

NOVA SCOTIA
ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES
COMMISSION

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2019

Halifax Marriott Harbourfront Hotel
Halifax, 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. Ashley Morton
Mr. Matthew Duffy
Mr. Alex Holmes
Ms. Melinda Daye
Ms. Lisa Roberts
Mr. Rob Batherson
Ms. Claudia Chender

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7:00 P.M.

CHAIRMAN
Dr. Colin Dodds

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good evening ladies and gentlemen. We have just waited what I would call a diplomatic 10 minutes to give people a chance to get parked and be here. It is almost 7:10 p.m., so I would like us to start. I want to thank you so much for coming out this evening.

My name is Colin Dodds. I live in Halifax, and I am the Chairman of the Nova Scotia Electoral Boundaries Commission and will chair this evening's public consultation. First let me acknowledge that we're on the unceded lands of the many First Nations of Nova Scotia.

As many of you know, the commission has held meetings. We started in September, in fact, September 4th of last year. The select committee asked us to produce a draft set of boundaries. I will come back to that in a few minutes, but before we commence, I would ask the commission members to introduce themselves starting on my left.

[The commission members introduce themselves.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: At our meetings back in September, when we first started the public consultations, I did provide fairly lengthy context 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 this evening, but if there are any questions, I would be pleased to clarify that later.

This commission was tasked, in its terms of reference, with producing boundaries for a 51-seat House of Assembly - what we currently have - and at least one other. Subsequent to our public consultations in September, the commission did produce an interim report, which was tabled with the Attorney General on November 28th last year. It proposes four alternatives, including the 51-seat House. In that particular instance, the 51-seat House, we made some changes, particularly in Bedford by moving parts of Bedford into Hammonds Plains-Lucasville. The reason for that was that the population shift was such that Bedford was 1.48, and we're allowed to have deviations of 0.5 over and 0.5 under.

The total number of electors as of June 29, 2018, was 743,500. The average, in terms of the current set of boundaries of 51 seats, is 14,578. Basically that's 1, and then any deviation from that depends on the number of electors. That number for June 29th represents an increase in electors of over 30,000 since the 2012 report. As I think many of you know, there have been continued population shifts to the urban areas of the province. In fact, we spent today as a commission discussing that, spent a long time taking account of that particular trend.

The commission is planning to use updated data, hopefully for December last year - if not December, more likely November. The data we use, if you're really interested in data, comes from Elections Nova Scotia, and it involves the 2016 census data, which has been updated for people who were 16 at that point and now 18 and so on - also landed immigrants who have become Canadian citizens. We have those data sets, so they're included. Of course, if you're a Canadian citizen, that's one of the eligibility criteria for you to vote.

If I look then at the four options - on top of the options, people may be wanting to raise more micro issues with respect to their particular boundaries. What we have this evening are three maps for the whole of Nova Scotia. Then we have some regional maps that are looking at HRM and the environs. Then we have some specific maps dealing with Halifax. Hopefully, if you're from this area, you can find your own map and have a look at it later on.

As I say, we look at the macro picture, which is the four options, and then the micro picture of looking at particular boundaries. Again, we spent a lot of time today doing some adjustments to what we have gone out with as a result of the public consultations that we have had already.

[7:15 p.m.]

The four options I have mentioned. The first one of course is the 51 electoral districts, which is the current size of the House of Assembly. We made some minor adjustments to that, principally, as I mentioned, to Bedford, moving parts of Bedford into Hammonds Plains-Lucasville.

The second option is 55 electoral districts, which include the formerly protected electoral districts of Argyle, Clare, Richmond, and Preston. That was the controversy back in 2012 if you recall.

The third option is 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, so only one vote.

Finally, number four - and these are not in rank order, I can assure you; they just go in ascending order of the number of seats - is 56 electoral districts, including then an exceptional electoral district of Cheticamp.

As I mentioned, you may have particular suggestions and questions about your own electoral district. If you have those, you can certainly raise them with us. If you have a written presentation, you can give that to us. We have had, on occasion, maps provided with us with red lines drawn and so on. It has been very, very useful to have

You may have seen in the media that in terms of Halifax and Bedford we are adding, in one of the scenarios, 55 seats and above, two seats in Bedford - Bedford Basin and Bedford South.

In our previous public consultations, we also asked for input on the concept of members at large to represent the Acadian and African Nova Scotian populations as well as the concept of non-contiguous electoral districts. But until last night, we didn't receive much support for those ideas.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am now pleased to turn the floor over to you. We have had one person who has indicated in advance that he wished to speak, so I'm going to ask him to come forward. After that, I'll call for anybody from the floor who wishes to speak. We have two microphones here for you to use. We have had, at various meetings, two people presenting at the same time. I ask that you use the microphone and state your name because everything that is said on both sides through these microphones is in fact taped, which is why we have our technicians at the back, and then transcribed. I would ask not only for your name but also for you to spell your name, so we get it right in the transcript. As I say, if you have any written notes and would like to give them to us, please do so.

The gentleman who has indicated he would like to speak is Ashley Morton. Ashley, please come forward.

MR. ASHLEY MORTON: Thank you very much. My name is Ashley Morton. I live in the North End of Halifax on Duffus Street. I'm not going to give you my handwritten notes because I don't think you would be able to read them afterwards; sorry.

I'm not here representing any particular group, organization, or political Party, though I should probably mention just for full disclosure that I am involved with the Green Party of Nova Scotia, only because if I failed to do so, I'm sure someone would believe there was a conspiracy going on. I am not here in any way representing the organization, although I can say that of course my comments will be unpolluted by crass, detailed concerns about what you have to do when you have an MLA because we have yet to get there.

As such, I should probably mention that I recognized in reading the report of the commission that proportional representation and any serious change to the basic fundamental structure of representation within the province is seen as outside the mandate, but it should continue to be repeated, I believe, that we have a deeply disproportionate representation. Part of that is why we end up having to twist ourselves into all of these knots in order to attempt to achieve representation that would, in fact, be much more efficiently and effectively produced by proportional representation - that being as it may.

I live in Halifax Needham. I have a couple of small comments on the actual specific borders there. The southern boundary of the riding should be Cogswell Street. There are a small number of residents who live south of Cogswell Street in taller apartment buildings that are connected deeply to the downtown core - not all that many of them, in fact, are voters. There are many temporary residents and so on, but those that live in a downtown environment which is much more connected with Halifax Citadel than it would reasonably be with Halifax Needham.

The western boundary of the riding should be Windsor Street. It should not be Robie Street, with a hook-over along Young Street and then up Connaught Avenue. This has the effect of misplacing two communities - the community that lives in the L-shape that is formed by Bayers Road and Connaught Avenue. If one looks at reasons that they have geographic boundaries - for example, school catchment areas - they almost always go south towards what we would generally understand as the west end or west. However, for representation, they are now connected into Halifax Needham. They're divided from the rest of Halifax Needham by the military properties that are in between that and the rest of it, and that seems unreasonable.

On the other hand, there are a number of residents to the immediate west of Robie Street between North Street and Bayers Road who are very much part of the north end world, and it would be much more reasonable for those people to be part of Halifax Needham. I will also point out that, in fact, this geography is born out by the very fact that the MLA's constituency office is not in her constituency because it is so much more logical to be on the other side of Robie Street.

