

NOVA SCOTIA
ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES
COMMISSION

THURSDAY, JANUARY 17, 2019

Cole Harbour Place
Cole Harbour, Nova Scotia

PROVINCIAL ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION

Dr. Colin Dodds, Chairman
Ms. Carlotta Weymouth
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Mr. Paul Gaudet
Mr. Michael Baker
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WITNESSES

Mr. Michael Marshall
Ms. Bev Doman
Ms. Barbara Adams
Mr. David Hendsbee
Mr. Ronald Cooper
Ms. Lianne Comeau
Mr. Vishal Bhardwaj

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7:00 P.M.

**CHAIRMAN
Dr. Colin Dodds**

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, ladies and gentlemen, it's about seven minutes past 7:00 p.m. We have had what I call a diplomatic seven minutes for everyone to get to know each other and have a look at the maps. We would like to commence. There is coffee. Did they bring milk? Okay, thank you.

Good evening, and thank you for coming. My name is Colin Dodds, and I live in Halifax. I am chairman of the Nova Scotia Electoral Boundaries Commission and will chair this evening's public consultation. I have a little bit of a cold, so if it gets too extreme, I'll be handing it over to my vice-chair.

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

As many of you know, the commission was here in September, when we presented a draft set of boundaries. Before we commence, I would like each of the commission members to introduce themselves. We do have a full commission, bar one, so we have eight of the nine. One is teaching class, so he couldn't be with us this evening.

[The commission members introduced themselves.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Last September when we were here, I provided context for that meeting in terms of how the commission was established and the controversy surrounding the interim and final reports of the 2012 commission. I don't intend to do that this evening, but if there are particular questions on that, you can please come forward and ask, and I'll clarify.

The commission was tasked, in its terms of reference, with producing boundaries for a 51-seat House of Assembly and at least one other. Subsequent to our public consultations back in September, the commission did produce an interim report. We did have some copies, but I think they're all gone. We presented that and tabled that with the Attorney General on November 28th last year. That proposed four alternative options - the 51 plus three others.

In terms of the data that we're dealing with, I mentioned the last time that we have been using June 29, 2018, data, which gave us a total electorate for Nova Scotia of 743,500. Based on 51 seats, that would have an average electoral district number of 14,578.

In terms of the data that we intend to use going forward for the final report, we're hoping to be able to use December data. Failing that, we'll use November's. The data sets that we're using are dynamic. They are based on the 2016 census, but then they're updated for a series of other data sets that Elections Nova Scotia can use, which includes driver's licence information and new immigrants. I think you know that to be an elector, you have to be a Canadian citizen and have lived in your location for six months. There's a number of data points they can access. In that sense, as I said, the data is dynamic.

In summary, what we would like your input on tonight is, first of all, any of the specific boundaries that we have here. We have the three maps over there that show the 51-seat House, which is the current size of the House. We have made a few adjustments. Basically, the adjustments we made were really for Bedford. Bedford was at 1.48. You'll know that our limits are 0.25 either side of 1, unless there are exceptional circumstances to justify further deviations. Bedford was at 1.48, so we made some changes and took parts of Bedford out and put them into Hammonds Plains-Lucasville. We made a couple of other little changes, but for the most part, the boundaries that we have for our 51-seat House are pretty well what they are today.

We have boundaries for 55 seats with the restoration of the protected Acadian ridings of Argyle, Clare and Richmond. Then we have an option for a 55-seat House, which has two sitting members for Inverness. One would represent the Acadian population, and the other the geographic area of Inverness. Then the fourth one is a 56-seat House, which would have Chéticamp as an exceptional electoral district.

We're here this evening to receive your input as we did the last time. We did make some changes, which I hope you see has been reflected - we couldn't do everything, but we did make some changes from the September meeting. Those options - Option 1, 2, 3, and 4 - we would like your input on. We would also like your input with respect to the boundaries that we have here.

[7:15 p.m.]

At the same time last September, we asked for input with respect to members at large and non-contiguous ridings. Apart from one public consultation that we have had, we didn't get much support for either of those two options.

What we can do afterward is, if you have specific suggestions with respect to the maps, you could talk to us after the session is over. We have a marker, and you would be able to make some suggestions with respect to them.

We can now turn the floor over to you, ladies and gentlemen. We have one person who has indicated that they wish to speak already, so if that person could come forward. After that, I'll open it up to everyone else.

When you present, if you can give your name. I think you know that everything that is said on all these microphones is taped. It is then transcribed. There are occasions when the transcribers have difficulty knowing how to spell the names of each of the presenters, particularly if it's MacDonald - is it with a capital or small D or "Mc" or "Mac"? This time around, we are asking people, when they do present, to first of all give us their name and spell it, if you don't mind.

MR. MICHAEL MARSHALL: My name is Michael Marshall. I should say that I have been involved in all levels of electoral politics in Nova Scotia for the last 50 years this year, sometimes as just a canvasser, sometimes as a candidate, sometimes even as a provincial campaign leader. I have had quite a bit of experience, plus in other provinces and even in other countries. So that's what I'm bringing to the table.

I guess my issue, unfortunately, is with your terms of reference. I think you're tied up by the fact that the mood of the province has generally been that should have no more than about 50 seats, either side. I think that ties your hands, unfortunately. I think that what we really need is a large but inexpensive Legislature. I'm suggesting that that way we can ensure that not only is there "one person, one vote" in the Legislature but also that there's a better chance that small communities - be they even urban, or they could be religious, in the old days, but today, we don't say those words; it would be ethnic or geographical - can be represented with a much larger Assembly.

