

NOVA SCOTIA
ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES
COMMISSION

SATURDAY, JANUARY 26, 2019

Days Inn Bridgewater Conference Center
Bridgewater, 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. Stacey Godsoe
Mr. Roy O'Donnell
Hon. Mark Furey
Ms. Carolyn Bolivar-Getson
Mr. Courtney Wentzell
Mr. Don Sedgwick
Mr. Lee Nauss
Mr. Dominick Williams

BRIDGEWATER, SATURDAY, JANUARY 26, 2018

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION

2:00 P.M.

CHAIRMAN
Dr. Colin Dodds

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I do want to apologize that we had to rearrange this meeting. We were down on the Fundy shore last weekend, Friday and Saturday, and it seemed then that the weather would be really bad by the Monday, so we did change that. I hope none of you came to it - we did put it on our Facebook page that it was postponed.

Thanks for coming. My name is Colin Dodds. I live in Halifax, and I'm the chair of the Nova Scotia Electoral Boundaries Commission, so will chair this afternoon's public consultation.

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

Before we actually commence formal proceedings, I would like to ask each of the commission members - we have seven of the nine with us this afternoon. Glenn could not be with us - he's from Antigonish - and Mike, from Sydney. But we do have seven. Starting on my far left, I'll ask each of them to introduce themselves.

[The commission members introduced themselves.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: In our meetings in the Fall - and we did not come directly to this area in the Fall - I did provide a context in terms of how the commission was established, and the controversy over the interim and final reports of the 2012 commission. If there are any questions with respect to that, I'll be pleased to clarify them.

The commission was tasked in its terms of reference with producing boundaries for a 51-seat House of Assembly - that is the current size of the Assembly - and at least one other. Subsequent to our public consultations in the Fall, the commission did produce an interim report that was tabled with the Attorney General on November 28th. It proposed four alternatives, including the 51-seat House.

The total number of electors as of June 29, 2018, was 743,500, and the average

number of electors per 51 seats was 14,578. So the total number of electors compared with 2012 added about 30,000 to what we had when we did the reports back in 2012. Our plan is to update the data to use data from December of last year.

If you're interested in the updated data sets, it's not just the 2016 census data that we use. It's updated in respect of Elections Nova Scotia data from driver's licence changes to new Canadian citizens - right the way through. When we produce our final report, which is due April 1st, we will in fact be revising these maps, not only in terms of the input we receive but also because of the new dataset.

In summary, what we'd like your input on this afternoon are the four options that the commission reported on in the interim report, namely: 51 electoral districts - which is the current size, as I mentioned - with some adjustments, so for example, with respect to Bedford; 55 electoral districts, which include the formerly-protected electoral districts of Argyle, Clare, and Richmond; 55 electoral districts but 56 seats in the House of Assembly, which would include the dual-member electoral district of Inverness, which would have one MLA to represent the geographic district and one MLA to represent the Acadian constituency; and finally, No. 4 - and these are not in ranked order - 56 electoral districts, including an exceptional electoral district for Chéticamp.

At the same time, we would like your input with respect to the maps that we have here, particularly the areas we're in right now, of Lunenburg, Lunenburg West, Queens-Shelburne, and perhaps Chester-St. Margaret's. At the end, if you want to stay behind, we can look more closely at the maps if you've got particular tweaks that you would be suggesting - we'd be pleased to do that.

This afternoon we have three maps of Nova Scotia for all of the province. You'll see that there's also a table that lists each of the electoral districts - 51, 55, and 56, with the number of voters as of June 29, 2018. Then we have some individual maps for Lunenburg, Lunenburg West, Queens-Shelburne, and so on. As I say, you may well have some particular questions with respect to those this afternoon.

Now, we have four speakers who have already identified that they'd like to speak, so I'll call each of those in turn. Then I understand that we have a delegation of councillors coming this afternoon. They are at a memorial event this afternoon at 2:00, so sometime around 3:00 or 3:15 we're expecting three, four, or five councillors from Lunenburg to be with us.

This afternoon, the consultation is due to close at four o'clock.

In terms of our final report, we are only allowed to recommend one of those four options or another set of options that we may have, but just one. When that is presented - and we have the Attorney General with us this afternoon - I understand that there's a

10-day period for that to be then tabled with the House of Assembly. Thereafter, the House can reject or accept our recommendations.

As I mentioned, this is an independent commission, and you can see the representation. It is at the moment, more heavily Halifax-biased because two of our representatives could not be with us this afternoon.

Without further ado, I would like to call Stacey Godsoe. She is the first person who has identified that she would like to speak. If you don't mind, if you could not only give your name but also spell it, please. All of these proceedings are taped, and we have people who transcribe it, and they don't always know very clearly what somebody's name actually looks like. Stacey, if you don't mind, please.

MS. STACEY GODSOE: Thanks for hosting us here today and making a point of coming to Bridgewater. It's appreciated for sure. I am going to read my submission, because a lot of group thinking went into this, so I want to honour all of that work.

Good afternoon, Chairperson Dodds and fellow commissioners. My name is Stacey Godsoe. I'm here today representing the Greater Petite Area Community Association. We're a not-for-profit organization formed two years ago representing communities in the catchment area of Petite Rivière Elementary School. Our mandate focuses on the development and sustainability of cultural, educational, and community development initiatives in the Greater Petite area of Lunenburg County, Nova Scotia. We have over 100 members and substantial community support, largely because of a successful campaign to keep our local award-winning school open. This latter campaign not only saved our elementary school but very much brought our community closer together, enhancing an already-rich tradition of collaboration and co-operation.

The communities we represent are Vogler's Cove, Cherry Hill, Broad Cove, Petite Rivière, Crousetown, Green Bay, Bush Island, Bell Island, Crescent Beach, New Cumberland, Mount Pleasant, and West Dublin. Many of these communities, while in Lunenburg County, are part of the section you're proposing in two of your scenarios to absorb into the provincial constituency of Queens County, moving them out of our current Lunenburg West constituency.

While we genuinely do recognize that the commission has an extremely difficult job to balance fairness, representation, and riding size, we also know you understand that the issue of voter parity needs to be carefully balanced with the community history and community of interest as well as preserving effective representation for all.

In the Courtney report, which you reference in your interim report, it is determined: "[c]ommunity of interest is one of the fundamental principles of the electoral boundary readjustment process" and needs to be carefully balanced and considered against efforts to achieve voter parity. "Citizens naturally identify with community of interest" and

“[e]lectors who identify with a community of interest within their riding are more likely to vote.”

“Drawing constituency boundaries according to a district’s communit(ies) of interests is seen as a way of ensuring better communication between citizens and their representative and of enhancing the representational process generally.”

In our view, Lunenburg County has a history and culture distinct to that of Queens County, different heritage, settlement patterns, economic activities, experiences, and concerns. Our corner of southern coastal Lunenburg County is itself unique and a community of interest that we naturally identify with. While we can appreciate all the many attributes of Queens County, overwhelmingly, our centres of business, recreation, and government, reside in the larger towns of Lunenburg County, particularly Bridgewater, which is also the seat of our municipal government, the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg. As well, many Queens County residents would not prioritize our area or our concerns, justifiably so.