With regard to the proportions within the same urban area, I think there are some valid arguments that can be made for having differing proportions of electors in fundamentally differing contexts. When we're talking about urban and rural, when we're talking about linguistic communities, when we're talking about communities historically under-privileged for all sorts of reasons, there may be valid reasons for representation, but it seems unreasonable to have side-by-side ridings in the same urban area that have 10,000 and 15,000 electors within them.

It seems that in the same urban context with many of the same considerations, there should be a greater effort made to balance the proportions of these ridings in ways that we will not be subdividing any municipal units, we will not be creating huge areas. It seems

unreasonable, for example, that the two Cole Harbour ridings - one has 10,000 and one has 15,000, when simply by moving the line we could make those two 12,000-person ridings, and we would not have a circumstance where one set of electors had one and a half times the voting strength than the ones in their fellow community. So, I do believe that a greater effort should be made within the urban context of the HRM to balance the proportions of those ridings.

I would certainly suggest that in the Bedford area, where it's reasonable that Highway No. 102 is used as a boundary and that we don't have a situation where there is one riding. In the 51-person model there are almost no changes made to the current set of boundaries with a couple of small exceptions, but the one change that was made extended a suburban kind of outer ring riding down to the Bedford Basin in a tiny little slice. Anyway, you get my point. Highway No. 102 is a much more reasonable boundary.

I did note - I realize that the terms of reference allow a greater variance in population than has historically been the case, but I did notice that without any mention or discussion within the proposed report, Guysborough-Eastern Shore-Tracadie suddenly becomes a riding with 7,700 people in it, which is only a .58 proportion. This is without having the clear and explicit justification for a protected status on a linguistic or racial basis - it is simply, I think, because it's big. I would suggest that a greater degree of justification should reasonably be required.

I understand it's not outside the terms of reference, but to take such a stance, which effectively gives voters in that riding twice the effective voting power as voters in a standard riding, requires more exceptional justification than has been provided - it's tough for me to see that - when it has the direct effect of making the Eastern Shore riding a lot larger, fundamentally weakening the votes of those people, which is also a large rural, challenging-to-represent riding.

It's tough to understand how the voters of Guysborough-Eastern Shore-Tracadie were so under-served with relation to their neighbours in the Eastern Shore riding that they now are desperately in need of having that additional voting weight. Especially when we look at things like the Hants and Kings County ridings - when the five of them are added together, there is an entire missing seat because every single one of the three ridings in Kings County and the two ridings in Hants County are between 10 per cent and 20 per cent over the standard amount. This means a certain area of the province is now effectively one entire member short.

Of course, the most contentious and challenging set of issues, other than my suggestions of dabbling at the margins of a specific urban riding, are questions of representation and the Acadian ridings and how to appropriately serve the mandate that you have as a commission. One thing that occurred to me as I was trying to organize my thoughts on this was that the goal is surely to provide representation, not to give power. I don't think we are all sitting around saying, how can we give Acadians more power in this

province? That's not the mandate. That's not even on the agenda, and I'm not saying that there's a vote for that or against that. That's just not what's going on. However, if we create enough small ridings, we have the direct effect of saying, if you are a rural Acadian in Nova Scotia, you get two votes. If you're from Cheticamp, you get five. That somehow doesn't seem quite right. That's not the goal, and therefore, we need to remember that we are here for representation, and we shouldn't have the unintended effect, unless there's truly no other way, of significantly overpowering one specific group, particularly one that's defined on ethnic or linguistic grounds.

In a perfect world, we might have fractional MLAs, a situation where someone from Cheticamp could absolutely be guaranteed that there would be a representative from them, but when they got to the House, because of course they only had 2,000 voters, they might get a fraction of a vote, and we could all have voting fractions assigned based on our population or something like that. But that's not what we have. That's getting back, basically, to my proportional representation, and we're not going to have that.

The challenge that I would see if we were to create a dedicated 2,500-person constituency is that we have effectively lowered the threshold for what communities must be represented. When it was noted in the report that there are 18,000 francophone Nova Scotians, that is clearly more than one riding. It is clearly the case that francophone Nova Scotians should absolutely expect to be able to see and communicate with and work with someone who is providing representation for them in the House of Assembly in their language. A quota is about 12,000 or 15,000. They have more than that. There should be representation for them. The idea that 6,000 or 7,000 people are now a community that is important enough to be represented - Clare has 6,500, Argyle has 6,000, Richmond has 7,500, and Preston has 10,000. These communities have been determined to be important enough that they deserve representation, and they would be unrepresented if they did not have someone designated for them. If we were to put Cheticamp into that same category, we would say that there's a community of 2,500 who now, if they aren't represented, are too important to go unrepresented.

If we do that, we need to recognize that there are 4,500 first-language Chinese speakers in the Halifax core area. I don't think we're going to designate two additional seats for the Chinese-language population of Halifax. There's 4,300, which also rounds to two seats for Arabic first-language speakers - not just first-language speakers but people who speak Arabic at home and people who speak Chinese at home. I think what we have effectively done if we put the threshold at 2,500 is say communities of 2,500 people that are otherwise unrepresented need to be represented. I'm not sure that there's a step that we're willing to take because there's a whole heck of a lot more 2,500-person communities in this province that are otherwise unrepresented than there are 6,000- or 7,000-person communities. I think you can point to Richmond, to Clare, to Argyle. There isn't a long list when you include those.

[7:30 p.m.]

That is basically the endpoint of my presentation. I really appreciated the flexibility and creativity that I saw present in the November report: ideas of at-large members, the possibility of dual voter lists. I don't believe we even need to maintain dual voter lists. It's absolutely the case when we still had school boards, for example, but I could simply walk up to the booth and say, "I'm voting in the French election" or "I'm voting in the English election." I don't think it would be an incredibly onerous proposition for Elections Nova Scotia to additionally run at-large seats. It has certainly been done in other polities. We were discussing before the meeting the fact that it has been done in New Zealand quite successfully.

I believe this answers the question of which communities need to be represented, and it doesn't say that it's only those ones that can find themselves a specific little enclave that happens to be of the right size and shape, and even perhaps not otherwise large enough. It says, we are going to find a way to represent those who need to be represented.

Although I understand that there are logistical challenges and conceptual challenges that would need to take place, I really think it's wonderful that the commission has been considering those, even though it might be a departure for some people in Nova Scotia. I think it's a great thing you're doing. I hope that you have the opportunity to more fully develop those options.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I just want to respond. With respect to the specific suggestions for Halifax Needham, as you know, we didn't change any of those boundaries. It might be - if you're willing to have a look at the map after we've finished, and perhaps point to it for one of us so that we can have a look at that when we meet tomorrow, for example.

With respect to Guysborough, I was on the 2012 commission as the vice-chairman. When we were forced to come in and not continue the protection of those four seats, we just took a piece of the Eastern Shore and shoved it into Guysborough.

MR. ASHLEY MORTON: And a piece of Antigonish. That's where Tracadie came from as well, wasn't it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, it did. We've had representation from the Eastern Shore. We actually have made a potential change to Guysborough as a result of today's meeting, but the logic for having it at the level that it has been - that it is in the report - is based on geography. It's the largest geographic riding, based on the data we have. So, that's the reason for that. Our second term of reference talks about geography.

