

NOVA SCOTIA
ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES
COMMISSION

THURSDAY, JANUARY 17, 2019

Annapolis Basin Conference Centre
Cornwallis, Nova Scotia

PROVINCIAL ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION

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

WITNESSES

Ms. Adele MacDonald
Mr. Byron Mersereau
Ms. Evelyn Leblanc-Joyce
Mr. Bill MacDonald
Mr. Don Droy
Mr. Alan Melanson
Mr. Roy Stubbs
Mr. Christian Thibaudeau
Mr. Matthew Dubois
Mr. Floyd Benjamin
Mr. David Cvet
Ms. Susanna Haley

CORNWALLIS, FRIDAY, JANUARY 18, 2019

NOVA SCOTIA ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION

7:00 P.M.

CHAIRMAN
Dr. Colin Dodds

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ladies and gentlemen, sorry we're just a little bit late in starting. I want to first of all thank you so much for coming out this evening.

My name is Colin Dodds. I live in Halifax, and I'm chairman of the Nova Scotia Electoral Boundaries Commission and will chair this evening's public consultation. We do have simultaneous translation, and we have some additional sets available if anybody feels that they need them.

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

As many of you know, we held public meetings in September. We were in Clare, and we were in Argyle, but we were not in this particular area. We felt that we should come in our second round of public consultations.

Before we commence this evening, I'll ask each of the commission members to introduce themselves. We're missing one person from Dartmouth.

[The commission members introduced themselves.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: At previous public consultations, particularly in the Fall, I did provide context for the commission, why it was established so soon because typically, Electoral Boundaries Commissions are established every 10 years. There was some controversy, I think you may be aware, over the interim report back in 2011-12. Subsequently, that led to a challenge to the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal, which was successful, and then led to something we call the Keefe commission, which was a report that was done from public consultations on increasing and making representation more effective for Acadian Nova Scotians and African Nova Scotians. I don't intend to go through all of that this evening, but if you have particular questions, I'll be pleased to address them.

The commission was tasked in its terms of reference, having been established by a Select Committee of the House of Assembly, to produce draft boundaries back in

September or October. We did present, after the public consultations, an interim report on November 28th of last year. This was presented to the Attorney General on that day. In terms of a final report, we are due to present that report the 1st of April of this year. We were tasked with producing boundaries for at least a 51-seat House and one other; in other words, two alternatives. In the event, we have four alternatives before you this evening.

On April 1st, when we produce our final report, we are only allowed to produce one set of boundaries. The process will be that when they are presented to the Attorney General, legislation will be tabled within 10 days of that. It's up to the House of Assembly then to either accept or reject the boundaries proposed by this independent commission. This was the problem back in 2011-12, because the government of the day intervened in the process.

The data we're using is as of June 29, 2018. We will in fact be using a later data set, probably December 2018. The maps and everything we have done so far in the interim report are based on June 29, 2018 data. That gave the total number of electors for Nova Scotia at 743,500. With a 51-seat House, that gave an average of 14,578. This represents an increase of about 30,000 electors since the 2012 report. What we have seen, of course, over the years, is a shift from the rural to the urban areas. In terms of the data, just to be clear, the data is supplied to us by Elections Nova Scotia. It does use the census data of 2016 and updates it to the point where in fact people who were 16 or 17 back in 2016 are now eligible to vote, so that's taken account of. As you probably know, you have to be a resident in a particular location for six months, so the elections data includes driver's licence information, when people are moving. It also includes new Canadian citizens and data from the last election, where people had not been on the list but came to a voting station and voted. That information is also included. When I say it's a dynamic data set, it really is. Previous commissions have used only the census data.

[7:15 p.m.]

What we would like, as a commission, your input on tonight, if you like, are the four macro views, the four alternatives that we're proposing. Also, you see that we have some maps of various electoral districts, including Annapolis, Digby. We would like your input as to whether we have it right in terms of the actual boundaries in those particular electoral districts.

Let me recap the four broad alternatives we're looking at. The first is to keep 51 seats, which is the current size of the House of Assembly but with some adjustments.

When we overlaid the most recent data, June of last year's data, on the existing boundaries, boundaries that the last election was fought on, we saw that there were some ups and downs. For example, Bedford, on the outskirts of Halifax, showed up at 1.48. We're allowed deviations of 0.25 on either side of 1.0. That 1.0, as I mentioned, for 51 seats is 14,578. Clearly, we had to do something about Bedford. We are allowed to go over

and above, but there has to be justification for that. We did give some information this evening on these four alternatives, as well as our terms of reference.

Our first term of reference is that we are here to provide effective representation for Nova Scotians but also to try and preserve voter parity, in other words that your vote counts the same as somebody else's. Then we're allowed deviations with respect to geography - which is Term of Reference No. 2 - ethnicity, language history, and so on. That of course then gets into the formerly protected ridings of Clare, Argyle, and Richmond, in other words the Acadian ridings.

The four alternatives, to recap: No. 1, the 51 electoral districts, which is the current size of the House; No. 2, 55 electoral districts, which includes the formerly protected districts of Clare, Argyle, and Richmond - largely the same but not quite, a few little deviations from what they were back in the interim report of 2012; No. 3, 55 electoral districts but 56 seats in the House of Assembly. This would include the dual-member electoral district of Inverness. The proposal is that there would be two MLAs, one to represent the geographic electoral district of Inverness and the other to represent the Acadian constituents, in other words two members in the Legislature, but you would only have one vote; you couldn't vote for both. Number 4 is 56 electoral districts, which would include an exceptional electoral district of Cheticamp. As I mentioned, you may have questions and suggestions with respect to your own electoral district. We do have maps, and we have a map here with respect to Nova Scotia as a whole, and we have some regional maps at the back.

I have been notified that there are some people who already wish to be recognized to speak. We will call each of those in turn. We will ask, then, from the floor, for anybody else who wishes to speak. In each case, I ask the person to come forward and present at the podium here. The microphones will be turned on at that point, and I will ask for them to give their name. Because everything is taped and then at some point soon, in the next few days, is transcribed so it's in a printed form, people want to be absolutely clear with respect to names. I would ask you, if you don't mind, to spell your name out so that it is an accurate record for the public record.

In previous consultations, we have also asked people for input on the concept of members at large, in other words one member representing a region or representing the whole of Nova Scotia to represent, say, the African Nova Scotians; represent, for example, the First Nations, because that is enshrined in the 1992 Electoral Boundaries Commission - that seat has not been taken up; or members at large with regard to the Acadian population.

Also, there's the issue of non-contiguous ridings. The history has been that ridings or electoral districts would in fact be contiguous. In the Keefe commission report, which was published last year, they indicate that we can in fact go and look at non-contiguous. In other words, if we look at Clare and Argyle, they are not contiguous. I think there's a logging road that links them, but to get from one to the other on the highway, you have to

go through Yarmouth. That would allow us, if we so wished, to have non-contiguous ridings. Likewise, Richmond, up in Cape Breton, could in fact be linked with Cheticamp.

If you have comments with respect to those ideas, please let us now.

I now turn the floor over to you. As I said, I do have a number of speakers. The first one I have on my list is Adele MacDonald. This is just in the order that the office received them.