Cutting us out of our natural community of interest fails to recognize the key difference of these communities. There is a real risk that our issues will take a back seat to those of a majority of people with a totally different community reality and set of concerns. The fact that there is no discussion in your draft proposal of the impacts of lumping part of Lunenburg County constituency into Queens indicates that you may not fully understand the significance of this action.

Within our region, the Greater Petite area is known as a thriving microcosm of the county, with numerous young families moving to the area and many successful new businesses establishing roots. We are bucking the trend of outmigration and a downward population spiral that many other rural communities are experiencing. We are growing and thriving, and hope to not be cut out of our riding and essentially punished for this resulting growth.

The success of the recent campaign to save our local elementary school has reinforced both our strong community spirit as well as infused a tangible sense of economic optimism among its residents. We are greatly concerned that severing us off from those with more understanding of our local experience essentially means that our key issues will be less understood and potentially acted upon.

The issue of school closures is a very concrete example of community difference. Queens County has already undergone the agonizing school closure trend. Schools have been merged, and the local regional council does not face the potential community disruption and expense that more school closures might entail. That is not the case for our municipal government, where council keenly understands the importance of keeping small schools in operation. Additionally, an MLA for a Queens County-dominated constituency

is less likely to place a priority on school closures as a provincial issue, an ongoing concern for our region that could be lost in the proposed boundary change.

To illustrate, had our school catchment been split half in Queens and half in Lunenburg West, it is possible that neither MLA would have had the community pressure to advocate on our behalf: 50 families of the school population would have been represented by one and 50 by another, in opposing parties, no less. It is highly unlikely that we would have had the dedicated and consistent advocacy of a single MLA who understood our issue completely and had the benefit of hearing from the whole school catchment in their riding, as we did.

School closures aside, simply cutting us out of the Lunenburg County community of interest and putting us into Queens has strong potential to further disenfranchise voters. Without elected representatives who champion their issues of greatest concern, there is a real threat that voters will feel disconnected and lose interest in the electoral process altogether. In a province where we have a steady decline in voting, this would be a backstep. Furthermore, given the distinct community of interest and its historical, cultural, and economic ties to Lunenburg County, what is the likelihood of anyone from the Greater Petite area being able to successfully win a nomination to run in an election in the Queens constituency, much less win?

We have seen this all happen before. For 10 years, from 2002 to 2012, much of this area was lumped into a Queens constituency, as you are now again proposing. It created confusion at the polls and in communities. We essentially felt disenfranchised and forgotten, serving to simply add voters to an already-very large and expansive riding that stretches from the woods of Keji to the shores of Sable River - exceptional places, but very removed from our own.

People in our community knew that the decision in 2002 was wrong, and that placing us into the Queens constituency was ill-founded. We applauded the report of the Nova Scotia electoral commission in 2012 when it stated,

“Another important set of factors in the redistribution process is *community history, interest, and identity*. Nova Scotia communities have deep historical roots, most dating back to the 18th and early 19th centuries These deeply rooted communities of interest and identity are an important part of Nova Scotia’s heritage as well as its current political reality, and they should be recognized to the greatest extent possible in the boundary redrawing process.”

The report of 2012 indirectly acknowledged that previously placing the Greater Petite area into the Queens constituency compromised our long-standing community of interest and failed to respect our coastal area’s Bridgewater orientation.

[2:20 p.m.]

To put an even finer point on it, in 2012, before the commission made the decision to revert our area back to its original Lunenburg West designation, if you follow, Mr. Mark Furey, who is now the MLA for this riding, said in his presentation to the boundary review commission at that time:

... I believe the sustainability of communities of interest is the core and the foundation to the survival of rural Nova Scotia. Communities of interest have to be seen to be supported as a center of activity outside of Halifax Regional Municipality. Declining population and out-migration of rural residents has to be countered by a demonstrated desire to see the sustainability of rural communities around core services and community infrastructure. I see the creation and responsibility of the Electoral Boundaries Commission to be an opportunity to move forward with the submission of recommendations that are in the best interests of all Nova Scotians.

The commission at that time did indeed forward the recommendation that we revert back to our Lunenburg West boundary, where we remained. Residents celebrated being put back into a constituency that shared our history, our ties, and our concerns. Having our communities in Lunenburg West was the right decision in 2012, and it remains the right decision in 2019.

This pattern of shifting us back and forth on a 10-year rotation makes many residents feel like simply numbers. It also begs the question of whether decisionmakers truly understand the impact of this move. Please do not repeat the mistake of 2002, which was finally corrected in 2012. In the interests of both effective representation and the recognition of the importance of community of interest, we would humbly suggest that you recommend to the government a scenario that keeps our area intact with Lunenburg West.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and for the dedication to this important work to ensure fair representation for all Nova Scotians.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. If you could just remain there, because there may be questions, please?

Paul?

MR. PAUL GAUDET: Could you please give me a little bit more information on the nature of your group and explain the main objective that you pursue?

MS. STACEY GODSOE: Sure. We were founded - we're coming up to two years, I think. Our initial purpose was to keep our school open. Our local elementary school was

undergoing a closure process, and we were an independent group of community members who wanted to engage a lawyer and fight that decision in the judicial system, which we did.

We've expanded since then. Our mandate is about supporting community health and prosperity in our particular set of communities, which we call the Greater Petite area. It spans those villages that I listed.

DR. PETER M. BUTLER: I'd like to ask a question. You know we're being very sensitive to the concept and the issues related to community of interest. I wondered, based on what I've heard you say, is there a size variable? Is there a point at which community of interest comes up and abuts in size? How big is too big, and how little is too little?

MS. STACEY GODSOE: That's certainly not my area of expertise. I would leave that to the commission to determine the number-crunching. I know it's a very challenging task ahead of you, and I appreciate all that you've done to try to balance representation throughout the province, particularly for marginalized communities.

But yes, we decided not to propose an alternative because we felt that, just as we felt that perhaps the commission didn't understand the impacts of that change to our area, we didn't necessarily understand the impacts to other areas. So we didn't propose an alternative, I'm sorry to say.

DR. PETER M. BUTLER: No, that's good, because that's probably one of the most important things that we're going to have to decide.

MS. STACEY GODSOE: I mean, we are very close to Bridgewater as a centre of commerce, and between 30 to 45 kilometres to Liverpool as an alternative. It's a much greater distance for folks to travel from our area of Lunenburg West to Liverpool than to Bridgewater.

DR. PETER M. BUTLER: Well, thanks for that. We still have to deal with it.

MS. STACEY GODSOE: Yep.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I just want to go back to the interim report, actually. If you look at the numbers - I know community of interest is very significant, but we also have to try to balance things number-wise. I do remember 2012, and I do remember 2002. I remember back in 2002, I chaired that commission, and then we made the change back in 2012, when I was the vice-chair.

The data right now, if you look at Table 2 in the interim report, were 16,055, placing Lunenburg West at 1.10, then. In terms of what our current proposal is, it's 13,209, which is now 0.98, so almost on the 1.