If we come back to the so-called protected ridings - the Acadian community would argue they're a founding member, 1604, so they should be treated a little differently to, say,

Chinese or the examples you've just given. But if I go back to the 1992 report, which produced the so-called protected ridings, they said - I can just quote from this - "It will encourage, but not guarantee, Acadian representatives in the Nova Scotia House of Assembly." It says that these are not designated Acadian seats.

In that sense, if I think of the seat for Preston, which was actually created at that time, again, it was one that would encourage or perhaps facilitate an African Nova Scotian in the House of Assembly. In that particular instance, the data they had at that time was that that seat would have a concentration of about 25 to 35 per cent Black population of the total constituency.

So, these are not designated seats as such. I just wanted to give you that context.

MR. ASHLEY MORTON: Great, in order - Guysborough-Eastern Shore-Tracadie, I do think it's worth noting that the size, while it is striking for Nova Scotia, is in fact still very small in the context of many other provinces. Saskatchewan isn't so overwhelmingly larger than us. They're about 15 per cent larger than us by population, I think, and have several ridings that are larger than the entire province of Nova Scotia. So, the question about size and representation, and to what degree that is enough of an argument to over-weight the votes there, doesn't hold with me. But I understand that there are other priorities in play.

The other aspect of founding communities - I would also point out that, while I understand that they are not designated Acadian ridings, it is understood that the reason why they are created and they are smaller is because of the nature of the founding communities and so on.

To a large degree, the other founding community that is in discussion regularly on this is the African Nova Scotian community. I would point out that if 2,600 people in northwestern Cape Breton is large enough to justify a specific riding that is framed around their geography, even if it's not specifically designated, then the twin communities of Mulgrave Park and Uniacke Square in the north end of Halifax could have a much tighter boundary drawn around them, creating a riding that has a much smaller and tighter and higher fraction African Nova Scotians and that would probably do a good job in serving African Nova Scotians on many of the same justifications that are done. Again, it would not include only African Nova Scotians, but it would have the effect of creating a greater likelihood of receiving African Nova Scotian representation within the House of Assembly without violating many of the other principles that are held within the House of Assembly Act.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Of course, we have looked at members at large. I think you know that back in 1992, an additional seat was provided for First Nations. That seat has not been taken up, but there is that seat. That would be a member at large, as it were, for the Mi'kmaq community across the whole of Nova Scotia. The challenge we have had on both

non-contiguous ridings as well as members at large is that there has not been a lot of support for those concepts.

Anyway, thank you very much indeed. Perhaps if you can stick around until we finish - I don't know which map it is, but we'll find it. We have some markers.

Who would like to speak next? Please come forward.

MR. MATTHEW DUFFY: Good evening. My name is Matthew Duffy. I am a resident of McGraths Cove, which is technically in Chester-St. Margaret's. However, it's along the Prospect Road and also listed as a Prospect community, which has a website and several other aspects to that.

The reason why I came to speak on this night is because I feel that there's a group of communities that are listed as Prospect communities that have actually been separated from the Timberlea-Prospect riding. They have been placed in Chester-St. Margaret's. The big problems with that are that it's a large area, we're on the tail end of it, and we always have consistent issues with communication with our MLAs.

We don't receive anything. I live a half-hour outside of Halifax, and I don't even have access to high-speed Internet, which is a sad thing to say, especially in this day and age. I know there are many areas of this province that don't have high-speed Internet, but I'm technically part of HRM.

On many occasions, I actually have to use the Timberlea-Prospect MLA to get anything accomplished in terms of issues within my community, more specifically snow clearing, roadway issues, and things like that. That leads back to the communication issue that we consistently have with the Chester-St. Margaret's MLA.

There's not a huge difference in elector count between those two ridings. Timberlea-Prospect is 15,921, and Chester-St. Margaret's is 15,223, which is just under 700 in the difference. The Timberlea-Prospect riding ends - there's a bridge that connects the communities of Shad Bay to Bayside. That bridge is the dividing line, actually going out a distance into the water. Basically, Chester-St. Margaret's either ends or begins at Yanch Road in Bayside and ends at Pine Drive in Martins River, which is at the opposite end of Chester-St. Margaret's.

I'm speaking on behalf of myself and also a group of community members that I have discussed this issue with, and they have asked if I could speak on their behalf that the boundary be moved to the end of the Prospect Road, which is actually where Peggy's Cove is. The Prospect Road becomes the Peggy's Cove Road right where the community of Peggy's Cove is. This would include the communities of Blind Bay, Big Lake, McGraths Cove, East Dover, and West Dover. Those are all Prospect communities on the Prospect Road.

This has caused a lot of confusion for a lot of residents over the years. There's a big separation in community identity and overall frustration, which again ties back to the issues at hand with the MLAs past and present in Chester-St. Margaret's.

I feel very strongly about this issue. I reside in Prospect. I do my business in Prospect. I patronize the businesses of Prospect. I travel the Prospect Road to get to Halifax every day. Currently, my MLA's office is - I have never been to it because it's somewhere in Chester-St. Margaret's, where I don't frequent ever. It's a very difficult task to actually go and see him when it's off the beaten path that you would normally travel, which I'm sure you can all attest to.

Growing up in Prospect, I have always been a part of that community. I sit on the board of directors for the Terence Bay Community Hall, which is in Prospect. I'm always juggling between these two districts - who do I contact for this? Who do I contact for that? That type of thing. It gets very tedious at times. With those communities being separated from the Chester-St. Margaret's and Timberlea-Prospect split-up there, it's a very confusing thing for a lot of residents.

I just found out about this on Thursday. I did send an email around this issue, I believe in early December, which I didn't receive any acknowledgement back from. I also emailed about tonight, which I didn't get a response to. I just want to make sure before I leave that I have the correct email address because I would like to send my notes as well via email because, like the gentleman before me had mentioned, you're not going to read my writing.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We apologize for that.

MR. MATTHEW DUFFY: That's all right. I'm glad I saw that it had come up.

It wouldn't be a huge change in the difference. Like where you had asked him if he could stick around to show on the map, I would be more than happy to do that as well.

I strongly hope you consider this change. It's more than inconvenient for those residents, especially where you live along the Prospect Road in a Prospect community but you're not part of the Timberlea-Prospect riding. Anything that has to do with that community, you don't really have much of a say in, because it's technically, according to that boundary, not your community.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. If you can stick around, we can have a look at that.

At the same time, we did not change the boundaries for Timberlea-Prospect or Chester-St. Margaret's from what they are right now. We didn't want to make changes for the sake of making changes unless there's a rationale. You have given us a rationale to look

at it. We will be meeting as a commission tomorrow, so we can have a chance to look if you can do that. Thank you.

If Ashley Morton can come back, one of our commissioners would like to ask you a question. Peter?

DR. PETER M. BUTLER: Mr. Morton, I was quite interested in your argument, but I would like to know whether you continue to feel that the only reasonable basis upon which we could make changes to the boundaries was proportions of people who live there. There is another dimension which we have been asked to think about, and we often acted in that spirit, and that is communities of interest.

My question to you is going to be, which is more important?

MR. ASHLEY MORTON: I think that sometimes it can be easy to confuse electoral districts with communities of interest, once we have created electoral districts and then we assume that the previous people got it right and that they have defined communities of interest and that therefore we become loath to change them. They create an inertia of their own. As the gentleman who spoke after me identifies, it's not always the case. In fact, no one is claiming that they got it right always before, but it has an inertia that tends to sustain itself.