I'm thinking of suggesting we halve the salaries of our MLAs - they go back to being part-time MLAs - and we double the number of MLAs, and hence their ridings. I am old enough to remember when we used to have part-time MLAs, before we had constituency offices and staffers.

I would like to offer a mea culpa, because I was part of the movement that moved this province to the idea that a backbench MLA's main job was to be a kind of citizens' bureau for citizens who had difficulty with the provincial Public Service and getting some redress or something they were due. I was part of the NDP in the 1970s and very much part of Jeremy Akerman's thinking that even as candidates, we would seek out people with issues and try and get them redress as a politician.

I think some of you may have read his book, *What Have You Done for Me Lately?* He and I quickly became aware that there was something morally wrong with the fact that a citizen and a taxpayer, who has already earned their right to receive these goods or services or whatever redress, needs a powerful politician at their elbow to get it. We just came to think that that wasn't the right thing.

I'm not saying that we save money by getting rid of constituency offices and the staffer. Other countries have an idea called a citizens' bureau. It's probably called 311 or something here in HRM. It's a non-partisan body that guides citizens through the process, when it can be difficult. I do think there's a role for politicians in this. If one person has trouble, perhaps that's them, but if a number of people have trouble with filling in a document, it may be that there needs to be changes. An alert candidate or MLA should be checking in and saying, that's a political issue. I don't know the names of the people involved, but a number of people have found this document damn hard to fill out - perhaps how to clear up the estate of their deceased parents - and it's an issue. That's what I'm suggesting.

I'm concerned that not only do we have one person one vote, but that areas are better represented. I think one of the starts would be that we compel candidates and MLAs to be residents in the riding they wish to represent. In Canada, unlike other countries where that is very much a tradition, it's quite rare. God knows I have been involved with parachute candidates more than anyone in this room. I think I've put a couple hundred on the books, so I'm very guilty of it. But I do think, in seriousness, that they should be a resident of the riding they represent.

If they're part-time - and I'm addressing how that would be dealt with later - they would have a better sense, being employed in that community, of what the concerns of the community are. Right now, in a sense, they're a bit isolated - with \$90,000 plus expenses coming from the government - from the reality of their own local riding, which they may not even live in.

I do think, in this day and age, that we should look at what the municipalities do, which is regularly scheduled meetings. This tradition of packing it all in into Fall and Spring sessions dates from the days when roads were bad. It would perhaps be better if they met once a week every month of the year, a packed week maybe, particularly around budget time. Then most of the rest of the time, they are in their riding, and they might have a better sense of what their riding really thinks of the bill at hand.

As you're taking a flying visit home, you want to kiss the kids and talk to your wife. Then two people you meet on the street say nay to that bill. Well that may not, in fact, be an accurate assessment of how your entire riding feels about that bill and the amendments. That's what I would think we should look at.

You may say, what do we do with 100 MLAs in the House? My experience is that backbenchers are bound to look bad when they're compelled to sit in a Chamber and do nothing but catcall because they have to be there in case of a snap vote. I find MLAs are at their best when they're on a committee that is of interest to their riding. They're in a fishing riding, and it's the fisheries committee. At that point, I see the partisan gloves drop, and they all get involved from various Parties on this issue at hand, and you see a better side of the backbenchers. But when you go in as a visitor, and you sit above and look down there,

they're bored out of their skulls and making a lot of noise. Well no wonder.

I don't see why they just can't be involved in a committee, and when a vote comes up, it comes up on their phone, they do as their whip has whipped them to do, and they go right back to their committee. I don't see the need for the large numbers in the assembly Chamber itself doing nothing.

In the Parliament in Canberra, Australia - I don't know if you ever noticed it - but it's a small room that's basically carpeted. It's quite quiet, and they have got pretty raucous politics, but in fact, Parliament is not as raucous as ours. It's surprising given that they're all elbows when it comes to politics. The acoustics of that room and the fact that there is a relatively small number in that room produces a change in the politics of Australia, at least as seen on television.

I think I have said what I have. I did give you a written submission. I varied from that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I did receive it, yes, thank you.

In summary, apart from the structure of the House of Assembly, I think you're saying that, from our point of view, more seats would provide more effective representation.

MR. MICHAEL MARSHALL: I just look at a riding like Guysborough-Eastern Shore-Tracadie and Inverness. God knows how an MLA stays in touch - just the physical travelling. I have a political science degree, and it's well known that in places where it's possible to have more door-to-door canvassing, either by the Party or by the candidate, at the municipal level, the voter turnout comes up. Back in the old days, when rural councillors and aldermen were paid just a stipend and there were many of them and their districts were small, they had quite personal contact with the voters, and the voters seemed to like that.

I'm switching - I'm a candidate, I'm a canvasser. I can tell you, it's awfully hard to feel like politics is something fun when you feel compelled to knock on every door in the 30 days. It's a blur, and it's very superficial. You hope that people just take your literature and don't say anything to you, because your campaign manager is telling you that you have 600 doors to do that day, and you're barely on your feet because you're so tired of going up and down stairs and so on. It's no way to have that sort of personal contact between a voter and a candidate, from either side.