MS. ADELE MACDONALD: My name is Adele MacDonald. I am the executive director of AIRO, which is Annapolis Investments in Rural Opportunity. We are deeply involved with community and economic development in Annapolis County. We fund new and existing businesses strictly within Annapolis County.

The questions that I was hoping to get some answers to this evening were around the reason for the boundary that essentially splits - in I think it's Table 2; maybe it's Table 3 and Table 4 - the new Digby-Annapolis area and the Annapolis area. There's a boundary line that is splitting that with some odd right angles on it that don't seem to follow a road or anything like that. I'm wondering if we could help the community understand why that was chosen there.

The other thing that I was hoping to speak to this evening as well, and I'm sure there are other people who will speak to it in more detail, is that this is our second time through this process in the area. The last time that they tried to change the boundaries in our communities here, the response was less than positive. The meeting that was held in Annapolis Royal had approximately 200 people attend, so I think there was a request to have you all visit Annapolis Royal again because not everybody could make it out to Cornwallis Park, which is actually where you are as opposed to being in Digby.

We have a community of interest, both areas do. In Annapolis Royal, for example, we are more closely involved with the agricultural community that we are perhaps with the fishing or forestry industries. Whereas in Digby and going further down Digby Neck, you would see communities that are more directly involved with fishery and with logging and forestry industries. Both of those things happen in both areas, but they're just bigger in Digby and bigger agricultural towards Annapolis Royal. The community of interest for Annapolis Royal, for example, has - Annapolis Royal itself is the community of interest, but then its focus is further up the Valley. It sees itself as part of the Valley. Not being a resident of Digby - I am a resident of Annapolis Royal, but from my outside perspective looking in, I would see Digby being the community of interest for communities coming up the Neck and further past Digby. Those are historic connections. Those are cultural connections. They're deeply rooted. I can see from many perspectives that severing those ties puts people in kind of an awkward spot because you have removed them from your communities of interest and put them together in communities that have different perspectives on what's important to them and what they want their representative to be

speaking to in the House. That's one point that I wanted to make.

Then a question that I'm hoping you can answer is more clarity about how those lines came to be, in particular the one that divides those two proposals there, that comes across from the Bay of Fundy and comes down into the Valley. It follows a road, and then it takes some really sharp right angles. It literally looks like it's going around a building. I can't see what's happening there. If that could be explained, I would greatly appreciate that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'll do my best to explain. I was vice-chair of the Electoral Boundaries Commission back in 2011-12, which I think you know why. There were 200 people. I think we had even more in Yarmouth at one point. That was the result - as you know, the interim report was thrown out by the then government, and we were then forced, if we were going to stay on as a commission, to not allow the protection of Clare, Argyle, and Richmond. That is why then certain things were forced together, in this case, it was Clare-Digby, and really trying to make the numbers fit because they didn't give us as much leeway as we have today, for example. That's just a little bit of history. Nobody was happy. Barrington Passage was merged in with Argyle. Queens felt they had been mistreated. So, it goes on.

In looking at what happened subsequent to 2012, I mentioned the court case and the Keefe commission. Then we were in a position to look at whether we should go back and restore the boundaries for Clare, Argyle, and Richmond, and at the moment, three of the proposals would, in fact, do that. That then takes a chunk of population out of Digby if Digby is going to look at it on its own. That's why we have Annapolis-Digby. If I look at the numbers, Digby-Annapolis right now would be a little over 12,000, and Annapolis on its own would be 11,400 and something. Annapolis before was 16,488 - that's the number I have. I think that would be in Table 2.

I can tell you that the commission not only has been meeting all this week with public consultations, but yesterday and the day previous - Wednesday and Thursday - we actually had full-day meetings going and listening to the public consultations, what our notes were - we don't have the transcriptions at this point, but we will soon - and then seeing what we heard and what changes we could make. In preparation for the meetings tonight and tomorrow, and tomorrow is in Wolfville, we did have a look at the maps.

Quite why it's this jiggery thing as it is, I'm going to have to ask my fellow commissioners. It's not jerrymandering, I can assure. We didn't go in and

MS. ADELE MACDONALD: There's a real perfect square on that one line. I would like to know why.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What we have tried to do this time around is look at other boundaries, community boundaries and municipal boundaries. Sometimes they just don't

follow a nice straight line. I think you're probably aware that historically, when people used to draw boundaries for countries, they would just draw a straight line down and of course ignore the different communities of interest on either side. What I can do is guarantee I'll get back to you because we obviously have your contact information - Julia is our office administrator - and give you a proper answer to that.

[7:30 p.m.]

MS. ADELE MACDONALD Thank you, I would appreciate that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: One of our speakers later is His Worship Bill MacDonald. We've had a couple of chats and he did invite us there, but we had already set the meetings and we apologize for that. We were just trying to set a meeting, it's not exactly equidistant, but something that was fairly close to Digby and Clare, and not impossible then for people in Annapolis to come to. This area has a lot of significance for a lot of people because of the peacekeeping centre it was and so on.

Does anyone have anything they could add? I honestly can't remember why this is as jingle-jangled as it is. I think the explanation was from the mappers and I suspect it's something to do with municipal boundaries or something, but I might be wrong.

MR. GLENN GRAHAM: I agree that our mappers were talking about doing as much as they could to utilize the available data that they have to really draw around very small community boundaries as well. So, this is taking that into consideration, from my understanding.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, but we'll get you an accurate answer.

MS. ADELE MACDONALD: I'd appreciate that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Have you got any more questions?

MS. ADELE MACDONALD: No additional questions for you. I would just note that a province of our size - we are a population of less than a million people. I think less is more when you're a smaller population. I'm not exactly clear - as much as I do want to see some way to incorporate the additional representation for Acadian Nova Scotians and African Nova Scotians, maybe there is a better solution than additional electoral districts or additional seats in the House.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Certainly, we've heard that. We had one presentation yesterday suggesting 100 seats.

MS. ADELE MACDONALD: I don't think we can afford that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But half the salary.

MS. ADELE MACDONALD: At half the salary. I don't think they can afford that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It would be cost neutral. It was very serious. The argument being is that - apparently, I've not been in Nova Scotia long enough to remember this, but I think at one point MLAs were part time.

We've had various suggestions that - if you take HRM, they reduced the number of municipal seats from 23 to 16. If you do that for Nova Scotia, you'd probably be down to around 40, 42 members of the House. The question is, how does that reflect what we have been charged with, which is effective representation. Also, with the upper cap of 0.25 - which we can deviate from, but there has to be a reason within our terms of reference to do that.

What we have learned in our meetings, and it's no surprise, is that particularly in the rural areas, people take their boundaries very seriously because it is a matter of community of interest. It's a matter of history. It's so many things that are there - and geography as well. In that respect, Nova Scotia is unique with many of those categories, and of course the population in many instances being very coastal right the way through, unless you're coming down the Valley.

MS. ADELE MACDONALD: I looked at the electoral districts for Annapolis Royal back to 1933, as far back as it would let me go. The community has always been in the Annapolis electoral district, so I think that probably there are a lot of people with far better reaching memories than my own as being a relatively new person to the area myself, only having come here in 2012, but definitely an historic component to that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think in those days there were county boundaries.

