

NOVA SCOTIA
ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES
COMMISSION

TUESDAY, JANUARY 29, 2019

Milford Recreation Hall
Milford, 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. Sandra Watson
Ms. Pam MacInnis
Mr. Kody Blois
Mr. Michael Perry
Mr. Leonard Giffen
Mr. David Nevin
Ms. Eleanor Roulston
Mr. John A. MacDonald
Mr. Lawrin Armstrong
Hon. Margaret Miller
Ms. Virginia Peter-Paul
Mr. Willie Courtney
Mr. Stephen King
Mr. Peter Giffen
Ms. Colleen Smith
Mr. Norval Mitchell
Mr. Keith Rhyno

MILFORD, TUESDAY, JANUARY 29, 2018

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION

7:00 P.M.

**CHAIRMAN
Dr. Colin Dodds**

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ladies and gentlemen, it's just a little after 7:00, so if you'd like to take your seats, please. There are a few at the front. There are six at the front, if anybody wants to come forward.

Good evening. Thank you so much for coming. Thank you for the invitation to be in your community and for providing the space to the commission. I think I met some of you at previous public consultations but, for the record, my name is Colin Dodds. I live in Halifax, and I am chair of the Nova Scotia Electoral Boundaries Commission. I'll chair this evening's public consultation.

Before we commence, I do want to acknowledge that we are on the unceded territory and lands of the many First Nations of Nova Scotia.

We have eight of our nine commissioners with us this evening; one couldn't make it. I will ask each of them who are here to state their name and where they live.

[The commissioners introduced themselves.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. At previous consultations, I've given the context with respect to why the commission was formed and how it was formed, but unless you've got particular questions on that, I don't propose to do that. We have a big crowd this evening, and I know a lot of people want to ask questions and make statements.

As I think you know, we did present an interim report to the Attorney General on November 28th. There was a press conference later that afternoon. We are charged with producing a final report by April 1st.

In that interim report we had a series of scenarios in terms of a 51-seat legislature, which we were asked to do; and in our terms of reference, we were asked to do at least one other. In the event, we have actually looked at four alternatives, and they are not in rank order.

I know that tonight there's particular interest in the boundaries with respect to Hants East and perhaps adjoining electoral districts. Let me refer to the maps that we have on the wall. There are some maps for Hants East and Hants West, and there are some other electoral districts in case there are other people here.

The data that you have on those maps refers to June 29, 2018, at which point there were 743,500 electors. Therefore, in a 51-seat House - which is what we have right now and how the boundaries were drawn in 2012 - that gives an average of 14,578, which is effectively one. Then you go either side of that with respect to our terms of reference.

This actually showed an increase of 30,000 electors since the 2012 report. The commission has met all of today and will be meeting all of tomorrow, and the data we are planning to use is actually December 2018's data. It shows a reduction in the number of electors since June 29th - something like 30,000 have left the province. Then we've had an influx of people, and of course we've had the deaths of over 5,000 electors. So, there's actually a net loss of 11,000 electors over that six-month period, which is a little bit of a surprise to us.

Just to make sure that everyone is aware of the options - I know you want to get down to your specific boundaries - we were asked for a 51-seat House, which we have done. Then, there are three other options. Option No. 2 is 55 electoral districts, which include the formerly-protected electoral districts of Argyle, Clare, Richmond, and Preston. Option No. 3 is 55 electoral districts but 56 seats in the House of Assembly. This would include a dual-member electoral district of Inverness: so one MLA to represent the geographic electoral district and one MLA to represent the Acadian constituency there. Option No. 4 - and, as I say, these are not in rank order - is 56 electoral districts, which would include an exceptional electoral district for Chéticamp.

I mentioned the maps on the walls, ... depending on what time we finish this evening. We do have a hard cut-off at 9:00 because our staff have to do a teardown and get back to Halifax.

In previous public consultations - as those of you know who have been at the BMO Centre and elsewhere - we asked for input on the concept of members at large to represent Acadians and African Nova Scotians. We also asked for input on the concept of using non-contiguous electoral districts - in other words, putting two areas together, like Argyle and Clare, that are joined geographically perhaps but, in this case, there's no road to directly link the two, or in the case of Chéticamp and Richmond.