I think our MLAs would be happier if they represented smaller areas with less diversity of opposing views. It would be much more comfortable to know that you were only representing a riding that had a pulp mill in it, and you didn't have to deal with fishermen as well to get elected. I'm thinking of something like the Pictou ridings. It's

hellish. You have a riding big enough and you have two very conflictful groups, and you have to be in the middle.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You mentioned Guysborough, and I think you will see, if you don't know already, that most of the part of Eastern Shore that was put into Guysborough back in 2012 is being given back to the Eastern Shore. Guysborough-Eastern Shore-Tracadie was the largest geographic riding that we had, followed probably by Inverness and Victoria-The Lakes. Any MLA who has to represent a riding like that - it takes two and a half or three hours, if not longer, simply to drive from point to point.

MR. MICHAEL MARSHALL: I just don't think Halifax County's large number of districts with people paying a stipend was in any way too expensive compared to a smaller number today when they're paid large salaries and they have a staffer and an office and so on, this kind of a thing. When you do arithmetic - keeping away from political calculus, just go down to arithmetic - I don't think you find that we actually save money by having fewer MLAs, MPs, or aldermen. The first thing they say is, "I have an enlarged responsibility, so pay me more money or give me staff." I don't think we're better off financially, and I don't think, in terms of the voters, we're any better off.

I envy the city of Leeds in England, where they have about 100 councillors. Leeds is a couple million people, as you probably know, because that's the metropolitan area, but the city of Leeds is only about 100,000 people. Their councillors are very close to the ground. As a result, they're not paid very much. There are other places in the world where things are done differently. We don't have to be locked into 50 seats.

Anyway, somebody else probably wants to talk.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Does anybody have a question? Peter.

MR. PETER M. BUTLER: Mr. Marshall - you have a good name, by the way. We share a good name, I should say. I'm not from this province, so I don't think we're related.

From time to time, when we have gone around and the subject of numbers of seats comes up, closely following that will be the term that this creates "big government." I would just like to have your thoughts. What is "big government"?

MR. MICHAEL MARSHALL: I always think that in some way, if you were a Premier and you had 100 MLAs to deal with, what you're actually looking at is small government, because now you have 100 individual personalities to ride shotgun on. Believe me, that in a sense allows those other opinions, that grit under the saddle, to be present in public decisions. They're never all going to agree. You're going to have a better airing, arguing, fighting over something before you make the decision. It will not be superficial with that many people involved. It's not going to cost you any more money.

I think what we mean by “big government” is - ex-President Dodd can recall when a former president of Saint Mary’s, Ken Osmond, ran for mayor. I ran into him late in the campaign, and he had no idea how big HRM was when you tried to do retail politics - when you tried to go up and down streets. He was worn off his feet. It was just too big. Not only that, but you had to have about a quarter of a million dollars in your kitty to start out. That was big government.

In the days when Councillor Zellers was my councillor out in Chezzetcook, we had a problem when a dead seal that washed up. We called the province. We got the run-around. We called the feds and got a run-around. We called municipal government, and we got a run-around. Finally, my mother said, let’s call Councillor Zellers. He put a shovel in the back of his truck, and he went down and buried the damn thing, and that was it. That was good retail government. That was small government. That was a guy who knew what he could do because he was close to the area.

MR. PETER M. BUTLER: Is big government too many people working for government or too many people depending on government? I could go on and on because I’m a political sociologist.

MR. MICHAEL MARSHALL: It could be that there’s too many people working at one level of government. Before 1939, the biggest government in Canada, in terms of both revenue and employees, was the municipal. Later, it shifted to where things were done out of Ottawa instead of being done in your town.

There was a time when municipal government - and in some countries, local government is municipal government. In some countries, there is no state or province in between the national government and the local, so local government does a lot more things. Again, if we look outside of Canada or outside this province, we see other ways of doing things that seem to work.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The U.K. is an example of that.

MR. MICHAEL MARSHALL: Yes. There are other ways of doing things.

I think we would be better off if we had 100 MLAs so that there would no longer be a riding with 18,000 electors and 10,000 voters in another one. If we went by the American model, they do their Congressional districts by the number of residents, which means that if you’re in a riding with a lot of young families or a lot of immigrants - you as an MLA in Bedford may well have 23,000 or a much larger number of actual people to deal with than you do in Clare where most of the population is elderly.

MR. PAUL GAUDET: We have heard that.

MR. MICHAEL MARSHALL: This is another thing you have to bear in mind. We

are by no means being equitable by carefully selecting that we only have 50 seats and that we only count the electorate and all those things. Those are all stacked into making sure that we have a representative for Clare and places like that only because we don't want to break the 50 boundary.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. We have our other speakers.

MR. MICHAEL J. BAKER: Mr. Marshall, could I ask you a quick question? I don't mean to put you on the spot. Thank you for coming out tonight - great presentation. You have certainly given the commission something to think about. Have you had an opportunity to look at the four proposals that are on the table based on the current terms of reference?

MR. MICHAEL MARSHALL: Yes, I have.

MR. MICHAEL J. BAKER: Is there one that you see as preferable?

MR. MICHAEL MARSHALL: What I couldn't get a sense of is how much input the cities' planners had on the possibility that what looks nice today, in 10 years' time is, in fact, well over the number. This has been consistent right across this country, well, forever, that we haven't done a good job in suburban areas of building up to the plan. Of course, these are suburban ridings. I drive through them, and I see all the houses.

I would urge that if need be, these ridings be below size because 10 years from now, they will definitely be over. We have to look at that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You can see an example, for example, in splitting Bedford. Bedford South is quite low in terms of numbers because we anticipate development.