[7:45 p.m.]

I do agree that communities of interest are important to keep together, and I would certainly rather reside in a riding that was slightly under-represented but had a rational basis on which my MLA would be chosen where my neighbours and other people, for example, went to my daughter's school - not the other people who go to my daughter's school. They're not old enough to vote. They're seven. But we're voting together and for issues we care about.

I think that's much less the case particularly in a suburban area and broadly speaking on the Halifax peninsula. I don't want to say - I think if you need to shift some lines one way or the other, you're doing much less of a disservice than you are if you suddenly drew a line down the middle of Bridgewater and said, some of you go with Lunenburg and some of you go with Queens-Shelburne. That would be a much more obvious disservice than some of what you can do in an urban setting which allows a little bit more flexibility within it. There are many more people who commute down the same chunk of Hammonds Plains Road or whatever. If you need to move things two blocks - in an urban setting, by moving two blocks, you may be able to get 500 people. Then I think that's a wise thing to do because overall representation is also a deep principle. I don't think you can stack one ahead of the other or behind the other necessarily.

But I think a 1.5 to 1 ratio - a 50 per cent greater ratio - in a neighbouring riding is probably enough to start questioning whether there is an entire community of interest that you might be able to move into the next riding.

MR. PETER M. BUTLER: I never did think until I got involved in this that that was a serious thing to bear in mind, but as we have proceeded and travelled around the province, I realized that this is very important to people. Last night we spent a great deal of time talking to people in Hants East, and the discussion seemed to centre around a school. Obviously, that's an indicator of a community of interest.

MR. ASHLEY MORTON: I think one of the most valuable things that you might be able to do as secondary pieces of information would be to grab the catchment area maps for the Halifax regional school district. Those are designed by things - parents have advocated for them, and school busing routes have been created around them, and these sorts of things. Even if they may not always have been communities of interest, they are now.

MR. PETER M. BUTLER: We're seeing that a great deal, to an extent which I never knew. I know it exists in Halifax because in the area where I live, people were really disgusted when they lost a chunk, where I happen to live, from being moved to the next northern riding. That matters, but it surely matters in terms of identities of communities. We must keep that in our minds when we make these small changes, and we have tried.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. Who would like to speak next? Please.

MR. ALEX HOLMES: Hello, my name is Alex Holmes. I'm from the community of Sackville-Cobequid and also Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank.

I'm here to speak about the boundary change that is in basically the other three-plus proposals beyond the first one that keeps everything the same, specifically the main boundary change at the Lakeview community. I'm here to speak basically first to the question centred around the thinking behind this change and then a follow-up once I hear that, just some context around my question about why that's happening.

I'm curious, based on reading the terms of reference around geography, population, and communities of interest, why the change in Lakeview, taking two ridings that are not significantly over or under the threshold and changing them, specifically taking a community from a lower-population riding in Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank to Sackville-Cobequid.

There's also, I believe, a clerical error in the report in that the only change to Sackville-Cobequid is adding that community. It seems to have decreased the population of Sackville-Cobequid with that addition. That's worrisome to me because it does

significantly add - not significantly, it's a few hundred electors - to the calculation for Sackville-Cobequid. I don't think the change is necessary.

So, going to the question, what was the rationale behind adding Lakeview to the Sackville-Cobequid community?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We had a lot of discussion at the BMO Centre. I think there must have been 25 people from Lakeview making their views known. We spent time this morning on that particular issue. When we looked at the particular map, the rationale was a question of how you access it. I don't know that area very well, but it was all to do with the fact that we had to go under an underpass to move up to the constituency that Lakeview was in before. It was purely what we thought was a convenience factor.

One lady said, I think the night before last, you just sort of chopped it off. There was a logic for it. I can assure you it was not done - but we have come back and had a look at it today. I can't say what's going to happen, but we probably spent 20 minutes or 30 minutes just on that particular issue. We understand your concerns.

Do you want to go on then to the more macro issues?

MR. ALEX HOLMES: Yes, I just wanted to add to my thoughts and my belief that Lakeview should stay in the Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank EDA. Going right off the top, a community of interest is the Lakeview-Windsor Junction-Fall River community association. I have lived in the area for most of my life in both of the ridings, having played baseball with the LWF and other organizations.

Going to the access as well, I'm quite familiar with the area, having grown up in it. That is a case of the Stone Mount area and Sackville growing into Lakeview more than anything else. I think it just takes a nice drive through the Lakeview-Windsor Junction area to realize that that community is more closely knit than the neighbouring wealthier area of the Stone Mount subdivision. That's in the Sackville-Cobequid area.

I understand the drawing. I have only been very active in the area, volunteer-wise, for the last few years, but talking to family and friends and other people in the area, this change has happened a few times in previous re-drawings, or at least been discussed. I know there's that train track that creates a nice line along that border. I can see where that can come from. But I firmly believe that the Lakeview community is very much tied to the Windsor Junction community, which is very much tied to the Fall River community.

I just want to highlight that, although it's only a few hundred electors, I don't see the rationale beyond more of an aesthetic change, specifically with concern to what the population change is to Sackville-Cobequid - which I assume is a clerical error, because it would add the population to that, and it would raise it closer to that amount where

Sackville-Cobequid would need a second look, by the metrics. I just wanted to add that piece.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We thought we were doing a favour, and clearly we weren't. We have looked at it closely this morning. We learned the initials LWF - Lakeview, Windsor Junction, and Fall River. All I can say is that we looked at it very carefully today.

MR. ALEX HOLMES: Okay, thank you very much for your time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would anybody else like to come forward and speak, please? Please come forward.

MS. MELINDA DAYE: Good evening. My name is Melinda Daye. I live in what I guess we would call Halifax Needham, North End Halifax. I live on Maynard Street. I'm a long-time resident of Maynard Street, having lived on Creighton as well, and I grew up on Creighton Street. I'm a retired educator, a retired teacher-principal, a former chair of the Halifax Regional School Board, and one who has worked very closely with the church and community, and also one of the former MLA candidates for Halifax Needham.

I say all that not to say, oh, look at me, who I am, but as someone who has indeed been involved to a great extent in the best interests of our people, of all people, and of Nova Scotian communities, especially education. Tonight, I'm here to ask a few questions. I want to get some clarity. I want to be certain in terms of what I think I might understand, and then of course to offer some suggestions in terms of what I'm thinking.

Some years ago, the government struck what they called, and we called, the tripartite committee. That was a committee that consisted of the Black Educators Association - the government asked us to do this, the minister - the Council on African Canadian Education, and the African Canadian Services Division. We went across this province, much as - I heard the gentleman say earlier you have been across this province. I can well appreciate what you have been doing, because we had to do that. We took to the cars and vans and hotel rooms and motel rooms. It was cold and chilly, just like tonight and other nights and whatever. We did just that to get across the province, to get a feel.

We called them table talks, to get around and really just listen to people. What is it that they're saying? What is it that they're feeling? Are they feeling any sense of hope? Is there any representation? Are we getting anywhere?

This was in 2011. What we heard from them, and what we see here today, is some movement, but the reason why we're here is because there's only some movement. We need to get a little more movement. We need to know, do we matter here in Nova Scotia? Do you know that we're here?