MS. ADELE MACDONALD: It started with county in 1933 and then, as it moved forward and we landed into electoral districts, it sat in either Annapolis East or Annapolis West before it landed in Annapolis for that whole period until we are here today.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's right. Well, back in 2002 when I chaired the commission at that point, we were asked to try to preserve county boundaries. County boundaries has now disappeared from our terms of reference because of the population shifts. If you have looked on our website, you'll see there's an interactive mapping guide that you can use. Our interim report should be there. If you go back to the Keefe commission, which only reported last year, it was erring on the side that to achieve more effective representation, there should be more seats. It didn't say exactly how many, and it's leaving it to us. We have heard both sides of the argument, I can assure you.

MS. ADELE MACDONALD: I thank you for your answers. I won't take any more

of your time. I'm sure there are many more people who would like to address you. Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're here tonight. Thank you so much.

The next speaker I have is Byron Mersereau.

MR. BYRON MERSEREAU: Good evening. My name is Byron Mersereau. My name actually originates in the Bordeaux area of France.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak and thank you to the commission for coming to our area, which in the report is the subject of potentially very significant changes in terms of electoral district. My own background is that in early 2003, I moved to Annapolis Royal and became a permanent resident there, which was a place I had identified some years ago as one of the places I would really want to live. Since coming here, I have taken fairly active interest in the economic and social welfare of the region, particularly our catchment area.

Currently, I am being represented provincially by the same member who represents the rest of Annapolis County, which I think for Annapolis and surrounding areas in Annapolis County is a good fit. The reasons why I think that, I'll just recap them quickly. Historically, as my neighbour down the street has already pointed out, we're used to being associated with areas more to the east of us in Annapolis County, and that goes back in the records I looked at, as being part of the Annapolis West riding for 50 years or so between the 1950s and later on and there were some reconfigurations along the way. Then of course at least since 2012, the boundaries have followed the county boundaries, which is another reason why I think it works fairly well for us.

Culturally, community-of-interest-wise, I do believe from my own experience over the last 16 years - as an aside, I'll mention that during my teen years, Little River, Digby County, on Digby Neck, was my domicile. I have experienced a little bit of that. I believe that the stronger cultural tie is to the rest of Annapolis County, even though, of course, as part of western Nova Scotia, we have some ties with the west.

Economically, I guess I have typically thought of our catchment area as somewhere around 10,000 people total population. The way I see it is that from a shopping perspective, from that economic consideration, we draw more from the surrounding area of Annapolis County and down towards Bridgetown than the other way. The new line, I guess, would be run about halfway between Annapolis Royal and Bridgetown or perhaps a little closer to Annapolis Royal than halfway. When I look at our health centre, the catchment area again, since it's located between Middleton and Digby - and is closer to Digby than Middleton - if we draw a line partway between Annapolis Royal and Digby, which has its own health centre in Annapolis Royal and Middleton, we get a stronger draw from the rest of Annapolis County. Another provincial department where we're represented along with the

rest of Annapolis County, aside from health, is of course the school region. I won't say "school district" any more because of changes there, but the regional administration is still part of the Annapolis administration.

That in a nutshell are some of the considerations that I saw listed as considerations in your mandate and report, and which I think are reasons - I hope if there is room either on your side or the decision makers that you make your recommendations to - to consider looking at continuation of something close to the status quo, and I believe have valid arguments.

From a geographic standpoint, I did have a couple of observations. When I looked at the map and quickly looked at the geographic distance from one end to the other to places like a proposed new Cumberland riding and one on the Eastern Shore and maybe a couple of others. From a geographic standpoint, it wouldn't be that much farther to take a car from one end of Clare to the other end of Argyle and drive through the little thin sliver for Yarmouth. Perhaps that has been considered and thrown out, but it occurred to me just from a stand-off position without knowing cultural difference first-hand that it might be worthy of consideration.

It also occurred to me that when I looked at the area of Nova Scotia and conveniently saw it was 55,000 square kilometres, I wondered if in the analysis in coming up with - particularly decisions or conclusions and whether or not deviations might be made on the basis of geography - if the financial gurus may have considered looking at a formula that factors in some deviation from the average size of 1,000 square kilometres along with deviation from the number of electors - sorry, compare number of electors to some mathematical value for the square area and perhaps see if that didn't give you a little different flavour or outcome that was worthy of consideration in determining how far you should go with a deviation based on geography. That concludes my remarks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Geography is our second term of reference. We've used it in certain instances. Right now, if you're looking at the 51-seat House of Assembly on the existing boundaries, or even the ones that we've made some slight adjustment to, you would have a constituency like Guysborough-Eastern Shore-Tracadie that is huge. It's the largest one, and again it's very coastal in terms of population.

Victoria-The Lakes, for example, in Cape Breton - because over the years, we've actually removed seats from rural Nova Scotia - when I say "we", the Electoral Boundaries Commission - and from Cape Breton. Right now, our proposal would be to add a seat in HRM to divide Bedford. That's in the 55- and 56-seat.

So geography is certainly a consideration. Not quite in terms of what you're suggesting in terms of square kilometres or something like that. We do have, I wouldn't say a unique geography, but we have a very interesting geography and almost a unique history as well. I want to ask you, are you suggesting that we should go further up the coast into

Kings West?

MR. BYRON MERSEREAU: I didn't have the data sets that you have access to to get down and try to do some hard analysis, but just from a stand-off gut reaction type of view, it occurred to me that if it was going to become a 55- or 56-seat configuration, and the number of electors in a combined Clare-Argyle would make sense, and by moving some more lines in the Annapolis area around, you could almost restore the Annapolis West and Annapolis East configuration with perhaps some side pieces.

[7:45 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Certainly, if you're going up to Kings West, you're looking at an existing elector base there of over 16,000, so it's getting very close to 1.25. We have spent some time on this, and we're willing to go back and spend more time. Thank you.

The next speaker I have is Evelyn LeBlanc. Again, if you could just spell your name, thank you very much indeed.

MS. EVELYN LEBLANC-JOYCE: My name is Evelyn LeBlanc-Joyce.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think you presented at Clare, didn't you?

MS. EVELYN LEBLANC-JOYCE: I did, yes. It's nice to see you again. Bonsoir, good evening. My name is Evelyn LeBlanc-Joyce, and I'm a student at École secondaire de Clare, and I am a board member of la Société acadienne de Clare.

I am here tonight speaking on behalf of la Société acadienne de Clare. The mandate of la Société acadienne de Clare is to ensure that the French Acadian culture and language stay an integral part of our community. Our mission is to ensure that Clare continues to be a place where one can live and prosper in French. Clare is a very unique community, and we have been so for 250 years. As a minority population, we are hyper aware of anything that might endanger our rights.

As you know, we are gathered here tonight to continue with the process of the Electoral Boundaries Commission. I was present at the September 8th meeting in Saulnierville, and since then, our position has not changed. Our organization is firm in its position that the recommendation to hand over the protected district of Clare should be put forward and accepted, and that Digby-Annapolis should be granted their own riding. This message also came through in a report released by the Commission on Effective Representation for Acadian and African Nova Scotians in November 2017. The message was very clear. Effective representation is necessary for minority populations to feel part of society.

Our country, Canada, is a bastion of democracy, equity, inclusion, and diversity. In

order to maintain these values, the Canadian government must ensure that these citizens all have a voice in the decisions made. This is not always easy because to have equity one must treat everyone differently. Each community has its own advantages and disadvantages, and to ensure fair play rules, they must be changed to accommodate differences.