MR. MICHAEL MARSHALL: Okay. That's what we seem to end up doing.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

There's a lady at the back. Please come forward, and then we have another lady at the back on this side. You're the next after this lady.

MS. BEV DOMAN: Bev Doman. While I respect Mr. Marshall's comments, I think they deviate from the terms of reference that the commission has been set with. I think that's probably another avenue for discussion, but not for this meeting tonight.

I did have some comments, though, with regard to the interim report that you had. I'm wondering about the exceptional seats as opposed to protected seats with regard to the Acadian population. I know the mother tongue is protected by having Acadian seats. There's a long historical background of when they came into the province. Those are all

recognized facts. The Carter decision has stated that there's grounds for these protected or exceptional seats.

I don't understand, though, why Clare and Argyle have to be separate Acadian seats. They can be non-contiguous seats. I have added the numbers. If you take the 55-seat scenario - well, it doesn't matter which scenario, because the numbers are the same - Clare and Argyle together would have 12,954 voters, which is in the average allowable. If you added Richmond and Chéticamp together - again, non-contiguous seats - you would have 10,027 voters. This would be below the plus or minus 25 per cent, but only by 112 voters, so it's not unrealistic to have those there. That's my first point.

I was at the Preston briefing, and I had a few questions from that briefing. Members at large were discussed. In that relation, I wonder why Clare, Argyle, and Richmond and perhaps Chéticamp are getting four representatives. The Black population is having one representative. The imbalance there doesn't seem proper to me. Members at large were something that was discussed at the Preston consultation.

They also suggested that the Black representative would sit on government no matter who was in power. If that scenario went forward, why would the Acadian representatives not want to be members at large as well? Would they have three or four representatives? Those are just questions that I raise.

The exceptional status of the Chéticamp scenario, if it was separate - the numbers were low. The reason is supported for that. But one of the suggestions was to bring in the Gaelic community. If this is an exceptional seat for Acadians, why are we pulling in the Gaelic community just because it's close? We have German communities. We have Muslim communities now, with our new immigrants as they become Canadians. It just seems strange that the Gaelic community would be brought in for a protected Acadian seat. They don't share the same mother tongue.

Also, I just want to bring up logistics a little bit. Province House would not be able to sit 100 seats in the current location that government sits. Maybe they would have to go to the Red Chamber or reconstruct. Who knows where they would have government? But there are logistics to be considered. When you're looking at seats that are non-contiguous, for example, I highly recommend two constituency offices. The poor MLA has to go back and forth, but perhaps two constituency assistants to look after the load of the specific offices.

I did want to comment on the scenarios that you have put forward. I'm personally in favour of 55, not the 56. I want to say that I like the clear lines in the areas that we're talking about tonight. I live in Cole Harbour, so I'm familiar with the surroundings.

I mentioned at the Preston meeting that the names of the two Cole Harbour ridings should be reversed. I want to reiterate that. Perhaps the Cole Harbour-Dartmouth one could

be called Cole Harbour-Westfall because it covers more of Westfall. That's a name thing, but it will be in your recommendations, and if adopted, they'll hold.

I did like the clear lines that you have in the maps. Portland Street and Cole Harbour Road are boundaries now. They may somewhat divide communities, but they're clear-cut boundaries. Highways are clear-cut boundaries. I do like what you have done with those.

That's everything.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions? Thank you so much for coming again. We were pleased to have you in Preston, and you were part of the September presentations as well.

Who is next?

MS. BARBARA ADAMS: Good evening, and thank you for having me here. My name is Barbara Adams. I am the MLA for what is currently known as Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

I want to say that I'm going to be speaking my personal thoughts with respect to the number of seats that are going to be proposed, going from 51 to 55 or 56. Then I want to mention what I have been hearing from my constituents.

Just for perspective, as it stands now, I personally represent 14,951 voters. When you do that math it's 1.03, so that's sort of the perfect number compared to other MLAs, who have too few or too many. If the boundary changes to go from 51 to either 55 or 56, my number drops down to 10,228 in either scenario, where I live in Eastern Passage. The Cole Harbour side of what I represent would go from 14,951 up to 15,957. One side is going to be a much smaller, a third smaller, and the other one is going to actually have more constituents. That's not necessarily fair.

The second thing is that if you look across the provinces, Ontario MLAs represent 100,000 constituents each - 10 times more than what I would represent. If we actually incorporated their model, we would only need 10 MLAs. The fact that we have 51 means we have five times as many MLAs as Ontario does. I would ask you to point out one indicator of where Nova Scotia is doing better than Ontario. If we talk about disease rates, tax rates, employment rates, immigration maintenance - any indicator that I can come up with - they're doing better than we are with us having five times as many MLAs. I know I'm arguing myself out of a job in the sense that I'm saying having more MLAs does not create a more thriving province, but it's important to point out.

The next one I looked at was Quebec. Their MLAs represent 67,000. They have six times the number of people to represent than I would - British Columbia, 57,000; Newfoundland 13,220. Newfoundland would be comparable to here. The point is, how do

we compare to Newfoundland's economy, job rate, and tax base, compared to B.C., Ontario, or Alberta? I should have looked up Alberta, but I'm sure it's somewhere in that same range.

I don't want anybody thinking that more MLAs is automatically going to end up with a more prosperous province. As far as I'm concerned, the exact opposite has happened. I'm not blaming all the MLAs for how the downturn has come, but we certainly bear some responsibility.