You see, Nova Scotia, I often say, has something that no other province in Canada has. We can put our hands up and wave our hands and wave our flags and wave everything we possibly can because we have come a long way. We haven't arrived. We're not there yet. But the things that we have put in place in and for and along with our indigenous Black community - I have to speak for the indigenous Black community. This province has the largest indigenous Black community - across this province. We don't have the largest number of Black persons in Canada, but we have the largest number of Black communities in Canada in this province. That's something we need to hold dear to. We need to understand that, that we have been here. We have t-shirts out and caps, I guess, that a lot of us would wear, that say we've been here, which is a good thing.

So, what we want to do tonight, and what I want to understand is, you have four options here, the four boundaries. There are two in particular - and we're talking about protected seats - that I'm looking at and I want to draw our attention to. The first one I want to talk to and ask questions about is drawing boundaries so that there would be 55 districts, including the four formerly protected seats of Argyle, Clare, Preston, and Richmond. Then the other one is very similar, but it's drawing boundaries for 56 districts, including the four formerly protected seats and a new one for the district of Chéticamp.

Mr. Chairman, can you help me understand what that really is saying in English?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We were tasked with drawing boundaries for 51 seats and one other. Whereas in the last Electoral Boundaries Commission we could not go beyond 52, this gave us the capacity to in fact go beyond the 51, because there's no number of seats mentioned.

In fact, if you go back to the Keefe commission, which was struck and reported after the Court of Appeal decision on effective representation, it talks about effective representation being achieved by increasing the number of seats. So, we went out in September with some draft boundaries, and we talked about 55, because if we are going to restore the formerly protected ridings - I don't particularly like the term "protected." None of us do, actually.

[8:00 p.m.]

MS. MELINDA DAYE: Yes, I was going to speak to that too.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's something we have inherited.

We would have to increase the number of seats, unless we're going to keep Argyle-Clare and then take away by expanding the seats of Queens, Lunenburg, and so on. At the same time, we're challenged with people wanting more seats in HRM, in metro. How do you do that with 51? It's a real challenge.

We came out with draft boundaries, which talked about 55, but then the argument was, what about other Acadian populations? As you know, after the expulsion, when the Acadians came back, they were dispersed across the province. So, what are we going to do about Chéticamp?

Our terms of reference allow us to have non-contiguous ridings, so should we put Chéticamp in with Richmond, non-contiguous? Should we in fact put Clare and Argyle together, non-contiguous? That's where we're coming from. But we didn't get much support for non-contiguous ridings.

We also looked at the issue of members at large. Should we have something like the CSAP school board, have a member at large for the whole of the Acadian population? Likewise, should we do that for the African Nova Scotians?

These are some of the issues that we have been looking at. That's where the 55 came from.

Then the 56, either by having 55 electoral districts but 56 seats - the dual member for Inverness - and then the 56 districts with 56 members was then, could we conceive of an exceptional district for Chéticamp. Right now, it would be about 2,500. We were up in Chéticamp on Saturday, and there were some suggestions that if we're going to do that, we should actually go further down the Margaree Valley. Things are still very fluid.

That's the genesis for the 55-56.

MS. MELINDA DAYE: Thank you very much for that. When you went across the province, what did you notice, especially when you got down in the Tracadie-Monastery area? Did you get in there? You didn't get to Tracadie?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We did Antigonish and areas. My vice-chair chaired that particular meeting.

What we're finding, no surprise, is that people take their boundaries very seriously in the rural areas. They're seen as more than just a line on a map. They are seen, as Dr. Butler mentioned, in terms of communities, schools, churches, shopping centres. It's felt very much in the heart.

MS. MELINDA DAYE: Oh, good. You saw that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We had a lot of people, say, from Lakeview on Monday night, a lot of people from Hants East. Again, the argument was on the corridor, that we had split a community because we're using the road as the boundary. This is what we're hearing.

In metro, you can see by the number of people here tonight that there's not the same concern, not the same interest.

MS. MELINDA DAYE: I know the concern is there, but people just don't come out - "Oh, you're going. Good, bring it back to me. Find out."

Anyhow, you can't speak to all that. The concern is there, but the attendance is what you need, and the voice is what you're trying to get.

I haven't taught down there. I taught across Halifax and Dartmouth, and then I spent some time and went to the Strait board. Because I have relatives down there, I stayed with them. My heart goes out to the rural communities, especially when I got a chance to live amongst them. It's so important that they get the representation - fair, equal and just representation - and representation of people who know me, look like me, speak to me, for me, and on behalf of me. That kind of stuff is important.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Our first term of reference refers to the right to effective representation but also elector parity. That's why the title of our interim report is *Striking a Balance*. Again, if we come back to the Keefe commission. It was tasked with looking at proposals on effective representation for Acadians and African Nova Scotians.

MS. MELINDA DAYE: Some years ago - in my notes here, it was in 1992 - the province put together what they call these exceptional ridings. That was in 1992. Then in 2012, the Dexter Government took it away and did not enforce that any longer. There were four ridings. Dexter said the boundaries had to be changed because the number of residents did not fall within the range of plus and minus

MR. CHAIRMAN: It was voter parity.

MS. MELINDA DAYE: Yes, there was a lot of that. He took aim at the province's four so-called exceptional ridings. Are you finding any of that? Does that become problematic? Does that come to your attention as members of the commission?

MR. CHAIRMAN: What we have found, for example, when we were down on the South Shore in September, we were quoted data with respect to voter turnout in the last election vis-à-vis the previous election. How much of that you could put down to change of boundaries - there's some sort of hearsay evidence that that might be the case.

On Saturday in Cheticamp, the same argument was put forward, that people felt that, in fact, the change of boundary was just one more nail in the coffin with respect to a rural community. They had lost this. They had lost that. This was just another sign of lack of interest, if you like, from the centre.

If you go online, you can read the transcripts from our meetings in September - they're all there - and you'll get that sense. It will be a few weeks before the current transcripts are available.

MS. MELINDA DAYE: I'm going to close my comments and hopefully get to speak to some of you individually afterwards.

I want especially to speak from the heart. When you look at the House of Assembly, when you see representation in our province, we have to recognize that there is a large group of people who are not represented and who are not feeling that their voices are being heard in the House.

As I started off, I believe wholeheartedly, with every inch of my being, that we need to look at our indigenous population and our Black communities. We have to look at those communities. We have to respect them. We have to honour them. We have to see that those people's voices mean something, that they carry something.

In the House of Assembly we have had Yvonne Atwell, and we have had Wayne Adams. Is that it? That's it, is it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: You have Tony Ince right now.

MS. MELINDA DAYE: We have Tony, yes. I was getting ready to say that. Is that it? We have Tony. It's very difficult the way it is.

We have a commission here that's working at something here. We have to make a difference here because we want folks to understand that I can have fair chance, that there's equity in here in terms of when I do run and where I run, that there's a great opportunity that I could very well be successful in that. It's hard to get in the door, it's hard to remain in the door, and it's hard to move on up the ladder. Those kinds of things need to change. We need to move in a different manner.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The so-called protected ridings were not designated per se.

MS. MELINDA DAYE: No, they're not. We need to look at that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: They're not guaranteed, but what they do is, they give the opportunity. I don't want to pass the buck by saying it's up to the political Parties, but really it is. First of all, you have to want to run, irrespective of which Party it is, to serve the province, and not everybody wants to do that.