The world-renowned Acadian author Antonine Maillet once said that Acadians as a people will know they have come into their own when they are focused on their contributions to society, rather than what they need to do to maintain their own vitality. This applies to any community. To contribute to a society, a community must have something to contribute, the confidence that it is welcome, and a healthy relationship with their society.

Merci, thank you, for your work on this commission and helping us to re-establish our riding.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions?

Thank you very much, Evelyn.

MS. EVELYN LEBLANC-JOYCE: Thank you for your time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The next speaker I have on my list is His Worship, Bill MacDonald.

MR. BILL MACDONALD: Good evening. Thank you for taking the time to call me the other day indicating that you couldn't be in Annapolis as suggested the last time in 2013, I believe it was. There was a meeting in Annapolis. It was attended by certainly in excess of 200 people, I believe. I was there with my wife and many others who expressed loud and clearly the position of the community - that they wanted to remain exactly where they were. So not for the purposes of saving time here this evening, let me just provide an executive summary that we maintain that position that we did then and continue to do so.

Maybe it's helpful if I actually talk a little bit about Annapolis Royal. I can really only speak on behalf of the Town of Annapolis Royal. We are the cradle of our nation - we are aware this nation first arose. Annapolis Royal has a population of around 500 people, but as was suggested by a former speaker - he talks about the catchment area. Well we talk about the people who see the Town of Annapolis Royal as their town - the community of interest - 8,000 to 10,000 people.

So when I speak about the Town of Annapolis Royal, some of those people wish for me to speak on their behalf because they have businesses in the Town of Annapolis Royal, although they don't live inside the two square kilometres of our town.

The history of Annapolis Royal is significant, and I trust that all of you know that, but maybe I should summarize it very quickly because I think it's somewhat helpful in providing the position that we take. When Pierre Dugas and Samuel Champlain sailed into the basin in 1605 - the Mi'kmaq people had been there for thousands of years. They continued to live there for thousands of years. Thank you for acknowledging that we're on unceded ancestral territory of the Mi'kmaq people - in particular the people of the L'sitkuk Nation here in Bear River.

The community that developed here in the Town of Annapolis Royal became the capital of the French colony of Acadie - the capital of the British colony of Nova Scotia. For three short years it was the capital of the Scottish colony of Nova Scotia - the legacy of which is the name of the province, is the Coat of Arms for the province. So, the history that rests in the Town of Annapolis Royal, me, as the mayor, and the council are custodians of that and protectors of that.

It was a garrison town in large part when Champlain and Dugas arrived. They were there as entrepreneurs essentially. Dugas had been given the monopoly for the French fur trade in the new lands. So they were there to develop the area, to settle the area, to colonize. It became the capital of Acadie.

In 1710, it became the most fought-over land in North America. Thirteen battles were fought there. Back and forth it went until it finally fell to the British in 1710. It became the capital of Nova Scotia, as I suggested. It was a garrison town. The merchants and the people in the area provided supplies to the fort. Even when the British took over Port Royal and named it Annapolis Royal, the Acadians that were there remained there, provided agriculture, industry, merchants.

When Fort Anne closed as a garrison and moved to Halifax when Edward Cornwallis arrived and made a determination that Annapolis Royal was a place of no consequence and decided to establish the capital in Halifax - when the garrison left the town, the town was left in a desperate situation. There was really no industry other than those that supported the fort - the military - other than the agriculture.

A remarkable thing happened in the Town of Annapolis Royal. It happened in Annapolis Valley, for which the town is the namesake - the Annapolis electoral district, for which the Town of Annapolis Royal is the namesake. The rail line came down the valley and into the Town of Annapolis Royal. Overnight it became the commercial hub of the area, and so all of the attention, the economic imperative, the cultural imperative, the social imperative of the Town of Annapolis Royal was up the valley, because down the valley came produce, products that would be loaded on ships, sent to Europe, sent all around the world. Ships would arrive and depart from there. Sir John A. Macdonald recognized that this was an important commercial hub, and as he was establishing the presence of the new Dominion of Canada, had a large federal building planted smack dab in the middle of the Town of Annapolis Royal, right at the intersection of road, rail, and sea. That was a very

significant and important thing.

Now, we love our neighbours. We love our friends in all of the other places in Nova Scotia. We respect their history. We respect their people and their views, so I'm not prepared to speak on behalf of them in any regard other than to say that 8,000 to 10,000 people view Annapolis Royal as their town, and they're currently in the Annapolis electoral district.

When you talk about history, I think it's firmly established that that's a significant factor for us. The cultural imperative hasn't changed in any significant way. The economic imperative hasn't changed in any significant way. The Province of Nova Scotia established the regional enterprise networks, and the Town of Annapolis Royal is a member of the Valley REN, not the REN that's down in Yarmouth. When we looked at all of the regional enterprise networks, we knew the one that was associated and most fit the economic imperatives of our community.

I think really from the perspective of the town, we're small but mighty. But we're more than just a line on a map. When you draw a line across a community, and you sever them from their history and absorb them into a place that, while they're friendly with and familiar with, they don't have the same attachments to, it's chaotic. It could be chaos. Economic concerns obviously are utmost in my mind, social and cultural concerns of course.

I won't go on. I think the point that is made for the Town of Annapolis Royal is it needs to remain within the Annapolis electoral district. It needs to remain where they are the namesake. It needs to remain because of its significance. It is the cradle of our nation, and to suddenly shift us and move us and attach us and connect us to some place that we don't have history with is the wrong move.

I leave you to work out the numbers. I see that there are large numbers all over the province when you're trying to figure this out. It's a difficult task that you have. I don't wish it on anyone. Thank you for doing it. I can only speak on behalf of the town and confirm for you one more time that the Town of Annapolis Royal wishes to stay exactly where it is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Questions from other commissioners?

MR. MICHAEL BAKER: Just a quick question, Mr. MacDonald. Have you had a chance to look at the four options that are on the table?

MR. BILL MACDONALD: I have, but I prefer not to speak to any one of them. I leave that for you to decide.

MR. MICHAEL BAKER: You have that right, absolutely.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions.

MR. LEONARD LEFORT: Could we maybe ask you to stay after and help us with where you see the line drawn on the maps?

MR. BILL MACDONALD: The Town of Annapolis Royal is the smallest incorporated municipality in the Province of Nova Scotia. The lines are very clear, two square kilometres of our own municipality.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Perhaps, following up on Mr. LeFort's question there, we could have a look at the map later. We have it over there. We have spent some time looking at it, which we did, actually on Wednesday, in preparation for this meeting. Perhaps you could help us.

Again, I understand, and the commission understands, that it's not just a numbers game. It can't be. It became that, I think, in 2011-12, but there was a reason for that. We are very much concerned about communities of interest, we really are. But it also has to fit in with our mandate and with our terms of reference.

MR. BILL MACDONALD: I think we qualify from the terms of reference perspective.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. If you can stay behind perhaps when we're finished. I don't know how many - I only have one more speaker on my list, but there will be others. Just help guide us because what we found in this process is that where people have sort of pointed certain things out to us, then we've been able to go back and incorporate it. Because although we're representing across the province, we have an historical knowledge, but not a unique knowledge of a particular area, unless it's where we ourselves live, just like you were saying with Annapolis Royal.