The challenge we've got is that Queens, on that basis, is 11,280. So the difference between Lunenburg West under one scenario and under the second scenario is about 2,800. If we take that out of Queens - in other words, restoring your county boundary back to where it was - that puts Queens way under. Then we have to have a justification - do we then go further down Queens-Shelburne, which of course happened in 2012, and in Argyle-Barrington? So it's a knock-on effect.

We do understand communities of interest, but at the same time, we have terms of reference to adhere to.

MS. STACEY GODSOE: I appreciate that. I wish you luck.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

The second speaker who's identified for this afternoon is Roy O'Donnell. He's been before us before. It's nice to have you back, Roy.

Again, if you don't mind, if you could just spell your name out so that the transcribers will have it accurately?

MR. ROY O'DONNELL: Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Roy O'Donnell, and I'm a member of the community of Shelburne. I wanted to thank you for affording me another opportunity to participate in the public consultation concerning more effective representation for all Nova Scotians.

Let me begin by thanking our MLA, Kim Masland, for her hard work and her genuine concern for the people of Shelburne. The interests of Shelburne have been well represented by our MLA in the Nova Scotia Legislature. The concept of fair and effective representation becomes increasingly difficult for an MLA to represent a large area, such as the Queens-Shelburne riding, where it can take upward of three hours to drive from one end of the county to the other.

Shelburne residents are encouraged that this commission is not hampered by a predetermined number of MLAs. We agree that the additional ridings are necessary for effective representation for all Nova Scotians. At the Shelburne meeting, it was also suggested - and it continues to be our opinion - that when determining electoral boundaries, no resident of Nova Scotia should be a loser when it comes to fair and effective representation.

Shelburne also heard that enhanced connections and co-operative developments between the two communities of Queens and Shelburne were presented as a justification for the split. We have seen absolutely no evidence of either. We should not try to recreate an artificial area of representation that may clearly place an MLA between conflicting community issues. Nova Scotians need politicians who are available in person and

understand our issues because they live in the community that they represent. It is traditional in Nova Scotia that a rural riding located within a rural county elects an MLA from its community, and that these county boundaries are political boundaries.

At one of the public meetings in 2012, it was mentioned that there were historic commercial activities between Shelburne and Queens County, which implied that there was an historic linkage that disregarded any county lines. We in Shelburne know that any trade between Shelburne and Queens County is largely incidental.

It would be remiss of me not to take this opportunity to comment on the final report of the 2012 Electoral Boundaries Commission. Mr. Chairman, I am not going to rehash the situation of 2012 again, but I will say that we believed and trusted the previous commissioners after being assured on two separate occasions that there would be no change to Shelburne's electoral boundary.

We felt deceived and betrayed, which quickly turned to anger when we realized that the Shelburne riding was just collateral damage. The residents of Shelburne were reduced to being used as pawns in an effort to increase the number of electors in the Acadian riding of Argyle. It soon became obvious that the residents of Shelburne, including myself, were no longer interested in the political process.

[2:30 p.m.]

The following will demonstrate the change in Shelburne's voting habit: in the election years from 1993 to 2009, Shelburne had voter participation of 64 per cent to 72 per cent. The decision to split Shelburne in half saw voter participation decrease to 50 per cent in 2013 and then decrease again to 39 per cent in the 2017 provincial election.

It is obvious that redrawing electoral boundaries simply to increase the number of electors in a neighbouring riding does not improve voter participation or enhance effective representation. However, I do admit that I was pleased to hear the chairman say that they were not happy campers with respect to the final report of 2012, and when they came together and reached a consensus on the proposals, it was then reaffirmed that we would definitely be travelling to Shelburne.

Mr. Chairman, I have one more item to address, and then I will retire to my seat. I will begin by saying that Section 3 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees every Canadian citizen an equal right to vote, but does this really mean that everyone's vote has to be equal? Many asked themselves that question when Saskatchewan's Electoral Boundaries Commission Act proposed to change riding boundaries. The Act resulted in city areas being underrepresented as compared to rural areas.

The answer to this question came in the landmark decision of the Supreme Court of Canada, better known as the Carter decision. At issue in Carter was the question of

variance in the size of voter populations between constituencies and whether the Section 3 Charter right of some citizens had been infringed upon by proposed changes to Saskatchewan's electoral boundaries that treated rural, urban, and northern ridings differently.

The Supreme Court of Canada ruled that deviation between districts did not violate Section 3 of the Charter and that the purpose of the right to vote in Section 3 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is not equality of voting power but the right to effective representation. The goal of redistribution is to ensure the constitutional right of effective representation.

Elections Canada recognizes that existing boundaries, including county boundaries, have already been drawn in recognition of communities of interest, and those boundaries themselves contribute toward the self-identification of their residents.

In 2013, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs expressed frustration with what it saw as unnecessary changes to the boundaries of electoral districts. The committee expressed a strong preference for continuity of ridings, and of riding patterns over change in order to best preserve the historic continuity of representation in the province.

Both the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal and the independent Commission on Effective Electoral Representation refer to and rely upon the Carter decision in their deliberations and determination. The Carter decision states clearly that "Effective representation and good government in this country compel that factors other than voter parity. . ." such as communities of interest or identity, the historical pattern of an electoral district, a manageable geographic size for districts in rural areas, and minority representation may need to be taken into account.

Carter also makes it clear that the above-enumerated considerations are only examples of consideration that may justify departure from absolute voter parity. Carter emphasizes that this list is not closed, which leads me to make the following request.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask this commission to consider the following suggestion in your final report to the Nova Scotia Government, that each recognized county in Nova Scotia be entitled to a minimum of one elected MLA, which will ensure effective representation for all rural Nova Scotians. This would neither increase nor decrease the total number of ridings in the province but would ensure that each county would have its own individual voice in Halifax and that no other riding would be sacrificed just to increase the numbers in another adjoining constituency.

I have sent letters to all the MLAs in Nova Scotia, and was surprised by the support I received from members of all three Parties. The Leader of one of the Parties has committed his MLAs' support for this proposal if it were to reach the Legislature. Kim

Masland, MLA for Queens-Shelburne, is on record with her support for the return of Shelburne's boundaries. She says the present riding is quite large and that it is difficult to make sure you are effectively representing the entire riding, and that travel time can be a challenge.

Mr. Chairman and commissioners, as a resident of Shelburne, I am guardedly optimistic this time around that the final report will mirror the interim report as it relates to Shelburne. I wish you all well in your deliberations. Thank you for listening.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We were very pleased to meet you in Shelburne. I think you were first off the mark to invite us, so we were there.

Just to be absolutely clear, at the moment, are you happy with the boundary for Shelburne as it is in the interim report?

MR. ROY O'DONNELL: Extremely happy.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you very much. I think that would place you at 11,360. I don't want to keep focusing on numbers.

I understand the point you make about effective representation, but in our terms of reference, it says that there is a right to effective representation and that elector parity is the prime factor in determining the electoral boundaries. So it's not just effective representation; it's also elector parity, which is why the title to our interim report is *Striking a balance between effective representation and voter parity*.