The other thing is, Mr. Marshall had made a comment that I want to comment on. He said that he thought most MLAs would be happier with less diversity and those who agreed more on the issues. I totally disagree with that. I represent from South Woodside, Shearwater, Eastern Passage, and Cow Bay into Cole Harbour. We have very different communities, and that's what makes us rich. I personally do not like the thought of seeing my constituency torn apart.

I certainly don't like the idea that we're going to spend more money on government officials like myself when we are asked 365 days of the year for more money for every single program out there. The long-term care report came out two days ago. We want more care workers there. Well, where is the money coming from? We want more teachers and teaching assistants in the schools. Where is that coming from? We want our bridges repaired and our roads paved. Where is that money coming from?

For me to say to somebody, we're not going to pay more money to doctors so that we can not be the lowest in terms of paying doctors, but we're going to give more money to MLAs - I find that personally offensive. I would rather put money where constituents are asking for it. I just want to remind constituents that if a member of the Ontario legislature can represent 100,000 people, asking me to represent only 10,000 - we're not getting the bang for the buck that Ontario is getting with a much lower percentage.

Having said that, when I talk to constituents on the Eastern Passage side, I would be going from 14,951 down to 10,228. I happen to live in Eastern Passage, so presumably in the next election, if I ran, I would run in the constituency that I live in. That makes the most sense. So, they're thinking, oh, you'll have 5,000 less people to represent, so we'll have greater access to you. That's what they're thinking. The Cole Harbour side are going to have an MLA with 1,000 more people to represent, so they're not happy because now they're going to have less access to that MLA. I'm hearing different things from different people.

I don't know that splitting up my constituency does anything to help diversity or the camaraderie that goes along between the two parts of my constituency. The constituents are certainly - after I say I'd go down to 10,228 - they're like, "Oh, that's good." I said, "Do you want more politicians?" And they're like, "God, no." Well, that's what this means.

I want to end on that note, that if a member of the Ontario legislature can represent 100,000 people, then I think our province going to greater numbers of MLAs is the wrong decision.

MR. MICHAEL J. BAKER: Quick question. Thank you for coming out, Ms. Adams. It's all about effective representation, voter parity, and voter engagement. You have the benefit of insight, which we do not.

Representing 15,000 is one thing. Do you think you could do as effective a job representing 100,000 as their representative?

MS. BARBARA ADAMS: Clearly, they're doing an effective job. Just look at how well their provinces are performing compared to ours. When you look at the tax base for Ontario compared to what you have to pay here, they're able to do different things with their money than what we're able to do.

Yes, they are clearly effectively managing - I'm not saying they're perfect. Every province and every government has its challenges. But we're talking 10 times the number of people being represented. We're talking a few thousand one way or the other, and it doesn't make that significant a difference for me to go from, say, 13,000 to 14,500. We're talking going from 10,000 to 100,000, and yet they're still able to manage those numbers. Frankly, we need to take a lesson from how they're managing to represent that many people. I think that me going from 15,000 down to 10,000 - we're going in the wrong direction.

MR. MICHAEL J. BAKER: We have had presentations about the difference between urban - if you're urban, that's one thing. If you're rural, it's another. Somebody from Sydney has got to travel the four hours back. Then they have two meetings to attend that evening, a funeral, constituency hours, committee meetings. There is a definite divide between urban and rural representation.

MS. BARBARA ADAMS: There absolutely is, and that's a really good point. If you look at Queens County and Kim Masland's constituency, it takes her hours to drive from one end to the other. If I go from South Woodside all the way around, including a detour down to Cow Bay up Bisset and then back to Cole Harbour, it takes me, at most, 20 minutes. I feel very lucky. I'm right on the line for the average number of constituents, but I have a very small boundary.

Having said that, if I was representing 100,000 people - somehow they're managing to get around. Before we jump to changing the numbers and increasing them, why have we not equally looked at how that is province managing 100,000? My father was an accountant. The math just isn't there that we need so many more than Ontario when our economy does not support that. That money could be used for emergency room spots, more hip and knee surgeries, or to build more long-term care beds so we can unclog the

acute-care hospital beds that are 20-per cent clogged with people waiting for long-term care. If the government has money to spend, I can think of 100 different ways that I would rather see it spent than this.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Who would like to speak next?

MR. DAVID HENDSBEE: Good evening, sir. Good evening, panel.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I thought you would have been there in Preston.

MR. DAVID HENDSBEE: I was in a council meeting Tuesday. My apologies for not making the Preston hearings.

My name is David Hendsbee. I'm a municipal councillor currently for District 2 of HRM, Preston-Chezzetcook-Eastern Shore. In my past political experience, I have been Halifax County Councillor for District 8; then in the supercity elections back in 1995-96, I was the Halifax HRM councillor for District 3; and then after the re-amalgamation or readjustment, District 2 now. I also had a short secondment as Preston MLA from 1999 to 2003.

I have been around politics and boundaries. I think I made presentations at all of the electoral boundary hearings that have ever been had since that time. I just want to make a few observations and comments.

I believe with 55 or 56 seats, we're getting way too far in regard to the population base for our province. Out of curiosity, when I heard about a Chéticamp seat, I was kind of, well, why wouldn't Chezzetcook qualify for a seat when you have the traditional Acadian communities in the Chezzetcook region? I think they have a population base probably comparable to Chéticamp. So, I don't know why that was not considered as a possibility.