[8:00 p.m.]

MR. BILL MACDONALD: I can talk at length about Annapolis Royal.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, if you can just stay and help us because we did spend quite a lot of time on Wednesday having a look at that particular map. Having our two mappers from Elections Nova Scotia doing - what happens if we shift it here, what happens if we shift it there. I have to say that when we went back to Cape Breton the other weekend, for example, people said, we think you've got it right this time. So we went back with a fresh set of maps. So if you don't mind, you can stay behind and do that.

MR. BILL MACDONALD: I'd be happy to.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. PAUL GAUDET: Maybe a point of clarification. In your presentation you mentioned chaotic consequences of drawing the lines in the wrong place. That kind of scares me. Could you give us one example of this kind of consequence?

MR. BILL MACDONALD: From the perspective of the social and economic imperatives of our community, they're directed up the valley - they're not directed down to Digby and the Neck and down the French shore at all. Those are our friends. Those are our neighbours. We work on projects and we share certain interests. Historically our economic imperative has always been up the valley.

The Town of Annapolis Royal is one of multiple municipalities in the Annapolis Valley that are involved in inter-municipal agreements for all kinds of services. To then suddenly remove us from that where we don't have the same political representation could be impacting on individuals.

So if you remove the Town of Annapolis Royal, someone who may live in the County of Annapolis outside of the town, and wouldn't be included in the severing and have a business in the town, they wouldn't have any kind of political say or any kind of electoral impact on what happens to the community. It's a significant factor.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. The final speaker that I have is Don Droy.

MR. DON DROY: Mr. Chairman, and members of the commission, first of all, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak here tonight.

My wife and I are residents and homeowners in Annapolis Royal. I would just like to start off - basically what has happened is, we had a meeting of a number of residents. I'm not talking politics - I'm talking just as a group of neighbours getting together. Everyone seemed to have a very strong objection to the proposal removing Annapolis from the electoral district.

We've only been here for two years. We moved here just over two years ago, but the majority of the neighbours I'm talking to have been here for years, so the feelings were very strong. Obviously, they brought up the point that before - there was obviously a meeting in 2012 and that Electoral Boundaries Commission made it clear at that time - it was made clear to them that they did not want to join Digby as they felt that the features and the history of Annapolis Royal were just totally different than that of Digby.

They said it would be a mistake to join Digby. They mentioned it was noteworthy that the rationale was found to be reasonable at that time and they were wondering exactly why it has reared its ugly head again. I think you have somewhat explained what has brought that about.

Once again, just reiterating - obviously Annapolis Royal was founded in 1605 and is considered one of the cultural capitals of Canada. It is a classic example of prolonged fine heritage preservation and economic development based around the arts. That's specifically what they're known for, their arts. Our population, as was stated earlier, was just 500 citizens, and it's an example of a very fine small town, an undefiled rural community which is of interest not only to Nova Scotians but to other parts of Canada and dare I say to people across many parts of the world.

I'm basing that statement on feedback that I have received from a lot of tourists. I have done a lot of these graveyard tours with friends of mine who have come here, and it's quite an amazing presentation that Alan Melanson does. What strikes me is the fact that that when we're there doing these tours - I always bring our friends because it's entertaining and informative to listen to it - there's such a wide spread of people coming from all over the place, all over Europe and things like this. People say they have read about it. They've read about Annapolis Royal, and they've heard about Alan's graveyard tours. This is why they're coming. There's a lot of tourism being brought in because of the town and what the town stands for, also in print and various broadcast media.

As was stated earlier, the town's roots have always been in the Annapolis Valley. We share the same traits with many other towns north of us. We feel strongly that it does not belong in the district of Digby, whose economy was once based on railways and shipping and now primarily on fishing and food processing. It does not have the history, the heritage, or the issues that Annapolis Royal does.

I have obviously read over what exactly you're charged with and your four options. From what I can see, the decision to go from 51 to 55 or 56 is based on the premise that the more ridings there are the more flexibility Electoral Boundaries Commissions would have in the future to craft boundaries in accordance with the principles of effective representation. Although it stressed that voter equality was the prime consideration, it also warned that boundary changes should not be just about representation based solely on population. It states that some deviation is allowed in constituency population for effective representation of communities based on geographic, ethnic, racial, or linguistic characteristics. However, it also emphasizes that the people of a village or a community should be together in one constituency, not arbitrarily divided just to ensure that the number of voters in adjoining constituencies are exactly the same. The Village of Annapolis Royal is a member of the Annapolis Valley community, no other.

The Keefe report obviously provides you with considerable flexibility. The only thing I would ask on behalf of the people we spoke to is that you would move the current proposed boundary of Annapolis further to the west to encompass Annapolis Royal and allow our residents to remain in the present riding.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions from commission members? Thank you.

We have exhausted the list that I was given, so now people from the floor are free to come forward. Gentleman at the back, please. Could you just indicate who else wants to speak so I can just get some idea? That's fine. We have plenty of time.

MR. ALAN MELANSON: I wasn't going to speak, but I like to listen. I'm a 10th generation Acadian. I grew up in Clare. My mother has Mi'kmaq bloodline from the Muise-d'Entremont marriage of Pubnico. So, the Acadian story, Mi'kmaq story - everybody's culture is important to me. I'm past-president of the Historical Association of Annapolis Royal. I do tours. I try to represent everybody's culture.

I have listened, and I am somebody, as an Acadian, who likes to get results and try to compromise as well, because in negotiations, nobody gets everything they want. I like the fact that there are boundaries that have been established for minority groups, but I also realize that Annapolis Royal is a unique community.

I grew up in Clare, but I've got to say now my community is Annapolis Royal. I've got land in Clare, but this is my home - and it's home to anybody who is Acadian. There are 3 million people and growing worldwide that are Acadians. The Acadian of Port Royal is not the Port Royal habitation. It's not really even Fort Anne. What it is - lands just across the river - Melanson Settlement. We've done digs. We found 18 foundations. I can show you exactly where my ancestor settled. He was bilingual. He could write English. I've got letters he wrote to the Governor of Massachusetts in English - perfect English - but he was also French.

The Port Royal of the Acadians is from here, Goat Island to Paradise, which is in Annapolis County. That's the cradle of Acadia. That's the crèche, the birthplace of the Acadians. It is not Grand Pré. It's not Chéticamp. It's not Clare. It's not Pubnico. Those communities didn't exist yet. Pubnico was the only place - in 1653 - the only two places in the world that Acadians have the same lands now that they did when they got here. One is in Memramcook, New Brunswick and the other one is Pubnico. I've got ancestors in Pubnico and ancestors from here.

I think it's important for Acadians worldwide to come to a district that encompasses this old Port Royal. So, my suggestion - if you're going with the 56 seats, I like that - would be to - I look at Annapolis Royal, I see 11,419. I look at Digby-Annapolis, I see 12,546. I see Annapolis at about 550 people. If you took 550 out of one and put it in the other, just the Town of Annapolis, which is how the boundaries are now. My brother lives just up the river - we're twins. He's in Digby-Clare and I'm in Annapolis - we live six miles apart.

So, leave the boundary where it is now. Digby will have 12,000, Annapolis Royal will have 12,000 roughly. Everybody wins - nobody loses. That's the way government should work. Winston Churchill said, there's no worse system than democracy, except all the others.