MR. ROY O'DONNELL: I would like to note that the first presenter presented the problem of Lunenburg West. I'd like to remind people here that, especially at the last meeting in 2012, it was suggested by a presenter here in Bridgewater that the simple solution was to take Queens County, Shelburne County, and Argyle, put them together, and divide them in the centre. That didn't work out, as we all know.

For the first presenter, I think that her problem can be resolved by ensuring that every county, every riding, has their own MLA. As I suggested before, that is only a minimum. If there are counties large enough for two or three, so be it.

Thank you very much, again.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Any other points from commissioners?

The third speaker is Patricia Nickerson. Patricia, are you here? No? Perhaps she'll be here later.

The next speaker is the Honourable Mark Furey, MLA for Lunenburg West.

HON. MARK FUREY: Good afternoon. I am the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Lunenburg West and a 30-year resident of both the Town of Bridgewater and the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg. I want to thank you again for the opportunity to speak before you. I had the pleasure of participating in the 2012 Electoral Boundaries Commission.

My comments today are in no way a criticism of the commission's work to date, but are intended to present and support a reasonable option to those recommendations that the commission has presented in your interim report. The option I present, I believe, will meet and/or exceed the terms of reference provided by the select committee, as well as the expectations laid out in the Carter decision in the Supreme Court of Canada in 1991.

My submission will advance one option for the commission to consider as you reassess the collective submissions and prepare to draft and submit your final report.

Allow me to present my rationale in support of this submission. My position and recommendation are based on the four factors referenced in the Supreme Court of Canada decision, as well as the commission's terms of reference: geography, effective representation, seat entitlement, and communities of interest.

In the past, as previous speakers have alluded to, the Lunenburg West electoral district included the existing geography of Lunenburg West as it is today. A previous boundary review - I believe in 2001 - had displaced those communities that Ms. Godsoe referenced earlier, so I won't repeat the names of those communities.

The seat entitlement at the time for the former Lunenburg West riding prior to 2002 was identified to be 1.13, consistent with the terms of reference for the commission at that time, as well as the expectations laid out in the Supreme Court of Canada decision. The electoral boundaries commission review of 2012, based on submissions at that time, and consistent with the terms of reference, reinstated this geography to the Lunenburg West electoral district as we know it today.

The existing electoral district of Lunenburg West includes the core community of Bridgewater, where the broader community gravitates for health care, shopping, secondary education, and public education, as well as multiple public service needs too numerous to mention. The interim report of this commission identifies the seat entitlement for Lunenburg West to presently be 1.10. The interim report also identifies an optional 51-seat arrangement of electoral districts where electors and seat entitlement remain the same for Lunenburg West at 1.10.

Of particular interest in the interim report are those ridings that demonstrate significant similarities to Lunenburg West, including but not limited to geography, community history, and communities of interest. Kings South, with the focal point being New Minas, has a seat entitlement of 1.18; Northside-Westmount, a seat entitlement of

1.12; Timberlea-Prospect, a seat entitlement of 1.09; and Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River, a seat entitlement of 1.09. All of these communities and the inherent factors specific to seat entitlement have significant similarities to Lunenburg West.

I should say as well that the proposed changes to the electoral district of Lunenburg West - concerns arise within the commission's interim report when you consider the 55-electoral district maps that you have provided here today.

Over the past number of weeks I've had extensive discussions with residents of those communities that are affected by the recommendations in the interim report and the proposed changes. The vast majority gravitate to Bridgewater, the core community, for their daily needs, where their average drive takes a maximum of 15 minutes. Very few travel the 30- or 40-minute drive to Liverpool, the core community of the Queens-Shelburne electoral district. The residents of these communities affected are divided by a municipal boundary in that they fall within the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg based on the existing electoral map.

These existing circumstances are, in my view, exactly what the terms of reference intended to achieve in the 2012 Electoral Boundaries Commission review, as well as the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada, specific to effective representation, parity of voting power, seat entitlement, geography, and communities of interest. The Electoral Boundaries Commission agreed with those foundational principles in 2012, and as we've heard and know, restored the electoral district of Lunenburg West to what it is today.

Although the Supreme Court of Canada decision and the terms of reference do not restrict the commission from crossing municipal boundaries, I would suggest that wherever possible, we strive to maintain those municipal boundaries in the best interests of community residents, where the Supreme Court of Canada guidelines and the terms of reference conditions have been met.

I would suggest that the residents of these communities would be disadvantaged should we return to an electoral district where the residents of the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg are moved to a provincial electoral district in a neighbouring municipality. In my view, based on my experience over the past 30 years in these communities, this in itself would equate to ineffective representation. The existing Lunenburg West electoral district has served these communities well over the last nine and 10 years.

[2:45 p.m.]

To depart from an acceptable standard of seat entitlement that presently exists in the Lunenburg West electoral district, endorsed by the Electoral Boundaries Commission findings, where the fabric and circumstances of these communities are also aligned with

Lunenburg West, would be counterproductive. Ironically, it is the title of the commission's interim report that reflects what the Electoral Boundaries Commission of 2012 set out to achieve and recommended as it relates to the electoral district of Lunenburg West: Striking a balance between effective representation and voter parity.

In my view, and the view of many residents I've spoken with, the existing electoral district of Lunenburg West best reflects that balance between effective representation and voter parity with a seat entitlement of 1.10, well within the permissible range or variance allowed.

Before I conclude, I would like to speak briefly to the impact electoral boundaries have on our school community. School catchment areas often get lost in the discussion and work around boundary reviews. The recommendation advanced by the Electoral Boundaries Commission in the interim report divides multiple school catchment areas between proposed new electoral districts for Queens and Lunenburg West.

The Hebbville Academy school catchment area - this is a pre-Primary to Grade 9 - has a vibrant school community that captures students and families presently located within the existing electoral district of Lunenburg West. To divide this school catchment area between two electoral districts, in my view, knowing the school community as I do, could have significant negative outcomes for our broader school community. The same circumstances would exist in school catchment areas for our Newcombville Elementary School, Petite Rivière Elementary School, and Pentz Elementary School, where the proposals actually impact and divide each and every one of those school catchment areas.

Division of school catchment areas, in my view, would be an unintended consequence of boundary reviews and most disruptive to the school and broader community. Allow me to expand and use Hebbville Academy as an example.

Hebbville Academy has a long history of academic and athletic excellence, with a proud history of student, parent, educator, and staff development, community pride, and success. Hebbville Academy is the single-largest feeder school to Park View Education Centre, our only high school, located in the Town of Bridgewater. Parents have children in both Hebbville Academy and Park View Education Centre, and should be extended the opportunity to deal with the same elected official within their community should the need arise.

We know from past experiences the challenges that we are facing in our education system and the role that communities and families and parents are playing in the discussions and, quite frankly, in the decisions. Hebbville Academy has an active and effective home and school association, as well as an active and effective school advisory council. The parents, volunteers, educators, and staff who make up these school committees come from the broad community and best demonstrate the unique qualities of

co-operation among students, staff, parents, administrators, and community - a legacy that Hebbville Academy established many years ago.