In regard to the Preston constituency, as stated earlier by someone, they like clear and concise lines. That's one of the things I would have liked to have seen in the Preston map that has been redrawn. As stated back in September, if you look at the historical Preston Township maps, you should try to respect that as much as possible. In doing so, you would keep the Mira Road portion of Porters Lake within the Preston constituency, but you would take the portion of Mineville out and put that in the Eastern Shore riding. The areas along the Westphal, the old Sunset Acres area, I would put into the Cole Harbour seats. Therefore, you're using Main Street, Highway No. 7, then Highway No. 107 as your distinct dividing line between the constituencies of Preston, Dartmouth and Cole Harbour-Dartmouth or Cole Harbour-Westphal - whatever the name shall be.

Also for concise lines with the Eastern Shore, I think that instead of going into Coleridge Estates at the bottom part of Cole Harbour area, if you kept the Ross Road area in with the Eastern Shore - because a lot of the communities that go through the Ross Road

are affected go to the Eastern Shore, a lot of the traffic, so they have a commonality issue there. I think that if you use the old Miller Road and the old Lawrencetown Road as the dividing line between Cole Harbour, Westphal and the Eastern Shore seat, it would be very simple. That way you keep Ross Road and Little Salmon River and Lawrencetown all together in the Eastern Shore area.

You probably heard representations about the Sheet Harbour area. They would love to come back into the Eastern Shore riding instead of being in the Guysborough riding. Having the Eastern Shore intact for the Halifax region basically from Ross Road to Ecum Secum Bridge would be a good start at reunifying the Eastern Shore seat similar to what it was many years ago.

About the Preston seat, I think that they should try to respect the historical township boundary. From East Dartmouth, you have it now, from Roleika Drive, Caledonia Road - go along Main Street straight out to Exit 19 and capture those dozen houses just to the north side of Exit 19. Now you have the boundary at the back line of Christopher Lane. There are about 12 or 13 houses in between Christopher Lane and the highway. I think it would be an easy adjustment to capture and simplify the boundary line that way.

That's it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions? Mike.

MR. MICHAEL J. BAKER: So, 55 or 56 is too many. What about 51?

MR. DAVID HENDBEE: I thought 42 would be a better number.

MR. MICHAEL J. BAKER: So, less government. We're here to give you a voice. We have heard a diverse opinion.

MR. DAVID HENDBEE: I find it kind of odd. I even helped Dr. Osmond campaign in the Halifax election down in Sheet Harbour, and he thought about the size. I said, all we did was, the county filled in the hole. Halifax County went from Hubbards to Ecum Secum in the past. I see my old colleague Councillor Ron Cooper here tonight. The county functioned quite well with the diversity of suburban and rural areas. We just filled the doughnut hole in the middle of Halifax, Dartmouth and Bedford.

In my district, I represent over 26,000 people. I go from the Little Salmon River water line. It includes North Preston, straight to the Guysborough County line. It's a two-and-a-half-hour drive in district. Barb Adams has 20 minutes to go around her riding. That must be really nice.

Anyway, I think that 51 is probably reasonable or 52, perhaps, what it used to be. I know you have a job to do to try to represent the diversity of this province. There are some

issues of having a capital region versus rural parts.

The other problem you have to deal with is the shifting demographics. We have a lot more population base coming into the Halifax region. Halifax now represents 45 per cent to 50 per cent of the population base of the whole province. Should we have 45 per cent to 50 per cent of the seats? That's questionable. Some would argue yes. Some people would say, what about the dignity for the rural areas - how will they be represented? Those are difficult questions.

Personally, I would like to see more amalgamations or conglomerations or mergers of the municipality units across the board and then go from there.

MR. MICHAEL J. BAKER: Thank you, Mr. Hendsbee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions? Nice to see you again, thank you.

Who would like to speak next? We have plenty of time. We're scheduled to be here until nine o'clock.

MR. RONALD COOPER: Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Ronald Cooper. I was going to try to avoid all this this time around, but I guess it's not going to happen. I've been sitting here, thinking and watching, and heard a lot of comments. My mind has gone to the scenario that I'm granting that there are a number of people here who have political interests in mind, in addition to community interests, and probably would look at the maps that we have seen and think about what the results would be politically.

For these purposes, I really think we need to get away from that because we have to look at effective representation. We have to look at equality of voting power. I'm a very big proponent of having as close an issue with voting power as possible. Granted, in this country, you're not going to have that.

I looked at the scenarios and said, 51 is not a bad number, provided adjustments can be made that would accommodate and recognize minorities, ethnic groups, racial groups, and origin groups in this province. I think that can be done.

I mentioned effective government. This is not going to change effective government a lot. We're changing boundaries. Effective government will only come along when the residents of this province have enough say with their MLAs and hold them accountable.

[8:00 p.m.]

Another thought that went through my mind is that the process we're going through

is not a heck of a lot dissimilar from the amalgamation that happened at the time of the uniting of the four metropolitan areas. You had some rural areas, and you had a number of urban areas. You put them altogether and ended up with what we have today, something the size of P.E.I. That was not a process that's deeply different from this one.

Accommodations had to be made for the Musquodoboit area - a huge area in the Eastern Shore. You made allowances staff-wise, et cetera, for those municipal representatives. I found that, in that case, things improved greatly when the council basically came into the modern age and started using the technology that was available to them. Sometimes I question whether our present MLAs make enough use of technology. That certainly is a way to be more effective, but of course the province hasn't gotten around to getting high-speed Internet all around this province yet. We have a long way to go.