I'm glad to see there's better Acadian representation than we had in 1710 because in 1710 we did have two councillors in the British Council. One was 84 years old and deaf, and the other one was 86 and senile, but they made a quorum. So, you've got to put all those things together and find a common solution that everybody is happy with.

Right now, nobody from Digby has knocked on my door saying we want you in Digby, and I don't know if we've done the same thing over there. Leave us where we are now. There are no changes there.

With the town, leave the town. We are our own municipality. Annapolis County is a municipality, but that building from Annapolis County is right in the Annapolis Royal building. So, leave us where we are and we'll both have 12,000 electors, and have an equal say and we can choose where we want, and we both feel linked to our past and to our history and culture. That's a win-win situation, so that's what I would propose. Thank you for your time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. As I said, we as a commission are very willing to look at the options. That's why we're here.

MR. PAUL GAUDET: Je veux simplement remercier, and I'm very proud to have been your teacher. (Laughter)

MR. ALAN MELANSON: I listened to a thing or two. Thank you.

MR. PAUL GAUDET: You were bright at that time, and you shine tonight also.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The next speaker is this gentleman on my right, and that will follow with you, sir.

MR. ROY STUBBS: Good evening, thank you for letting me talk. My name is Roy Stubbs. I live in Cornwallis Park. I've lived in six different areas in Canada. There is a situation here. I'm over here trying to learn what's going on here, but this is French. They didn't teach me French in the military.

[8:15 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: We did have some English, but I think we're out.

MR. ROY STUBBS: I excuse that. What I'm trying to say to you is there wasn't enough English. That's what I'm trying to say.

Based on the history the mayor talked about, yes, I have read about all of this. Annapolis Royal has a lot of history, more than Digby, and I understand that. I lived in Digby for a short time, and Digby town functions 24/7. Why? Because I lived just before

the wharf, and it's going 24/7. I know that from experience.

What I'm trying to say to you is that I have always thought Bear River Bridge was where the boundary lines are. If that's where it is, then that's where it should stay. That's all. It's more than fair - 12,000, 12,000, yes. Make it happen. That's reasonable based on both cities. The Annapolis area has a lot more history than Digby, and I understand that - based on the history that I have read. This area here, Cornwallis, has a lot of history too.

It's important that we keep on functioning here. It's not functioning totally the way it should be, and it should be. That's my opinion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. That's why we're here.

This gentleman next, please.

MR. CHRISTIAN THIBAUDEAU: Good day. I will be very brief. My name is Christian Thibaudreau. There's only one point I want to bring. I have worked in a lot of places in Canada, from the north to the east to the west to the south. You name it, I have been there.

I have learned one thing working everywhere in the country: we're all equal. I understand culture. I understand differences. I understand all the approaches that different people - I'm from Quebec. I'm French. Actually, I'm a direct descendant of Pierre le meunier from Round Hill. I can see the Acadians. I have worked in Clare. I have worked in Digby. But we're all equal.

Why do we need so many people to govern so little population? I'm sure that we can keep things the way they are and bring people for representation - the Acadians are very important, the African Nova Scotians are very important, and the natives are very important, but does every little area need to have their own representative? Or could you have a representative on the Acadian side who could take care of a greater area, let's say?

Economically wise, I participated a lot in the exercise of One Nova Scotia that took place earlier, about five or six years ago maybe. I remember the circles that they did. You know what? Everything I heard here tonight and everything I heard at One Nova Scotia, Digby doesn't circle with anything past Annapolis Royal when they did their economic - I don't know what they call it. What they did is, they studied the types of industry, the economy, and found which communities were best economic partners with each other. At the time, it was Digby circles with Clare.

We work well together, the whole nine yards. Personally, I believe that Digby has benefited more since the entire Digby area is run with one MLA. I think that maybe not culturally and all that, but I know my MLA, Mr. Wilson. He works fricking hard on both sides of the county. He's doing a lot of great things.

That'd be it. Why can't we leave things with the economic regions to better benefit the area instead of splitting them? If you guys identify that there's a cultural need, an historical need, or - this young lady, I really liked what she said, because I understand that to strive you have to move ahead and take care of yourself. Well, then, come up with an extra option to have a representative that will take care of that part. Could it mean that you can leave Digby the way it is, leave Argyle and that part of the province the way it is, but have an MLA, I guess - an extra MLA - who will represent both communities, who can have some type of veto in the House when it comes to Acadian affairs or when it comes to African Nova Scotian affairs?

The government is going to have to stop dividing us. We live in a country where we're working hard every day to unite everybody - all the cultures and everything - and here we are talking about coming up with a system to divide people even more. What do we want? Do we want to be together or do we want to be divided? That's my opinion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We have had similar comments expressed to us, so we understand that. Thank you so much.

There's a question here.

MR. MICHAEL J. BAKER: Thanks for coming out tonight. Just so it's clear in my mind: you're in favour of less government, less seats? Is that how I'm reading you - a 51-seat option?

MR. CHRISTIAN THIBAUDEAU: I cannot tell the government what to do, because if I was smart enough to be in government, I would be in government. My opinion is that if something works - we've got to look at the economic dynamics of the areas. Culture is important, but we have to look at the economy.

We're dying here in rural areas, so I think that your committee should focus on the economic foundation of each area that you're studying. That should be the primary care. If we lose our economy, the culture is going to go with it.

You've got to support an economy and the government has got to come with a strong economic plan. They're not really doing a good job with that when it comes to down this way, so please don't make their life any harder. Let's stay united and if there's a culture need for a certain group of population, then let's take a sidestep to it. Don't divide Digby and Clare. We're the only economic - you guys are the only economic partner to Digby. really, when you look at the type of economies we have, so don't break it.

On top of it, I understand culture, and if there is a need to identify a special status for Clare, Argyle, and Chéticamp and those places, well, then they can do like they did with the school board. They have one seat for the African Nova Scotian people and use one voice for the tri-counties. It appears to work fine. I don't know if that answers your

question. I don't know if we need more MLAs or not. I don't think we do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So, you're sort of supporting the concept of a member at large.

MR. CHRISTIAN THIBAudeau: Yes, the concept of a member at large, but not for the entire province, because the Acadians of western Nova Scotia have a different need - I did live four years in Cape Breton too - than the Acadians in Cape Breton. All you're doing is isolating those communities in a way while providing them with a sense of, "Yes, we took care of you, you have your own representative." But we need to stick together and not to be split apart.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. The next speaker.

MR. MATTHEW DUBOIS: I may ramble because I wasn't prepared to speak here, but I thought I get my two cents' worth. Personally, I am not geographically tied to any one area. When it comes to politics, I think a representative should be my representative no matter where he comes from. If he lives in this district or that district, I just expect him to represent my interest when the time comes. The idea of a member at large appeals to me, and I believe we should have more members at large representing more different homogenous interests. I do like the idea of having more ridings so that you can have a balance for protected ridings. That's an innovative way of solving the problem. Again, since not all people of one interest live in one part of the province or county, I think a member at large still makes more sense than having more ridings, more MLAs, more expenses, and whatnot.