These volunteers often sit on numerous committees across multiple areas of responsibility within the school community. It's important to maintain the whole of the Hebbville Academy catchment area. Past circumstances of school reviews necessitate the collective efforts of the broad school community within its catchment area and its collective volunteers to establish and advance community positions on the design and makeup of their school community.

In my view, the new proposed Queens electoral district will divide the school community, its volunteers, and their access to effective representation - representation by the Lunenburg West MLA, located in the Town of Bridgewater, versus representation by the Queens MLA, located in Liverpool, presents obvious efficiencies or, depending on circumstances, obvious inefficiencies. When educational issues arise and the need to consult and communicate with your legislative representative arises, the efficiencies of travel to and ongoing communications with the MLA's office are apparent.

Parents, educators, staff, and administrators, all pressured in the management of their time, will find it extremely difficult to participate in an effective and timely communication or representation in pursuit of the earliest resolutions to their challenge or needs. The proposed new Queens electoral district will have the same effect on the Newcombville, Petite Rivière, and Pentz Elementary School communities.

You have heard representation from the Greater Petite Area Community Association specific to their school and community. I think that's a great example of how individuals can collectively come together to work together to ensure that the strengths of their communities are identified and recognized and, quite frankly, successful. In these circumstances, a community group took on the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia and were successful.

In summary, to use some of my words from my 2012 submission - and I believe this remains the case - I believe that sustainability of communities of interest is the core and foundation of the survival of rural Nova Scotia. I would suggest to the commission that school catchment areas are seen to be communities of interest and should not be lost in these discussions. Communities of interest have to be seen to be supported as a centre of activity. This should include our school community and, inherently, school catchment areas.

We are bucking the trend with declining population and outmigration of rural residents in these communities, and we have to do that to continue to counter what could be a problem going forward - a demonstrated desire to see the sustainability of our rural communities around core services and community infrastructure. School communities, in my view - and school catchment areas, inherently - are a critical component.

I see the work of the electoral boundaries commission to be an opportunity to support the sustainability of our rural communities, including our school communities. Division of these school catchment areas between two electoral districts, in my view, will be counterproductive to the subject of an unintended consequence in the work of the electoral boundaries commission.

It's my recommendation to the committee, bearing these collective factors in mind, that the electoral boundaries commission maintain the electoral district of Lunenburg West as it exists today. With those few comments, I appreciate your time, and thank you again.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions? Paul?

MR. PAUL GAUDET: The French school, L'École de la Rive-Sud - the catchment area, is it all within this riding?

HON. MARK FUREY: No, it's actually quite broad. Queens County students, Lunenburg County students - when I say "Lunenburg County students," as far away as Chester-St. Margaret's district. I spoke to a driver just this past week who was actually travelling to the Windsor area, picking up students, and commuting them to our francophone school here at Exit 12.

MR. PAUL GAUDET: It goes as far as Windsor.

HON. MARK FUREY: Yes. There's a growing population there as well.

MR. PAUL GAUDET: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions? Mr. Furey.

HON. MARK FUREY: I've left a copy. Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, please.

Unless Patricia Nickerson has arrived, that completes the list of those who have already registered to speak, but now we can open the floor. Who'd like to speak next?

Madam Mayor, thank you. I'm asking everybody to not only give their name but also to spell it.

MS. CAROLYN BOLIVAR-GETSON: My name is Carolyn Bolivar-Getson. I've been involved in these boundary reviews for a few years, and I really thought you had it right the last time. But looking at what's being proposed with Petite - it's a community where you're in, you're out, you're in, you're out. I really feel that the boundary should remain the same.

There have been how many seats added for Halifax this time? One? It seems that our boundaries are at the detriment. You could campaign in Halifax very easily in one of your ridings. Geography has to play into this. Queens County should be justifiable as a standalone with the geography that an MLA has to cover. Taking Chelsea, Lapland, Waterloo, and these communities out of Lunenburg West - Petite, Italy Cross - breaks up communities of interest. It breaks up the flow - the way people travel, where they go to church, where they go to school. These are all important factors that should be considered when we have boundary reviews. I'm looking at some of these. They would never flow to Queens County in that manner at all.

I know population is one of the things that you have to look at when you do your boundary reviews, but again, geography has to play into this, or rural Nova Scotia will end up with 10 MLAs soon and everything else will be in HRM. I do not think that's reflective of the greater Nova Scotia.

Please, when you look at this, take into consideration those communities of interest, some of the key features that bind communities together, whether it is fire departments, community halls, or schools. Let's not split them down the middle and think that the river or whatever is the boundary. County lines play into this hugely when we look at boundaries, and having the split like this, geographically, it does not make any sense whatsoever. I really think that if Queens County needs more population, if that's the only thing we're looking at here, I really think that's wrong.

Again, when you look at this, look closely at the communities of interest. Our council is all opposed to the proposed changes that I bring here today. There is not one. I really feel that the communities are not aware of what's going on.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions?

The challenge, as I've said before to previous speakers, is this balancing. For example, representation in HRM would say they want more seats to balance the population. They would say, "Why is my vote not worth as much as someone else's vote, say in Clare or Argyle or Guysborough?", or wherever it is.

Our first term of reference is the right to effective representation, which comes from the Supreme Court and the Carter decision. It also comes from the Charter. But then we have elector parity as the prime factor in determining electoral boundaries - not just a factor, but the prime factor. So that's the challenge we have. As I said, we've had representation that there should be 40 seats, 42 seats, that if HRM council could reduce its membership from 23 to 16, why can't the provincial government also reduce, say to 42 seats - the same sort of proportion?

We are very conscious of the rural/urban issues and the population shifts. Some rural areas are receiving extra population - we know that - but others are not. Somehow, we have to balance that.

If you go back to the 1992 Electoral Boundaries Commission, and to some extent to 2002, in the terms of reference, county boundaries had to be respected - certainly in 1992. Then bit by bit, county boundaries have - they're not even referenced in our terms of reference now. So, we're very conscious of that.

Again, I think all the commissioners would say that communities of interest are significant. But somehow, we have to balance that.

MS. CAROLYN BOLIVAR-GETSON: Rural Nova Scotia definitely needs to have those seats to represent the diversity that we have around this province.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Peter?

DR. PETER M. BUTLER: As the person here, probably, who was most initially concerned about communities of interest, I'm now putting on my hat as a political scientist to worry a little bit about identity-based politics.

[3:00 p.m.]

Identity-based politics could undermine the whole notion of communities of interest. More importantly, if we start to identify by race or by socio-economic status or by people who share something together that they feel very strongly about, it carries with it - certainly in the literature of political science - the likelihood that it would undermine the stability of the provincial electoral system. It could even undermine provincial identity.

So, we've got a real problem here, I think - I mean, it's not for you to solve, and probably we're not going to solve it, but we've got to be aware, to a certain extent, of what we're dealing with. There's a lot of work on that issue right across Canada.