With regard to the scenarios - and I'm speaking basically on this side of the harbour - the problem has been with both HRM and the province. How do you transition from those urban areas to the developing rural areas?

I listened to Councillor Hendsbee mentioning the Eastern Shore area. If you look from the Eastern Shore area, you see an area that is growing. If you look at that same district from in town, what you see is a huge increase of mobility going down towards the Eastern Shore. In my mind, it says that in the not-too-distant future, you're going to look at that district and say, look at the huge increase there. I think the community should keep it in mind and take that into account.

I found that the 51-seat scenario has gone a good way to keeping communities together, and that has been a prime imperative in this province, particularly in the Halifax Regional Municipality area, ever since the amalgamation. People do not like to lose identity. That has been addressed, and they have tried to address it. Eventually it may be overcome, but I don't think it's going to happen right now, particularly in the Cole Harbour-Westphal area. I looked at the scenarios, and what I see there is a splitting of the communities. If it was to stay the way of one of those maps, then I would say change the names of one of the proposed districts because what would be Cole Harbour-Portland Valley has none of Portland Valley in it. That in my opinion would really be a Westphal-Cole Harbour riding.

It has been, even before amalgamation, an area that has had a lot of self interest on different sides of the highway and came together. We now have a community centred around places like Cole Harbour Place, which serves the whole area. In my opinion, anything that would go to providing a divide or initiating a divide should be handled very carefully. Still, I am trying to recognize which communities are there. If there were to be a difference, and you were to take the original area of Colby Village out of there, that's a split that shouldn't be. It is possible under some of these scenarios.

Is it an easy process you're going to go through? No, I don't think so. I do have to

ask, because it's not clear here, what happens when you make the initial report to the Premier. Are you going to be coming back to that final scenario, or is that going to be on the table and let the province deal with it through the Legislature? I think you would have to come back one more time.

Another thing that should be taken into account is if there was an increase in the capacity of the service systems on this side of the harbour - right now it's all filled up - but if they decided to put a new sewage treatment plant, then you are going to open up the whole Eastern Passage area to further development, and it would make a big change there. That should probably be investigated before you do it.

All in all, is 55 a huge number more? No, not really. I like 51. Could we survive with less than that? Yes. Again, to be effective, the MLAs would have to use the technology, and if they have a huge riding, as happened with Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley, they were provided with the extra people in order that they could do their job effectively.

In my own personal opinion, probably the busiest politicians in this province are the municipal politicians. They can't get away at all unless they leave the province. Every time they walk out the door and drive around their district, it never leaves them.

I like to think that all the MLAs put as much effort into it as the municipal politicians do. That's about what I have to say here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Cooper. Would anybody from the commission like to ask any questions?

DR. PETER M. BUTLER: I would like to make a comment to Mr. Cooper. We're not unmindful of communities of interest. It's not all only about geographical numbers. It's about things that make people identify with a sense of community. A lot of our decisions regarding the boundaries have put that, it seems to me, some of the time, uppermost in our discussions. From time to time, I hear people think that all we have done is sit around and play with numbers without considering what the numbers mean in a community context. This is just to say that we do. We get it, and we're trying to deal with it.

MR. RONALD COOPER: I am quite happy to hear you say that. Again, I go back to the amalgamation. That was based on the fact that there was a commitment made to all of the areas in the amalgamation process that they wouldn't be forgotten. That didn't happen. There's so much there - fire departments, et cetera - that had to be changed, enhanced, et cetera to make it work. If you have to do something to make it work, then you do it.

Another area, and I probably shouldn't get into it, is unfortunately this whole process of the education system in this province. If that has to be part of it, you should

allow everybody to know that towards the end of this process. It's unfortunate that it's happening at the same time as this is happening.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The challenge we have as a commission is that a lot has happened since 2012. First of all, there are more population shifts.

But there was a court challenge, as you are aware, to what happened. I think I referred to it before as a controversy. There was a Court of Appeal challenge, and subsequently, once that result was known - the government did not appeal that, and they established the Keefe commission, which reported January of last year. As you know, it was an effective representation of African Nova Scotians and Acadians. A lot has happened in that period of time.

The Keefe commission, whilst it didn't tie the hands - it said it wasn't going to tie the hands - of the boundaries commission, it did seem to lay a groundwork that to achieve more effective representation, you have to have more seats in the House. I leave you with that. It did suggest that the new commission, whenever it was appointed, should look at a 51-seat scenario, and that's precisely what our terms of reference gave us. A lot of our terms of reference actually come from the Keefe commission, non-contiguous and things like that.

MR. RONALD COOPER: The way society as a whole today is changing, not to make one huge class of people, but to recognize and continue the roots of the province and the peoples in it, and to make enough accommodation that they're not lost and their voice is effective.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I remember the announcement on amalgamation. I think it was a Friday afternoon, three o'clock or something like that. If you're going to announce news, you do it then. Anyway, that's water under the bridge. Now we have HRM, and people are saying, can we go back to have a divorce with respect to the communities? As Dr. Butler said, this commission as with previous - and this is the third time around for me on these commissions - is very conscious of community interests.