Secondly, unless you're going to run as an independent, you have to align yourself with a Party. That then depends on what the Party structure looks like, how diverse the Party executive is, and so on. I don't need to tell you, but that's the case.

MS. MELINDA DAYE: I appreciate that. The gentleman a few speakers ahead of me was talking about the downtown area - Creighton and Maynard - and he mentioned Mulgrave Park and Uniacke Square. Yes, they do have a large population of Black persons who live there - Creighton Street, Mulgrave Park, Uniacke Square, Brunswick Street.

Thank you very much for this opportunity. I wanted to ask a few questions. I wanted to get some clarity. I just wanted to get our commission members to continue to think about these things. I know you are, but just delve a little deeper in terms of where we are and how well we're doing.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If you have any more questions, you can contact us by email. Hopefully we'll respond this time.

The vice-Chairman has a question.

MS. ANGELA SIMMONDS: I'm just curious because last night we were in the community, and there was some conversation about members at large. With your background, experience, and knowledge, I'm just wondering what your feelings are about or some comments that you can give about that.

One of the things that I would say here, from my lived experience and being a brown-skinned African Nova Scotian woman, is that people try to say that Mulgrave Park, Gottingen Street, North Preston, East Preston, Beechville, and Lucasville are all the same. One thing that is very distinct is that our communities are very different, so I struggle with how a member at large would fit knowing that this is an issue amongst our people. I'm just wondering how you feel about that, some of the comments you have about that.

MS. MELINDA DAYE: It would be difficult to an extent, Angela. Like you say, we are also a very distinct people. We have our communities. I was telling somebody tonight that we can tell by your last name who you are and where your people are from.

When it comes to a member at large, I was at a couple of tables there, and we were sitting around chewing the fat about different things. I ran for MLA. I would like to see us run for a particular MLA and run for a particular Party. I also understand, though, where the member at large would come in. It would take a very - what is the word I want? - special, distinct, knowledgeable person.

When you think about it, the Premier just appointed somebody to this position because somebody just left the Cabinet. His name just left my brain. The federal minister who is about to leave.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Scott Brison.

MS. MELINDA DAYE: Right, Scott.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So, we're talking about federal.

MS. MELINDA DAYE: Then the Prime Minister appointed somebody, and that somebody is responsible for that. How could she possibly? How could he possibly? Are they able to? Well, it's going to take a lot of road trips to meet that

[8:15 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: This is Bernadette Jordan, with respect to rural across the whole of Canada. Yes.

MS. MELINDA DAYE: Yes, to respect the rural communities, the city

MR. CHAIRMAN: She's the member at large for

MS. MELINDA DAYE: You're asking, when it comes to rural communities, when it comes to Halifax-Dartmouth, would you really be able to effectively do that? Trial and error, I guess. Do you know what I'm saying, Angela? A little bit of trial and error, but is it what we would really want, we would put our hand up and say, yes, give us that?

MS. ANGELA SIMMONDS: I think historically we often put our hand up first because we want it because we never had it. My fear is that this is what a community and our people think we want, but we just want to be sure that there's not a power imbalance and that the member at large has the same power, the same authority, as an MLA. Those are all of the things

MS. MELINDA DAYE: That's what we would have to really make certain of. You're an MLA. You happen to be a member at large.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much indeed.

Who would like to speak next? Anybody from the floor? Please.

MS. LISA ROBERTS: Hi, I'm Lisa Roberts. I am the MLA for Halifax Needham, and I feel quite lucky to have two such engaged citizens of Halifax Needham speaking today.

I just wanted to particularly voice my appreciation for Ashley Morton's comments about the boundary. The boundary was changed in Halifax Needham - I'm not sure exactly when, if it was in 2012 or if it was previous to that - from Windsor Street to Robie Street. I would say that it's something that comes up often in conversation and in constituency work, that people who are living in the Windsor Park area of my district express surprise that they are not part of Halifax Chebucto. They remember being part of Halifax Chebucto.

I think it's particularly relevant, given the elimination of school boards, that that neighbourhood is part of Halifax Needham, because most of the school catchment for St. Catherine's school is outside of Halifax Needham. It's a relatively small corner of that school catchment area that is in Halifax Needham, but the children who go to that school, by and large, come from either Halifax Chebucto or Fairview-Clayton Park and cross Connaught.

I'm in a situation now as an MLA where I have four elementary schools in my district, in addition to having many children who are living in Halifax Needham actually attending Oxford, which is in Halifax Chebucto. In terms of engaging with St. Catherine's school, very few of those families live in Halifax Needham. The majority would not live in my district, but the school is in my district.

I consider it an absolute privilege to represent people anywhere, and I will do my best, but from the feedback I have had from residents, I do think that many of the residents in that portion of the district would feel more attached to other residents either of Halifax Chebucto or in some cases Fairview-Clayton Park, but particularly Halifax Chebucto.

Certainly many, many residents between Windsor and Robie Streets, extending from Young Street to more or less the Halifax Commons, would feel more attached to the rest of Halifax Needham. At the far North End, you're divided not just by Windsor Park and military lands but also by the whole area of Kempt Road, which is largely industrial and sort of impassable. There's very little connection between the far north end of the district. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. We'll have a look at the map later.

Rob, if you want to come forward.

MR. ROB BATHERSON: Good evening, commissioners. My name is Rob Batherson. I'm a resident of Halifax Armdale. In the last provincial general election, I was a candidate in the electoral district of Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

I also grew up in Lower Sackville, so I was going to speak to the Lakeview issue, having, in a previous life, experienced that debate, but I understand you have already heard about that from engaged citizens in Lakeview. I'm glad to see that they are still as engaged as they were in the 2001-02 process. Alex Holmes covered that off, so I will dispense with that aspect.

Ashley Morton provided good disclosure in terms of his speaking for himself. I come here speaking just with my own views and my own perspectives.

I didn't have a detailed, prepared, well-researched position paper. I tried that in 2011-12. I think as the Chair will recall, it was summarily unsuccessful, so I'm flying

rogue here with some general ideas for you as commissioners to consider, based on my experiences as a candidate and my experiences in different community ventures.

First off, to disclose, it's no secret that I do have a political affiliation, but to paraphrase from Will Rogers, I am not a member of an organized political Party; I am a Progressive Conservative. (Laughter) I'm sure that will come back to haunt me.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's on the record now.

MR. ROB BATHERSON: That's right. It's on the record now. This is what happens when I come without a script.

First off, I want to applaud the commission for, in the second round, having an opportunity for dialogue on the peninsula here in Halifax. Notwithstanding the lower turnout than what you have seen in other communities, it is extremely important that urban residents be provided with an opportunity to share their views, and I'm glad that the diversity of views picked up a bit as the evening went on. There were some really great submissions and questions from different people here in the community.

I also want to applaud the commission around communications, particularly in the second round of meetings. I know in the first phase there were some questions raised about the sharing of information, but I do want to put on the record that the current iteration of the website is extremely user-friendly. It's very easy to compare different scenarios, before and after, and to zoom in and see the communities that could be affected by the proposals. Thank you for that.

One of the interesting aspects of being a candidate in 2017 is that I ran in an electoral district which had the dubious distinction of the lowest voter turnout in the province - 39 per cent. My fellow candidates and I clearly did not engender a lot of enthusiasm for voters to come to the polls. After the election, I had an opportunity to sit down with a friend of mine who happens to be an MLA for another constituency for another political Party but represents an urban district. That voter turnout was not as low as in Halifax Citadel-Sable Island, but it was certainly lower than the provincial average.