I think we're ready to start. I have names of people who have indicated that they wish to speak, so my intent is to ask those first and then ask from the floor. When you come forward - and I'll give the names in a second - that you state your name. Because everything is on the public record, from this side as well as that side, we do have transcribers who take the audio. They want to be absolutely clear that they've got the

correct name and spelling, so I would ask if you could spell your name. It's a little tedious, but it's for those people who will do the transcribing.

[7:10 p.m.]

Our first speaker who's indicated that she wishes to speak - and the person who invited us to be here this evening - is Sandra Watson - Dr. Watson, I think.

MS. SANDRA WATSON: Thank you. My name is Sandra Watson. I did prepare some notes this evening that I'll read, which outline how we here in East Hants feel about what's happening.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and commission members. I had the opportunity to speak at the Bedford meeting but feel the need to speak out again for the sake of our communities. Concerns have been raised by the communities of Milford and Shubenacadie, and they are valid and need to be given your full attention before any final decision is made by this commission on the proposed electoral boundary change.

We have been provided only a short time to gather our thoughts and concerns regarding the change to our electoral district, as a boundary change had been brought to the attention of the community of East Hants only a few short weeks ago. I have been placing posters up in businesses over the past ten days, and anyone I talked to about this change feels that it is not in the best interest of the communities, not are they for this change.

In many cases, residents were unaware that this change is happening to our electoral district. We are spreading the word. In the report that was published in November 2018, *Striking a balance between effective representation and voter parity*, there is language included that says that communities that share common features of an established historical link, geography, and cultural values should be carefully considered. In the report it notes that effective representation be an imperative consideration for electoral ridings. This may not be exact wording but shows a sentiment of exceptions for proposed changes for electoral districts.

Previous questions posed at the Bedford meeting made it clear that we must impress upon this commission who we are as communities and why East Hants is culturally, historically, and geographically linked. We must impress upon this commission why it would be a disservice to separate parts of Milford and Shubenacadie from the provincial electoral riding of Hants East and join us with Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley. We must state that we expect and deserve the best representation available to our constituents and insist that our best representation would come by remaining in the provincial electoral riding of Hants East.

Previously, I had stated that having two MLAs serving the communities of Milford and Shubenacadie would not be in the best interests of the voters of those communities for the following reasons. We are intrinsically woven in with all of East Hants because of history, our cultural ties, and geography. As noted in my past statements, Milford is a centre for education for students from all communities of the corridor of East Hants, from Enfield through to Shubenacadie, including students from Sipekne'katik. Milford also provides much to the East Hants corridor communities for sport and recreation. I do not want to rehash all of my previous remarks from the Bedford meeting, but this fact is worth noting, as community education and providing recreational facilities is part of the fabric of our community and is used widely by all of the East Hants corridor communities.

Our communities would not be best served by having to communicate with two MLAs, who could potentially not work together, not have the same point of view on issues, or not support the needs that could arise for our communities, such as infrastructure projects, particularly if the MLAs were members of opposing political Parties.

As communities of East Hants, we are very much bound together by history and geography and through our culture. I took some time to review the history of each of the communities in the East Hants corridor and the geographical feature that drew all of these communities together. It is the Shubenacadie River. It is what enticed each community to be settled where it did. It has long been known as a waterway for transportation for Indigenous peoples throughout their history. It is why the Shubenacadie Canal system was built for the transportation of goods and people from one end of the river to the other, from the Bay of Fundy through to Dartmouth.

The Shubenacadie River was and continues to be used by many for fishing. The migration of fish species from the Atlantic Ocean to Shubenacadie Grand Lake at the head of the Shubenacadie is historic in nature. People fished gaspereau commercially from the Shubenacadie River, a practice that still goes on today. There is a book written about our Shubenacadie Canal system by local author Barbara Grantmyre. There was a recent film created by filmographers and producers that was shown at the Atlantic Film Festival this past Fall, called *East Hants: This is Us*. It explores the history of the communities of East Hants and the establishment of these communities. One of the main proponents who worked on the film lives here in Milford, Mr. Peter Giffen, who worked with many others from the East Hants community to make this film.

[7:15 p.m.]

Milford and Shubenacadie are part of the corridor of East Hants. The corridor is bookended by the communities of Shubenacadie and Enfield. Enfield was established along the Shubenacadie River in 1760 with a land grant that was given to Benjamin Franklin in what we now know as Enfield.