MS. CAROLYN BOLIVAR-GETSON: I guess in a day or an age where we're trying to get more people out to the polls, this disenfranchises those voters from going to the polls, is what it does. It did that in Petite the last time around, and it will continue to do that. People will refuse to go to those areas. If you look at what happened in those polls, you will see that, and the percentage of voters who just didn't show up.

DR. PETER M. BUTLER: I'm not unmindful of that.

MS. CAROLYN BOLIVAR-GETSON: We want people to vote.

DR. PETER M. BUTLER: We do, and if boundary redistribution helps that, then I'm all for it, but if it doesn't . . .

MS. CAROLYN BOLIVAR-GETSON: It can hinder it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Traditionally, more urban areas have lower turnouts. If you look at my own electoral district, I think it was 34 per cent the last time, but that's not unusual. Whereas rural areas typically are higher - that's what you'd expect. The data given to us this afternoon replicates other data we've heard from Argyle and Clare and other areas.

If there aren't any further questions, thank you very much.

I do have one, sorry. Some of your councillors were planning to come, I think. Are they still planning to come?

MS. CAROLYN BOLIVAR-GETSON: I'm hoping that some will come.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I know they're at a memorial event.

MS. CAROLYN BOLIVAR-GETSON: We were at a memorial for a council member's husband.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Well, I did promise your EA that we'd be here.

Who'd like to speak next? Thank you.

MR. COURTNEY WENTZELL: I'm sorry, I have nothing prepared. My name is Courtney Wentzell. I'm the former constituency assistant for Queens-Shelburne and Sterling Belliveau. Sterling was unable to make it.

I'm going to speak a little bit on that, if you don't mind, just for a little history perspective. Sterling was the only one in the Dexter Government who actually stood against the boundary changes that were put in place. You're probably aware of that.

I can remember that the argument at the time, which came both from Queens and Shelburne, was that - for lack of the right word, we'll call it "culturally" - Shelburne County folk, for professionals or for shopping, they go to the west. Queens come to Bridgewater. It has been that way for a long time. Family history, for instance - Queens has a lot more in common with Lunenburg West, with Broad Cove, with East Port Medway, with Cherry Hill, with that area. Shelburne, more to the Barrington area.

That was the basis of the argument, and as Mr. O'Donnell said here, Shelburne really felt slighted in that battle, maybe more than Queens did. I believe that the boundary

line - we all believed in the boundary line, that Shelburne should have been their own and made whole again. I'm just repeating many people like Mr. O'Donnell.

What I have to say about Lunenburg West is going to fly a little differently than the previous speakers. I hope it doesn't upset people.

I am a part-time genealogist and history nut. I know the history of Lunenburg and the Protestants and the Germans. I know they came to LaHave, and I know they settled right to Port Medway, almost to Liverpool, all along the shore. There are still the same family names that run from Eagle Head, West Berlin, Port Medway, East Port Medway, Broad Cove, Dublin Shore, the whole way up to Petite. There's a very strong history there.

The commute to Bridgewater is done by the people of Port Medway and Charleston the same as those folks. Yes, the school districts are different. I understand that. The base of when they were first moved into Queens County, when they worried about representation - if you go back and you look at your poll information, the MLA at the time, Vicki Conrad - that was her base. The biggest percentage of her support came from those areas. Vicki came from Charleston - right by Danesville, right by the county line.

The county lines in the north, when you look at Chelsea down to Greenfield, up to North Queens, up to Hemford, over to New Germany - it's the same kind of interest, family, settlement throughout that. I'm not sure if I totally agree with the map I'm looking at, but just looking at those areas - same as in Caledonia. Those folks go to Bridgewater. They don't come in to Liverpool to do most of their shopping and whatnot.

There was a time, of course, when you could do it in Caledonia, just like there was a time you could do it in Liverpool. You can't do it anymore. That's just the way it is. Yes, there's lots of out-migration, especially in the North Queens area and the farming areas. There is. But there is a lot of commonality, right up into Annapolis, with Maitland Bridge, around Keji - all the county line there with Annapolis, New Grafton - the same names and the same families have been there a couple of hundred years.

That's all I had to say.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions for Mr. Wentzell? Peter.

DR. PETER M. BUTLER: I don't have a question, but I'd like to get your reaction to this. We heard in Cape Breton that it was time to let go of some of that, to go into the future with new ideas, new mixtures, new peoples. We thought that was courageous for the man who said it at the time, even though we thought it was a little nuts. But it was a point.

MR. COURTNEY WENTZELL: It's a very good point, because in Nova Scotia, you know how we treat people as CFAs - they're "come-from-aways." Right or wrong, it is done. I heard a lot of conversation here today about commonality - sometimes it outweighs

the numbers game that you're trying to do here. I'm suggesting that there is a lot of commonality close to those borderlines that we've drawn to call counties. There is.

DR. PETER M. BUTLER: But you're not objecting to the possibility of new alignments.

MR. COURTNEY WENTZELL: I'm not, but I believe Shelburne needs to be made whole. I don't have a problem with it if you'd just stuck with Queens being whole. I'm just trying to show you a counter argument on why, maybe, Queens, wasn't whole back 10 years ago. We do have an out-migration problem, and our population in Queens County is declining.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. Would anyone else like to speak? Please come forward.

MR. DON SEDGWICK: Mr. Chairman, my name is Don Sedgwick. As one person said, when I moved here 16 years ago, "That's not a local name." It actually is a local name. I think there was a Commander Sedgwick who pillaged around Nova Scotia many years ago, but I won't claim any relation to him.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's a Sedgwick House in Chester, I seem to recall.

MR. DON SEDGWICK: Indeed, yes.

Just for identification, I am a member of the school advisory council of the Petite Rivière School. I'm extremely proud of what the school has achieved. I'm also the community relations officer for the school - a volunteer position that I took on after retiring from the University of King's College several years ago.

I just want to offer a couple of brief comments. One is that a number of people from our community could not appear today, for a variety of reasons, but I want to assure you that they have asked me to pass along to you that we support all of the presentations - let me rephrase that. We support the presentations of Ms. Godsoe and Mr. Furey - I wasn't aware of the gentleman who just presented. We feel very strongly in favour of all the concerns that Ms. Godsoe and Mr. Furey have raised.

I can say with great assurance that the preservation of the school has solidified and brought our community together in a way that we had only imagined. On the converse, I think if it hadn't been preserved, the community would have been in dire straits. I want to reiterate what Mr. Furey said about the importance of the school and the school boundaries.

I'm also very aware of what GPACA has done. GPACA is an exemplary example of community involvement and community service. I think it's showing the way for other

communities in this province on how to involve a very diverse community and get great things accomplished.

Just as a footnote, I will mention that I canvased - in our own household and some other households - the living patterns, if I may, for how we operate. In our household we made 150 trips from Petite Rivière to Bridgewater in the past 12 months, for business and for social reasons, and apparently made 12 trips to Liverpool over that same period. I think that is common among people in our community. Bridgewater simply is the hub of the South Shore community. It's where everything happens, as far as we're concerned. No offense to Liverpool - it just really is not on our radar.