In many ways, Nova Scotia is unique in terms of its history and in terms of geography. As we were reminded the other evening, it has the largest indigenous Black population in Canada, for example. Then we have the Acadian population as our founding nation, in 1604. There are a lot of unique features that we have, and of course we have our First Nations communities as well. In 1992, the Electoral Boundaries Commission did actually have a seat - right now we're at 51 - an additional seat available for the First Nations community, which would effectively be a member at large.

Thank you very much, Mr. Cooper.

Would anybody else like to come forward? Again, if you can state your name and

spell it please.

MS. LIANNE COMEAU: Bonjour. My name is Lianne Comeau. I really wasn't going to speak today, but I thought, I might as well. I'm from the area of Clare, but I live in Dartmouth right now. I just wanted to say that I was really happy when they decided to reinstate for the Acadian population because when it first started in 2012, I went to meetings because I was in Sydney at that time.

I was very sad that Clare wasn't just one part because you have to think of the needs of the people too. I find that the area is very vibrant, and it was lost with the last one, so I was very happy to hear that it was reinstated. I just wanted to share that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

Would anybody else like to speak? Please come forward, sir.

MR. VISHAL BHARDWAJ: Good evening, everyone. My name is Vishal Bhardwaj. I won't be too long. I just have a few comments I want to add on here.

[8:15 p.m.]

I do agree with the very first term of reference, which is effective representation. I'm saying why it is important for me, looking around at what is going on in the world. We're in a democracy where people have the right to vote. It is critical. I'm concerned day-by-day with what's happening, how the participation in it is going down. Partly it is that engagement is not happening enough.

I personally believe that in order to have effective engagement here, you need to have enough time and resources and the geography to meet those requirements to have engagement and meet the people to do it. You cannot do it without looking into that effective - of course we want to have it efficient, but at the same time we want to make sure that that representation is there and that the MLA is connected to the people and to the area.

Also, I want to add that I totally agree with adding more seats in the HRM. The population is growing, no doubt, and it's continuously growing the last two years now. I'm happy to hear that. I think it definitely warrants effective representation, at the same to be efficient within HRM.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. We heard at one public meeting that in one of the Halifax electoral districts in the last election, the number was only 34 per cent or 36 per cent of registered electors actually voted. Whereas I think some of the rural areas are quite high. We heard on our visits in some of the Acadian ridings that voter turnout had dropped between elections. In other words, when, in the boundaries final report in 2012, they lost their status as protected ridings, in the next election the voter turnout was down.

You can't say that was necessarily the cause.

Also, an interesting feature was the number of spoiled ballots that you had. In other words, people turn up to vote, and then they spoil the ballot in some way. Perhaps I'm reading more into it than I should, but if someone takes the time and trouble to actually go out and vote, and then the ballot is spoiled in some way, that could be seen as a protest. It depends on how they spoil the ballot.

Would anyone else like to speak?

MS. ANGELA SIMMONDS: I just want to actually follow up on a little bit of what my colleague Peter had mentioned. We do really value the community of interest and effective representation. Although we're hearing a lot of comments in terms of bigger cities doing this, I would just like to say that bigger cities have a lot more diversity than we do. Part of effective representation is getting voter parity in terms of people who aren't represented to come out and vote. Part of this process is to make sure that we are lending power to voices and people who have historically not been heard. So that is the point of effective representation and moving forward with the court decision.

I just feel like, sitting here on this panel and listening to people, I want to commend the young woman who came up from Clare in a room where you were alone, and people questioned why there are three seats as opposed to one African Nova Scotian.

I just wanted to make sure that everybody is aware that we're looking at several different things, and it's not just about the numbers and population and geographical areas, but things that are not being said. The commission has really taken a lot of time to look at several different issues. I just wanted to make that comment.

MR. VISHAL BHARDWAJ: I think Angela said very rightly here. I do fully support having that 55-seat scenario, having that effective representation, especially for the marginalized communities. I strongly believe in the 55-seat scenario where those marginal communities are getting representation, which is much needed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

If there aren't any further speakers, we will be spending some time here afterwards. I would invite you to stay for coffee, if there is still some, and have a look at the maps. If you have particular questions, we have some markers if you want to mark on the maps and show us something at the micro level.

The purpose of these consultations is, first of all, at the macro level - the options of 51, 55 and so on - but then it's an opportunity for citizens perhaps to say, you got this right or you got this wrong. We can't necessarily take every suggestion. We spent all of yesterday and a good part of today going through the input that we have received from the

public consultations, saying can we look at this and can we look at that. When you look at the numbers, sometimes you can and sometimes you can't.

I think a future boundaries commission is going to have to look at some of the issues you have raised this evening in terms of the urban and rural areas. We have had representation to say there should be more seats for HRM. There should be a balance that reflects the population or reflects the electors. We have had representation, as was mentioned this evening, for a smaller House, in terms of 40 seats, or I think 42 was mentioned this evening. Then at the other end, we have had representation for 100 seats but no extra money by having the MLAs as part-time.

Our job is not an easy one, and we are bound by our terms of reference. The first term of reference is of course effective representation, but voter parity and how you balance that. That is why the interim report is actually titled *Striking a balance between effective representation and voter parity*.

Okay, ladies and gentlemen, one last time, anybody else? Hearing none, thank you so much for coming on a very, very cold evening. As I say, if you want, stay behind and look at our maps.

I do want to thank our technical crew that follow us around, and Julia Kinsman is our office administrator. We have a Facebook page, and you can contact us by email or go to our website. There is an interactive mapping tool on our website. Thank you so much.

[The commission adjourned at 8:22 p.m.]