One observation that that MLA made to me was that, with many electoral districts that have a large number of apartment buildings and even condo units, the voter information that was provided by Elections Nova Scotia was often inaccurate. I know this is outside of the terms of reference for the commission, but I think it bears mentioning, because the data on which you are making recommendations - I question the accuracy of that data.

For example, in many units, the voter information would suggest that there were seven residents in one particular unit, when in fact there were one or two. Layer that on over hundreds if not thousands of apartment and condo units in urban Halifax, and I would

question whether the numbers of eligible voters in our urban districts are in fact overstated. Again, I don't know for certain.

In terms of a solution, one thing that the Legislative Assembly may wish to consider - and I know this is outside of your scope - is bringing back mandatory province-wide enumeration to ensure - particularly underrepresented groups, who may not be getting their information in terms of filing their taxes, may be missed. Oftentimes, knocking on doors and apartment buildings and condo buildings, I would see the tags that came from Elections Nova Scotia for a first go-around and a second go-around, the way they were doing targeted enumerations.

I think having mandatory enumeration may improve the quality and the accuracy of the data. Just something for the commission, perhaps worth reflecting, with the recognition that it's outside of your terms of reference and scope.

So, let's get to the task at hand in terms of effective representation. Community of interest - extremely important. I like the ideas that Ashley Morton echoed by Lisa Roberts, the MLA for Halifax Needham, around ensuring that the catchment areas for our public schools be weighted in terms of the drawing of the constituencies. This is particularly important, as MLA Roberts noted, with the elimination of our regional school boards.

It bears repeating that, with the elimination of the elected school boards for the English public system, we have also eliminated guaranteed African Nova Scotian representation in terms of decision-making in our English-language public school system. So, I think making sure that the representation at the provincial level mirrors or more closely corresponds to school catchment areas is more important than ever.

In terms of the drawing of the boundaries themselves, I'll go through a few suggestions here around community of interest, starting with the boundary between Halifax Chebucto and Halifax Citadel-Sable Island. One of the things that I experience as a candidate still, even though the northern boundary between Chebucto and Citadel has gradually moved south over the last 20 years, is a lot of confusion by residents in that Quinpool Road to Coburg Road corridor.

Essentially, in Halifax, if they live below Quinpool Road, people view themselves as living in the south end, not the west end. I do applaud the fact that in the current 55- to 56-district scenario, that boundary at Coburg Road has moved back up to Jubilee. I think some consideration should be given to moving it to Quinpool Road, for a couple of reasons. One, to ensure that the Sir Charles Tupper Elementary and LeMarchant-St. Thomas Elementary School district is more closely in one provincial electoral district. Secondly, even though that change would likely put Halifax Citadel-Sable Island over the 1.25 variance, I think the reality is that in a very dense provincial electoral district, admittedly with low voter turnout, I don't think it would necessarily impede the ability of the MLA to serve that constituency.

Without drawing more arrows from 51 MLAs, certainly a case that many municipal councillors in the Halifax region have made is that they represent larger districts - 16 - than the provincial MLAs, and they don't have the same level of staff support as provincial MLAs would have.

Most municipal councillors would share one council support person. Perhaps it bears correcting, but my understanding is that every MLA is guaranteed funding allotment for one constituency assistant. Some have flexibility within their budget to hire casual employment, plus most are affiliated with a political Party that has caucus office research support. So, I think an MLA for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island certainly could carry the overage.

One thing to consider, though - when you look at community interest, I know the Quinpool Road commercial district right now would be entirely within Halifax Chebucto. One potential compromise to my solution might be - and we can go offline after the meeting - to perhaps move the southern boundary from Jubilee Road to Quinpool Road up until Connaught Avenue, and then keep both sides of the Quinpool Road district within Halifax Chebucto as a way to maintain that community of interest in the Quinpool Road business district.

[8:30 p.m.]

Those are some suggestions around Halifax Citadel-Sable Island. I did look at some of the boundary changes vis-à-vis Halifax Chebucto, Halifax Armdale, Fairview-Clayton Park in the community - the Windsor Park community and essentially the neighbourhood north of Bayers Road. In my mind, the community of interest there best resides with Halifax Chebucto. You look at the Westmount School district, moving more of the students and families into the same provincial constituency. You look at École St. Catherine's Elementary, which, as MLA Lisa Roberts noted, resides in her constituency, but most of the students tend to come from the Halifax Chebucto constituency.

As a western boundary, the rail cut is easy for people to understand. I know there is a proposal to move the eastern district to Halifax Armdale more onto the peninsula to the Halifax Shopping Centre area. I think that risks creating more confusion among residents. That Romans Avenue area, they've always - dating back to Alexa McDonough, the MLA for Halifax Chebucto has been their MLA. I don't see a pressing reason to move that neighbourhood in with Halifax Armdale. For a lot of the reasons already stated, it makes sense to keep that neighbourhood in Halifax Chebucto and move the entirety of the neighbourhood north of Bayers Road back into Halifax Chebucto, as it was prior to 2012.

Some comments that I made during the last round, in terms of the boundaries between Halifax Armdale and Halifax Atlantic: there might be some merit in terms of moving more of the Williams Lake subdivision in its entirety in with Halifax Armdale. Right now there is a split near Frog Pond, where I would argue there is greater community

of interest along that Purcells Cove Road area. We have a former alderman from the area, Rick Grant, who might be able to speak more closely to that.

Concurrently, if Armdale were to take on those extra residents, it may make more sense to move more of the Cowie Hill neighbourhood that currently resides in Halifax Armdale in with Halifax Atlantic. Again, many of the students who go to École Chebucto Heights would then feed into the J. L. Ilsley High School catchment area, high school wise. Again, Rick Grant, who knows that area better than I, could speak to that more usefully.

The Lakeview point has been covered. You've heard it. You don't need me to repeat it. Based on growing up in Sackville, I certainly agree with the point of view there, and hopefully you'll consider those views.

With that, I'll conclude my remarks. I'm happy to answer any questions now or after the session.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The challenge we have for moving the boundary for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island to Quinpool Road - right now on the 55-seat scenario, Halifax Citadel-Sable Island is 1.23. If you just look at what's going to happen to the Ben's Bakery site, that's going to develop quite markedly. If you then look on Robie Street, Spring Garden Road, Carlton Street, I think there are going to be three towers there. We're not obliged to look at future development, but we do know in different areas, from our own experience, what is happening.

With respect to Williams Lake, I used to live on Williams Lake, so I know that area quite well.

Rob, thank you for your comments. Are there any questions of Rob?

MR. ROB BATHERSON: If I could address that point around the Ben's Bakery development - that is why I did suggest as perhaps a compromise the maintenance of the Quinpool Road section.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Up to Connaught Avenue.

MR. ROB BATHERSON: Yes, to offset some potential growth. I think one factor to keep in mind, even with the new developments - my first-hand experience, and again, I do not have data to back this up - is that many of the residents moving into those buildings aren't necessarily eligible voters, by way of citizenship, by way of international students. Of course, as a former university president, you would be familiar with that. So, I'm not certain that the number of developments that are coming online would necessarily skew Halifax Citadel-Sable Island into a Bedford-style situation, where you would be at 1.5. I would reiterate that I think a 1.35 scenario for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island would still be tenable for an MLA to serve.