I think the concerns and representation in the community work very well for us as they are, and I would encourage you, on behalf of the community, to leave things the way they are. I think they're working just fine, and I rebel against this notion that numbers have to be the determining factor. I appreciate that they are one of them, but in this particular community - which, as I say, I'm extremely proud of and heavily involved in, if I may say so - is demonstrating how to renew rural communities and make them prosperous, if you look carefully at what's happening.

Our little school, for example, just won a \$20,000 national award for sustainability, competing against in excess of 600 other schools in the country. It's a pretty impressive show that's going on. It's a very, very diverse community. We have people involved in an extraordinary number of businesses, start-ups, and exciting enterprises that are putting this community on the world map. Not just the local, provincial, or national - the world map. I would be dismayed - indeed, appalled - if there were anything that was done to divide those tremendous efforts.

I thank you for your attention. I hope you will pay particular notice to what is going on here and factor it carefully into your consideration.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Sedgwick.

Any questions?

MR. PAUL GAUDET: You said that put the community on the world map?

MR. DON SEDGWICK: Yes. For example, HB Studios here is a world leader in video games. It might not be on your radar, but it might be on your grandchildren's radar. I believe six of the most popular videogames in the world have come from HB Studios, right here in Lunenburg.

[3:15 p.m.]

We also have a very thriving organization here called CO3, which is a hub for new entrepreneurs. It's recently merged with the hub in Mahone Bay. Again, interesting - it didn't happen with Liverpool. It happened with Mahone Bay. That's very exciting.

We have a fantastic organization called the Awesome Foundation, which every month gives \$1,000 to community groups that are starting new and exciting enterprises.

You may or may not be aware that some of the graduates of the little Petite Rivière school have gone on to study at some of the most prestigious universities in North America.

There's a long, long list of accomplishments I could relate to you about the people in this community. They're doing extraordinary things. I don't like to call myself a CFA. I'm a come-by-choice. I moved here deliberately from Toronto 16 years ago. I spent eight years going all over this province looking for what I thought was the most exciting, vibrant, and progressive community. I chose this one.

I think there are a lot of us who are come-by-choice who are very proud of it. We don't necessarily have names that you'd identify. I'm not a Wentzell. But we're here by choice because of what this community represents, and we're very keen that you preserve and encourage what we're doing here.

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

I think at the beginning I did indicate that we would have a delegation of councillors from Lunenburg. I did commit, therefore, that we would be here until 4:00. Right now it's a little after quarter-past three, so what I suggest at the moment is that we pause. We have some coffee at the back. Have a look at the maps and have a chance to chat, and when they arrive, we can reconvene.

I did make a commitment that we would be here, so let's have a pause, and as I say, there's coffee at the back.

[The commission recessed at 3:17 p.m.]

[The commission reconvened at 3:27 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, ladies and gentlemen, could we please reconvene?

I want to thank you for allowing that pause so that we could have another representative speak. He is now in situ, so if you could please give your name, and if you

don't mind, please spell it. When these proceedings are transcribed, the people who do that are not always clear as to how to spell names.

MR. LEE NAUSS: My name is Lee Nauss.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's a very original name. Very common name down here. Thank you.

MR. LEE NAUSS: I apologize for being delayed, but I had to attend a funeral, and I had an 80th birthday party I had to go to, and then this one here. That happens between 2:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, we're very pleased you could be here, which is why we had a pause. The floor is yours.

MR. LEE NAUSS: I didn't prepare a speech, because what I'm going to say is coming from my heart. I think what we're doing, or what you're attempting to do, is wrong. It was wrong when it was done the last time, and it had to go back to the original. Therefore, why make another mistake? We should have learned from the mistakes that we made.

This idea of trying to get parity on voting - it's more the size of a constituency than it is the number of voters. If it's too large, then they have to travel. If it's a reasonable size, it makes it much easier for the MP or the MLA or whoever it is. I know our municipal boundaries - we went through this two years ago and redid our boundaries. No, it was four years. Longer than I thought.

We tried to do that. We ended up cutting communities and everything before we finally realized that no, we can't do that. We can't cut communities through the middle. What we're doing here, you're taking a bunch of communities and moving them from where they've lived, where they've worked, and where they've voted all their lives, except for those two elections that it had to be changed back.

But you've gone beyond that now. You've gone into another area and you've taken more areas from the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg. I think you have to look at the people. The people who are in these areas, these communities, have never had any drawing to go into Queens County. All their work, basically, is in the Bridgewater area. They do their shopping here. They buy their cars here. They get their service here. They die and they use the funeral homes in the Bridgewater area, 85 or 90 per cent of them. Yet you people are saying, no, we have to move them to make some other place have more voters in it.

[3:30 p.m.]

I think the MLAs - and they have been ever since I can remember - were quite happy with the number of voters they had. They never complained. And if the people who are working in the constituency don't complain, and the residents are not complaining - only now they're complaining because of what's going to be attempted to do to them again - move them out. They don't want that. I support the Petite Rivière people for the efforts they have done and allowed trying to make sure that it stays where it has been.

It's similar to what went on with the Petite Rivière school when it was going to be closed. That group of people took it on themselves, with very little support from anyone, and worked and finally got it that the Petite school was saved. Now you're going to take that Petite school, and in a sense, those residents will be out into the Queens County boundary. Can you tell me why, other than parity of voters? Is there any other reason?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, the reason, of course, is our terms of reference. We do talk about effective representation. At the same time, voter parity is termed as prime in our terms of reference, and therefore, obviously, if it's "prime," it means it's not only important but very important.

It's not a question of absolute voter parity. It's a question of relative voter parity. If we were not to do what we're proposing at the moment, Queens would be too small in terms of an electoral district.

Way back in 2012, we know what happened in terms of Shelburne taking part of Queens and Barrington Passage being moved into Argyle and so on. But I think you're right. In that sense, it is one of trying to balance representation with voter parity.

MR. LEE NAUSS: That is the reason, but does it make common sense? This is what we should be looking at, is common sense. The MLAs from Lunenburg West and Queens have never said that they were unhappy with their district because it was too small or too large. They survived. Queens has always been Queens since it was formed. Lunenburg has always been Lunenburg Municipality or Lunenburg County. To me, it's upsetting the people. There are a lot of people who are in their 70s or 80s, and it's very disturbing to them to think that now they've got to go back and go into another county to vote for an MLA. It's hard to explain to them.

Now you're taking the people in Hebbs Cross, Camperdown, Lapland, Waterloo, and Chelsea and moving them further, and if they have to go to their MLA's office, they have a much longer distance than they have now. In order to get there in a reasonable way, they have to drive out to Bridgewater, go back through and into Queens County, and then up to Liverpool. You're asking people who've been settled here and lived here all these years to change their lifestyle, to change their way of living. I'm 80 years old, and I don't believe it is correct. It wasn't correct when you did it before, and it's not correct now. If

there's a smaller constituency, let it be smaller. Let this one be the size that it is. If you do that, you'll probably get praise. If you don't do that, you won't get any praise. You'll be almost like a condemned man, as far as we are concerned.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A condemned commission.