I also find that going by geographic divisions doesn't seem to make much sense when it comes to ridings and representing interests. Maybe it's just me, but I notice there seems to be a line that goes down one side of Cape Breton and across the province, and every boundary seems to span out from there to the coast. Although the coast has one set of interests - the fishery industry and logging - what goes on in the interior of the province - rural logging, forestry, and whatnot - seems to be of a different interest. Getting away from that kind of prejudice of divvying out the province lengthwise and having one part of our riding be on the coast and one part being deep rural doesn't seem to make much sense when it comes to trying to organize by interest and by economic fortune.

Having said that, I have only been living in Granville Ferry, which is a bedroom community of Annapolis Royal, for six and a half years. In that six and a half years, I have come to appreciate the culture and the economics in there. When I heard that they were splitting half of Annapolis and putting it in with Digby, a face of horror went over my face. Even in six and a half years, there's no way that I can see the cultural, economic history of Annapolis Royal belonging to Digby, the whole idea of having a Digby-Annapolis riding, how the health care is going to be divvied up, the way the economic benefits or the way the representation is going to be that will benefit Annapolis Royal, and basically, that's my community.

Having said that, thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions? Paul.

MR. PAUL GAUDET: Did I hear you say that an MLA should be a representative of people rather than a representative of a geographic area?

MR. MATTHEW DUBOIS: Yes.

MR. PAUL GAUDET: That's an interesting thought.

MR. MATTHEW DUBOIS: If it was up to me, you would only have members at large. People would vote for whatever interests an MLA represents.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, thank you. Would anybody else like to speak? Please come forward.

MR. FLOYD BENJAMIN: My name is Floyd Benjamin. I am a long-term resident of Annapolis County. I currently live in Inglisville, which is just up past Lawrencetown on what we call the hill of the South Mountain. I previously owned a home and lived in Melvern Square, which is about a mile from the Kings County border. Annapolis County is unique. The people from the Middleton area, a lot of them work at CFB Greenwood, which is the saving blood of the area.

But we have always migrated to Annapolis. The municipality office is in Annapolis Royal. Our history is in Annapolis. I would like to remind people that our history did start in Port-Royal and in St. Croix Cove, I believe in 1603. We are very deeply attached to that. We have always migrated, even though the living is made in Kings. I think a lot of Forces personnel, in my perspective seeing them - I have been involved in various organizations over the years - tend to come this way. Our economic plight has not always been the best in Annapolis County.

[8:30 p.m.]

Because of our history, we should stay together, but another compromise we used to have is what we called the Annapolis riding and the Digby-Annapolis riding. The boundary was at Allains Creek, with Annapolis Royal, and went out Highway No. 8. That worked very, very well.

That a particular government decided that they wanted to do away with seats that another Party was winning is wrong, morally wrong. That's why we're here today, because of a political system by a political Party.

I am fiercely for one Party, but my thing is this: when the election is over, no matter

who the political candidate is, no matter what I think of them, they are my MLA. They are part of the government of this province or the Government of Canada. They should represent me as well as everybody of all political stripes, religions, cultures, or whatever.

To take another portion of Annapolis County, Springfield, and stick it out with Bridgewater and that area - when they, too, migrate here, even though they go to Bridgewater. Their taxes are here, and most of their services are here. They migrate to both places. It's a small, little community. To cut that off is wrong. The same as it was wrong to cut off Maitland Bridge and stick it with Queens County. It was morally wrong.

This commission has a duty to look at the moral and the non-political aspects of it and the political aspects in the past, because that is exactly why we are here today. Annapolis County is a unique county. Western Nova Scotia is a unique area, and when you take from the Annapolis County line, which used to be the old southwest political district, federal political district, we have always associated with the Acadians. We have elected Acadians, and we have supported them.

We brought, and Annapolis County was a big part of that, the first female MP, Coline Campbell, in government in an area where the old boys' network was very prevalent. She was a great MP and still is a great person. This area unites when it wants to, and to divide it is morally wrong. That's all I have to say on that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. Any questions from the other commission members? Thank you very much.

Now, please, if you want to come forward. We do appreciate you coming out on a very, very cold evening.

MR. DAVID CVET: I live in Smith's Cove. I think I'm the only one - there's just a few people from Digby County here.

Listening to all the stuff, I just have a couple of comments about some of the points raised earlier this evening. Firstly, the history of Annapolis is indeed unique. It's not a fact of more history. It's just a bit longer than Digby's. I just want to point out that Rear Admiral Robert Digby, in 1783, in his ship *Atalanta*, a 17-cannon ship, went to New York City and evacuated 1,500 United Empire Loyalists and dropped them off at Joggins in an area at that time called Conway. Later, Conway was renamed Digby in honour of Rear Admiral Digby. It does have history, but it's a different history compared to Annapolis.

The second thing is, sitting here listening to all these comments, I kind of feel like the middle child. We have Clare and the Acadians on one side, and we've got Annapolis on the other side, and then you have Digby in the middle, which is primarily a fishing industry. It has its own unique culture. I guess in some ways, we're pretty laid back, because with all this discussion about electoral boundaries - I don't really give a rat's ass

how it's structured, as long as we get the job done, and let's move on. If Annapolis wants to stay together, that's fine. I'm okay with that. I'm probably representing a lot of the folks from Digby in that sentiment. I don't think it's a really big problem to keep the electoral boundaries the same as they were before. Clare has theirs, and we have the middle child called Digby. I'm fine with that too. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Any questions?

Please, would you like to come forward? Thank you.

MS. SUSANNA HALEY: I wasn't actually sure whether I was going to come tonight. I'm a schoolteacher who's very interested in politics. I certainly didn't intend to speak, but like the previous speaker, I feel kind of divided. I grew up in Bear River. I grew up on the Annapolis County side of the river.

The town is split in half. Half of it is in Annapolis County, and half of it is in Digby County, which is a decision that was made a very long time ago. That is when the county split. The idea that Annapolis and Digby do not have much in common - they were in fact the same county for a very long period of our history, and Isaiah Wilson lays that out quite well in *A Geography and History of the County of Digby, Nova Scotia*.

My sister went to high school in Annapolis and I went to high school in Digby, so my family has been connected to both areas for as long as I've been alive.

I moved away and lived all across Canada, and I came back. I chose to live in Annapolis. I work in Digby County. I'm a teacher, so I work in the Tri-County Regional Centre for Education. I have worked at Islands Consolidated. I have worked at the Weymouth High School, which is actually in Clare - it's in St. Bernard. Currently I work at Digby High School.

There will always be a division between Annapolis and Digby. For as long as I can remember, there has been this idea of separation. But there are also large parts of both places that are combined, and there are some shared interests. I've heard Digby described as a fishing town. Digby as a town, actually, was primarily a tourism town to begin with. Currently its economy is largely based on fishing and tourism. Annapolis Town has a long history and a very strong connection to the tourism sector, but parts of Annapolis County, including the Bay Shore, are very connected to the fishing sector and are more similar to Digby Neck and Islands, possibly, than they are to the opportunities that exist within the town.

Regardless of where the next boundary ends up, there will always be dispute. I worked for Robert Thibault when the West Nova boundary changed, and everybody thought the world would end by that boundary change, and in fact it hasn't.

The question here is about the protected seats. They never should have been removed, in my opinion. That decision was made to accommodate metro seats, so seats were removed from rural areas. They were protected seats, but they were also primarily rural, at a time when rural needs more voice, not less.