For what it's worth, again, this wouldn't necessarily be a recommendation for this round, but I think I would put it on the record that as a candidate in Halifax Citadel-Sable Island, there was not a canvass session that went by where I did not have a voter or multiple voters ask me about why Sable Island was in the name. I patiently explained, and I haven't had a chance - although we have talked, the former MLA who sponsored that change as a private member - to have some fun with him about that. I'm a pretty patient guy, but listening to the same question and the same jokes over and over again could be quite tiring. It did create some confusion. I recognize, particularly with the national park reserve status, that perhaps Sable Island deserves some recognition in that respect, but we have other national parks in Nova Scotia that aren't necessarily factored in the name. I just bring that, again, not necessarily for this round.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We actually had some input on that and discussed that even today, that given the creation as a national park, at some point, they're going to have to have, somewhere in Nova Scotia, an office or whatever it is, whether it is in Halifax Citadel or wherever it is. That might lead to Sable Island moving - not geographically, but to wherever that office is. You might want to store that up there.

Your point on the data: previous commissions have only used census data - of course, the census was 2016 - whereas the data we have is from Elections Nova Scotia. As I said, they take account of Canadian citizenship applications, the birth rate - somebody who is 16 is 18 two years later and is eligible to vote - and driver's licence records. There are a number of inputs of data.

When we first met as a commission, we had two days of meetings, and half a day was spent with Elections Nova Scotia just talking about the datasets. I have to say that they think they're pretty reliable. They're professionals, so we have to take that. I can assure you the mappers are very reliable. We have spent a lot of time with the mappers. They're quite encouraged that their data is as accurate and up-to-date as it could be. As I said, we're hoping to use either November or December data.

MR. ROB BATHERSON: I would not question the validity of the research methods that were applied in terms of the collection of statistical data. I would hate to use that old chestnut that often successful and unsuccessful politicians and those who are involved in the political process apply, but how many of those individuals have actually knocked on doors with the information before them?

In fairness, I'm relating an "Aha!" moment that was presented to me by an MLA. If they felt strongly about it, they could certainly share that, and they have chosen not to.

Notwithstanding the question around accuracy, I think in terms of effective representation - I don't think he would mind me quoting him, but I remember at the time in the mid-1990s, when it was proposed as a way of efficiency to eliminate mandatory enumeration, John Leefe, who was the MLA for Queens at the time, warned that there

would be an impact in terms of missing voters, particularly those who are on the margins of society. As a democracy, we have to be there for everyone, not just those who take the time to put their hands up and step up.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If I could just add to that: they also capture the data if someone goes to vote and they're not on the list, and then they are then allowed to vote. They capture those data as well.

Anyway, it's just a point that this is quite a difference from the previous commissions where they simply used census data. In our case, as I mentioned at the outset, we're looking at 30,000 more electors than we had back in 2012.

MR. ROB BATHERSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and commissioners. Again, don't give up on peninsular Halifax. Hopefully the submissions were of a quality, if not quantity.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anybody else who would like to come forward and speak?

MS. CLAUDIA CHENDER: Good evening. I did not come here intending to speak, but I just wanted to echo a couple of the points that I heard tonight. My name is Claudia Chender. I am the MLA for Dartmouth South.

I guess the two points that I wanted to amplify were, one, around the school districts. So, I will again speak first-hand as an MLA and say that with the disappearance of elected school boards, our offices have taken on almost a new mandate, because there is not an elected representative to call other than us. That's certainly by design, and we accept that with the grace with which we are required to accept it and we do our best.

However, it is often complicated by our boundaries. So, for many of us - for myself and I think my colleague for Halifax Needham - we will have some schools that are within our district, but whose students largely reside without, and vice versa. I have both of those cases in Dartmouth South. Bicentennial School has a very small number of students from Dartmouth South and a very large number of students from Dartmouth North.

At the same time, Portland Estates Elementary, which is not in my district - also Prince Arthur High School has a number, and Ellenvale Junior High School - all are not within my district, but I have several families who send their children there.

I would just make the point that if you haven't already done so, it would be really interesting to transpose these maps with the catchment districts of the regional education centres and just see what that yields. Often, I think, those do also point to those communities of interest in ways that political boundaries - which, as you will well appreciate, often get manipulated around numbers and this, that, and various directives - don't. So, that's No. 1.

No. 2, further to Mr. Batherson's remarks, and again recognizing that it's not within your mandate, I would echo that, having now, more times than I can count, gone out into my constituency with a list in hand from Elections Nova Scotia, there is not a time that it has been, I would say, more than 80 per cent accurate, and generally less so.

From the Elections Nova Scotia perspective, I think they have very reliable data for their purposes, which is to list the households. It happens, but it's rare, that there will not be a household that is listed. It happens. I mean, it happens not infrequently, but less frequently. What often happens is that people will move, but that move will not be recorded, so you will approach a single-family home and you'll have a list of nine people, and it will become quickly apparent that the people who live there and the people who lived there before that and the people who lived there before that are all listed under that single address.

So, I just wanted to add some credence, and again, from a first-hand perspective to say - and I hadn't thought of this, in fact, before Mr. Batherson brought it up - that there is that issue just to be aware of, particularly in places where there is high turnover or where there is a more transitory community.

The other piece that I'll just mention - because it's connected, and I think it's good to know when we are talking about representation and ensuring that people vote - is that people still think they need a voter card to vote. We all know that's not accurate, but people absolutely think that. So, as a candidate, if you go to a doorstep on election day, you will often be told, "But I didn't get my voting card." Then you are required to explain that, in fact, you don't need a voting card. It's really simple. You just show up at the polling station.

[8:45 p.m.]

Where I encounter this very frequently in my constituency is in Metro Regional Housing or Housing Nova Scotia properties, of which there are a great many in Dartmouth South. For instance, this year - previously every resident had been given a voting card. That did not happen this year. There were notices posted on the message boards in those buildings, which I would argue suppressed the turnout. I don't think it was intentional. I think it just happened.

That particular example is not directly germane to the work of the committee, but I mention it just so that you can keep that in the back of your minds. A number of speakers tonight have spoken about accurate representation and ensuring that we have the best mix and greatest diversity of MLAs. All those little things matter, and those communities of interest matter. I thank the commission for their work. Those are all my comments.

DR. PETER M. BUTLER: I just want to assure people who are here, who are feeling that there is a deliberate attempt to freeze them out of the discussions, that the

commission had nothing to do with this. It's just the hotel. The doors are open and we're freezing up here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anybody else? We've got a little bit of time left, but we want to perhaps spend some time on the maps.

Hearing not, thank you very much for coming this evening. Tomorrow night we are in Cole Harbour Place. Friday we're in Cornwallis for Digby and Annapolis, then we go up to Wolfville on Saturday, and on Monday night we're going to be in Bridgewater. That's an additional session we've put on. That should be in *The Chronicle Herald* on Saturday, along with Hants East, an additional session. We're going to Milford on the 29th.

Again, thank you very much. If you want to get in touch with us, please do so. I want to thank you for coming out. I want to thank our technical crew and Julia, who is our office administrator. We are on Facebook. Again, if you want to post messages to it, we'll try to react as fast as we can. Thank you very much.

[The commission adjourned at 8:48 p.m.]