Equally so, of course, people in HRM might in fact compliment the commission because we've restored more voter parity. But we're here to listen. We're not going to be debating this afternoon.

Any questions?

Thank you very much, sir.

You can speak, if you could come forward, please? You have to go on record, sir. We need you on the microphone.

MR. DOMINICK WILLIAMS: I live in Crousetown. I apologize for arriving late. The relocation of the meeting was confusing, to say the least.

First of all, somebody just made the statement that Queens has always been Queens and Lunenburg has always been Lunenburg. I respectfully point out . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Could you say your name.

MR. DOMINICK WILLIAMS: I am Dominick Williams, I became a permanent resident in 2003. Prior to that, I'd had what we referred to as a country home since 1990. In 2003, I became involved in a dispute surrounding Rissers Beach. At the time, I had to engage in a pitched battle with a minister representing Queens who did not know that Petite Rivière was in his riding. I mean, I'm sorry, I think to try to impose some artificial boundary at that time - it was some artificial line drawn somewhere between the campground and Crescent Beach. It didn't work then, and it won't work now.

To impose, in the interests of voter parity, some totally artificial line that nobody can understand - I'm sorry. Voter parity may be more important in a major urban conglomeration like Halifax, but in a country area, I can tell you, identity means everything.

I have two neighbours in their 80s. They've been married for 60 years. If I make the mistake of saying, you're from here, they rear up and they say, uh-uh. I'm from Conquerall and my wife's from Petite. I mean, come on. Five miles.

In real estate, which is my business, it's location, location, location. That's what matters. That's what matters to people in this area. Your commission may be all very great

in terms of some hypothetical voter parity issue, but it doesn't work. The fact that a Minister of the Crown did not even know what the boundary of his riding was, and didn't want to know - I mean, he argued with me. "No, no, no, I don't have anything to do with that." I said, "Excuse me. It's your riding." And it was, at that time.

Please don't keep on making this flip-flop. Stick to the boundaries that everybody understands and leave it be. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Williams.

Would anybody else like to speak?

Well, hearing naught, I do want to thank you for coming out this afternoon. We apologize for the change of date, but that was weather forecasted - we made that decision on the Friday evening, when we were down in Digby, and then it turned out that the hotel we were going to be at, the Best Western, was not available, and here we are this afternoon. We did have an advert in yesterday's *Chronicle Herald* confirming the location as being here.

Again, I want to thank you. In terms of the report - yes, sir? (Interruption) Sure. I was going to do that.

We have one more public consultation, which has been requested by Hants East. We are going out just beyond the airport on Tuesday night, the 29th. Then we're meeting as a commission on the 29th and 30th - two days of commission meetings.

As I mentioned at the beginning, although we're proposing four options right now, and the four are in the interim report - but not in ranked order - we have to come up with one. We are required to do that by April 1st, unless we request an extension.

But although it's April 1st, there's a series of steps that have to take place before that. As a commission, we have to go back and look at the public consultations, like this afternoon, what we've heard, and make some micro-decisions, if you like, with respect to specific electoral districts. But then of course the bigger one would be the 51, 55, or 56.

We will be having those discussions next week, not necessarily finalizing it next week. It takes about two or three weeks, first of all, once the report is written, to then be put into a format that's suitable for printing. It has to be translated, and that can take two or three weeks, depending on its length. Then it has to be printed, and then April 1st would be our date. If we can't make it by then, we can seek an extension - it's not guaranteed that it'll be given, but I suspect it would be given if we could explain why.

We made our November 30th deadline - actually presenting on November 28th, so we were able to meet that.

Really, those are the timelines ahead of us. There is a fair amount of work that has to be done just in terms of getting it into a format and making sure that it is free of grammatical errors and things like that.

I do want to say that on our website there is a little tool that you can use to look at boundaries in Nova Scotia. You can drill down - it's an interactive tool, if you're interested in that. If you want to get in touch with us, we do have a Facebook page and a website, or you can call and leave a message. We will be taking written input into February.

As I say, we've got those two sets of decisions: the macro-decision as to the number of seats - we have three maps here of 51, 55, or 56 - but then we've got a lot of work to do with respect to the boundaries between particular electoral districts. Some we are proposing no change to, of which Lunenburg itself is one; we haven't touched that one. But there are others - and we've heard that this afternoon, in terms of Lunenburg West.

Does that explain? Thank you very much.

As I say, everything that's been said this afternoon is on record, so at some point you'll be able to access those through Hansard.

If there aren't any further comments from the floor, I do want to thank our IT staff, who follow us around across the province, and Julia Kinsman, our office administrator. She's the person who would be at the end of the phone and monitoring Facebook and our website.

Again, apologies that we had to make the change. When we were down in - please, if you want to come back.

MR. LEE NAUSS: Do you require the name?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, it's Mr. Nauss. We understand.

MR. LEE NAUSS: What I neglected to say is that I went on municipal council in 1967. I've been there since. I represented every one of these communities during my tenure, with the exception of the Chelsea area. My boundaries have been changed in different communities. They have spoken to me, some of them - quite a few of them - over the time, and they were never happy with how it was. They accused us, as municipal councillors, of being part of it. They didn't understand that the last time. I appeared at the Electoral Boundaries Commission meeting that was held in Halifax because I couldn't attend anywhere else at the time. They said, well, you just went in there to get your mileage, because you didn't do anything for us. I said, we can only do so much, but we like to do what we do with common sense.

[3:45 p.m.]

They're saying the same thing again. They're putting the blame back onto municipal government because we didn't work for them and convince you what was happening was wrong.

I know these people quite well. They've been part of me, and I've been part of them since 1967.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. As I said, in terms of our final report, we will be presenting it to the Attorney General, as we did the interim report. I think I mentioned that they then have 10 days to table the proposed boundaries, and then it's up to the House to accept or reject those boundaries.

As you're aware, what happened in 2012 was that the commission proposed interim report boundaries and the government of the day then intervened and said, no, we're not going to accept that report, and basically made the commission go back and produce a revised interim report and then a final report that produced 51 seats, which are the House and the boundaries that we have right now. That then led to a court challenge to the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal. That challenge was upheld by the Court of Appeal.

It then led to the government of the day - the current government - establishing the Keefe Commission on Effective Electoral Representation of Acadian and African Nova Scotians. Our terms of reference largely come from the Keefe commission report. They were adopted by the select committee.

That's where we're at, and again, I want to thank you for your time. It's a beautiful afternoon. It's very, very important for us to try to get this right, but to try to balance effective representation, however defined, with our terms of reference, which include geography and a whole bunch of other factors.

You have to realize that we have voter parity as prime with effective representation, and it's trying to strike that balance between those two.

Again, thank you very much for coming out. We will certainly weigh what you have said this afternoon. We have taken notes, but there will be a transcript available to us in about a week - a week to 10 days, Julia? Julia has to do all that work.

It will be at Hansard.

Thank you very much indeed.

[The commission adjourned at 3:48 p.m.]