The questions I have are whether there was any consideration of the impact of political decisions by different levels of government based on population density. There could be an argument made that in an urban setting, municipal decisions actually have a more significant, direct impact on the affairs of the people living there. When we look at the numbers - and I agree with representation by population, but there are other considerations to be taken into consideration. I would argue that in a rural area, the decisions of the provincial and federal governments actually have a more significant impact on the everyday lives of the people living there.

When I worked for Robert Thibault in Ottawa, I had a discussion with some of my colleagues who worked for Members of Parliament who were from Toronto and Montreal and London, who looked at the size of our riding, just the population, and said, how do you have a representative when you have 40,000 fewer people than we have? My answer was - and I did actually just look this up a minute ago - that West Nova has an area of 8,885 square kilometres, and Papineau - I chose that because it's our Prime Minister's riding - has an area of 9.91 square kilometres.

When you look at the number of issues that can arise in a significantly large geographic area, there are more issues. In West Nova we have Acadians, we have fishing, we have forestry, we have all of those things. When we look at where the boundaries end up, the average number that you can't deviate beyond, the 25 per cent, is based on an average of 51 seats. Is there a consideration of having fewer seats or of looking at possibly reducing the number of seats in metro, because of the nature of the political impact, and allowing the rural seats to remain? It would be a return, possibly, to the 52-seat model that we had before, but possibly with some shifts - I know Digby and Annapolis were combined at that point, to as far as Allains Creek.

The last thing - well, I guess two more, sorry. The idea of having an additional representative - why was that only considered for Chéticamp and Inverness, and not for Clare-Digby or Argyle-Barrington?

The last thing I'll say is, one of the previous speakers compared having representation to replace the protected seats with members at large, which is one that I quite like, as long as we make sure that there is regional representation within that and that it is like the school board seats. Even now, within the protected ridings there is no guarantee that the elected representative is actually going to represent the community that is meant to be represented.

That's it. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. Any questions?

DR. PETER M. BUTLER: I wanted to ask, do you think that public opinion will support the notion of seats at large or members at large?

MS. SUSANNA HALEY: I would say that some political decisions are difficult. Politicians need to do what needs to be done and not base it on populism - we see where that leads us in 2019. Those seats should be protected based on the historical inequities that have existed for the populations that are meant to be protected.

I would argue that there should be at least one seat protected for the Mi'kmaq people as well.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A point of clarification: there is a seat. It was established in 1992. It's just not been taken up. If the Mi'kmaq population chose to, that would give us a 52- or 56- or 57-seat House, depending on where we end up.

With respect to Chéticamp, the issue there is that there is a small population - perhaps 2,500 and change - who identify as Acadians. When the so-called protected ridings were established back in 1992, Chéticamp was left out, so we're just looking at that.

I think we're getting more interest in members at large at this meeting than we've had across the province so far. We did get a little bit this week as well. But in the past, people would argue with it because how can one member represent, say, the whole of Nova Scotia, which is what the Mi'kmaq seat would be? Could you look at regional? So, if you take Acadians, could you identify this area? Then up into northern Nova Scotia, including Cape Breton, so you could have two. If you take African Nova Scotians - again, because the population is so dispersed - could you have a member at large, say for African Nova Scotians in Halifax metro, and then one perhaps in Cape Breton to incorporate Whitney Pier and so on? These are all the challenges that we are coping with. As I said, Nova Scotia has a unique history and a unique geography.

[8:45 p.m.]

Coming back to the issue you raised in terms of the size of electoral districts, we had one presentation that said that in Ontario - I haven't checked this fact - you have MLAs representing 100,000, so therefore we could have 10 seats in Nova Scotia. I think that was a more flippant remark. But these are some of the issues. Certainly, less seats in metro - metro would say that they have close to 50 per cent of the population, so they should have 50 per cent of the seats. Right now, they would not.

MS. SUSANNA HALEY: Can I comment on that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, of course you can.

MS. SUSANNA HALEY: When we look at equality versus equity, sometimes equity means that if those 100,000 people can be represented by one person because they live in a 10 kilometre-square area, whereas somebody who is living in an almost 9,000 - and I'm talking federal district - an equitable answer is to allow a representative for a smaller population because they're representing a more diverse population that is more geographically spread out. That would be my counter to metro.

As somebody who works in education, equity is something where I see a disparity in education, as well, between metro and here. It can't always be about population. We talk about declining enrolment, we talk about declining population, but we're not doing anything to ensure that the voices in rural areas are represented and heard so that we stop and find solutions for that decline in population and decline in enrolment.

We need more voice for the smaller populations, and the larger populations that are more densely put together - again, political representation, what serves their interests better: municipal, provincial, or federal?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks so much for that. We have had various representations talking about the role of municipal councillors and the work they do. Certainly, in HRM, they're representing a far larger population than their elected representatives as MLAs. These are all the challenges we have to work with.

Thank you so much. Are there any further comments from the floor?

Come forward, please. If you want to correct something, it has to go on the record.

MR. FLOYD BENJAMIN: Floyd Benjamin. When I referred to Digby-Annapolis, that was a combination that worked very well, from Allains Creek down to the Digby riding. That worked very well, because it also brought in the common ground of Annapolis County and the people down in Bear River. It kept Bear River together.

We currently have a First Nations reserve where part is in Digby County and part is in Annapolis County. When you look at that, and I mean in no way to - the whole area is unique, in my opinion, from Annapolis County down, down to Yarmouth. It's a little different in Yarmouth. When you look at the area of Digby-Annapolis from the Allains Creek area and Highway No. 8 down to where the old Digby riding was before this political meddling. If you talk to the people in Bear River, Clementsvale, or up to Allains Creek, you will find that they are sort of mishmashed with the people from Annapolis and the people from Digby. Some work in one side, some work in the other, but it was a unique fit.

I think that is the best possible solution without offending and upsetting people. In no way am I here to malign Digby. Digby is part of this. I consider from Windsor to Digby the Annapolis Valley, and we are unique, but the Annapolis County line down, like I say, to

Yarmouth is a unique area. We associate more. We are more together. But I would like to correct that about Digby.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Any further comments from the floor? Hearing none, I will close the meeting at this point.

I want to thank you for coming out. As I mentioned, April 1st is our due date. If we need a little bit longer, we can ask for that. We did not have that in our interim. We had to report by November 30th, which we did on the 28th, as I mentioned.

Again, as I mentioned, we have to come forward with one set of recommendations. The House then can table legislation and move from there. We are an independent commission, although we were appointed by a joint committee of the House of Assembly.

In terms of our timeline, even though it's April 1st, our report is in both English and French, so we have to allow for translation and printing and so on. We will be largely finished our work at the end of February into early March, and then we hope to hit that April 1st deadline.

Again, I want to thank you for coming out. Hopefully, there is still more coffee and hot water for tea, if you want to stay. We would be pleased for you to look at the maps and give us some suggestions.

I want to thank our IT crew who have followed us around. Also, we've had the interpreter - the lady at the back - for simultaneous translation.

We do have a website. We're on Facebook. We do have that interactive mapping tool. If you do call, the person you're going to speak to is Julia Kinsman, who is right here - if you want to email. Again, if something occurs to you that you would like us to know, please do so. Thank you for coming out tonight.

[The commission adjourned at 8:53 p.m.]