seat - and I was a previous school board member and we had designated seats - only African Nova Scotians can vote for an African Nova Scotian. Now

if you want to get to that nitty-gritty, it's a lot of political will that has to be done, and it has to be the political will of the Parties and the government that want to do that to say, when you go to your election, you either vote for your general population seat, or you vote for a designated African Nova Scotian seat.

Are we ready to go there? Some aren't, some are. It's almost like bringing back affirmative action. We talk about it in government policies, but do we follow it? Ninety per cent of the time, no. So, what we have to do is bite the bullet and say, this is what this commission is offering, this is the change that needs to take place in 2019, and we are ready to say that African Nova Scotians have been under-represented for 400 years and we are willing to step out and make a change. That change says that we are going to have a designated seat, that only African Nova Scotians can vote for an African Nova Scotian.

It's my right as a citizen that I either choose - just like the school board elections - I either choose to vote for my African Nova Scotian rep or I choose to vote for the member at large. But give me that option to choose who I want to serve me. Give me the option to say I want a designated African Nova Scotian, or I want to be represented by a non-African Nova Scotian.

By just opening up the riding and changing the boundaries, that is not going to guarantee representation of an African Nova Scotian. As we all said, not all African Nova Scotians can represent who I am and what I say, but we have a better chance of at least having an African Nova Scotian face sitting at the table, listening to discussion, and oftentimes chiming in about some of the issues that are going on in the Black community, because you don't sit at my supper table, you don't come to my church, you don't come to my community, so how do you know what's going on in my communities? Whereas an African Nova Scotian, if they're only in their community, at least they know what's going on in their community and they may hear from somebody - a neighbour, friend, or relative - this is what's going on in Yarmouth, this is what's going on in Cape Breton. They can share that. But if you don't come to dinner with us, you don't sit around our tables, you don't play sports with our children, then you don't know where we're coming from on a lot of our issues.

Yes, one person is a small voice, but at least it will be a voice that will be representative at the table and can bring issues forward, and if they hear something, they can at least bring it up. As somebody already said, you have to form allies around the table. When you are only one, then you may find five or six allies around the table that have the cultural relevancy or the cultural competency that they want to be inclusive of all people, and they don't want to be in that narrow-mindedness that they've grown up with all their lives or whatever.

If we don't get the chance to sit at the table and voice our voice, and give our opinions, then we're not going to be there. We start with one and we grow into two, we grow into three, four, five, but it's our will as African Nova Scotians to go to Yarmouth and

vote for somebody that looks like us - start building our own political will around the province and try to increase. But we cannot feel accepted at the table if we don't see somebody there that looks like us.

That's like all things - in teaching, in medical - if we don't see doctors or teachers that look like us, our children don't aspire to become politicians. They don't aspire to become teachers, doctors, and lawyers. We have a part, and the province has a part to help us with affirmative action. Yes, we're supposed to be managers moving up. We are janitors, we are secretaries. We are not middle managers and we are not higher managers so how are we making decisions? We need to make sure the political will is in all organizations to help us help you understand what our needs are.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I just want to let everyone know that if there are written submissions or if you have any further comments, you're more than welcome to visit the website or email. That address is on the website.

I also want to say that our final report is due April 1st this year. Our terms of reference mandate the commission to have this produced by April 1st. We are continuing to go around the province.

The deadline for written submissions is February 28th. (Interruptions) Just the final report coming out on April 1st. Again, the deadline for submissions is February 28th.

I just want to thank everybody for coming out this evening. That concludes our community consultation.

[The commission adjourned at 8:43 p.m.]