Shubenacadie, as the community name indicates, is on the Shubenacadie River. Shubenacadie was known to have settlers earlier than 1740. They were the Acadian French. There was a French church built in Shubenacadie by a French missionary - I may not say his name correctly - Louis-Joseph Le Loutre, in 1740. The French lived alongside the Indigenous people who had a long-established and historical settlement in the Shubenacadie River area. That church was later destroyed by the British around the time of the expulsion of the Acadians. If you drive out through Shubenacadie and get on Highway No. 102 from Exit 10, you will have driven by the area where the church once stood.

Elmsdale was established alongside the Shubenacadie River in 1875. My grandmother recalled an Indigenous encampment along the Shubenacadie River in Elmsdale when she was a young girl. They could see it when they drove with their buggy through Elmsdale.

Lantz Head, once known as Milford, was established along the Shubenacadie River in 1890, probably before that, but was named Lantz Siding in 1902. Milford was established in 1875 along the Shubenacadie River. From 1785 to 1858, Milford was known as Shubenacadie and was eventually named Milford in 1870. Our communities were home first to the First Nations people. Their history intertwines with these communities.

There is a long and rich history of the area connecting all the communities in East Hants bordered by and drawn to the Shubenacadie River. It is why we are here. We are not scattered communities that will easily assimilate or not be impacted by a move to another electoral district. We are communities drawn together along the Shubenacadie River, forming the corridor of the community of East Hants. Geographically, we are defined by the Shubenacadie River, not Highway No. 102.

I can see how it would be an easy fix for whoever decided how to redraw the electoral boundary maps by looking at that feature, Highway No. 102. Redrawing the new lines based on that feature does not take into account the impact on the communities affected by this new boundary, Milford and Shubenacadie. Highway No. 102 is not a natural feature and should not be the feature by which our electoral district is to be drawn. It would appear that it made their jobs very easy by choosing that highway to define our boundary, but it certainly does not take into consideration the cultural, historical, and geographical essence of who we are in East Hants.

Being told that we will be part of the Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley riding is like telling us we should be part of any other disassociated voter riding, a riding where we share nothing common. We do not engage in day-to-day activities or businesses with Colchester or Musquodoboit Valley. They are set apart from Milford and Shubenacadie and have their own unique set of circumstances, culture, and history that is not intertwined with East Hants or the communities of Milford and Shubenacadie. In East

Hants, we do not share the same cultural, geographical, or historical ties with Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley that we do in our communities of East Hants, where we share a natural geographical boundary, the Shubenacadie River, and a cultural history, including the Indigenous peoples' history in our community of East Hants.

This process should be about the best for the communities. Where will we be best served? Where will Milford and Shubenacadie best be represented for our needs and concerns? It is not going to be in a riding where we do not have and have not had interaction, common issues, a community history, or even a common geography. I ask that this commission keep Milford and Shubenacadie in the provincial electoral riding of Hants East, as this would provide residents in our two communities with the best representation by an elected MLA. That's what it should be about, providing meaningful representation to voters. Good representation outweighs a system of voter parity when it is what the people of East Hants want.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. I'm going to ask each of the commissioners if they want to ask you questions or comment.

MR. PAUL GAUDET: One point of clarification please, do you have the exact location of the Acadian church that Le Loutre

MS. SANDRA WATSON: I can point it out to you. It's not there anymore, but we can tell you where it once stood. There is a gentleman in the back who can probably speak better to that. It's actually on land that they currently own, so he would know the exact location of where it was. It would be on the side that would be expected to go to Colchester.

[7:20 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there any other questions of Ms. Watson? Again, I thank you for the hospitality.

MR. PAUL GAUDET: One point of clarification regarding the Shubenacadie River that was the Highway No. 102 waterways. So that is the essence of your argument.

MS. SANDRA WATSON: That is the division by which we are now being put into a different district.

MR. PAUL GAUDET: The villages.

MS. SANDRA WATSON: The villages exist on both sides of Highway No. 102. Milford and Shubenacadie are on both sides of Highway No. 102, but east of Highway No. 102 will go to Colchester-Musquodoboit, is what I understand, and the other side will not. It will stay in East Hants, so now we've got a division of both communities.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. The second person who has indicated they wish to speak is Pam MacInnis.

MS. PAM MACINNIS: My name is Pam MacInnis. I am a resident of Shubenacadie and a municipal councillor representing that district for the Municipality of East Hants.

Thank you for the opportunity to address you. I addressed you briefly in Truro. I'll keep it brief because I think Sandra hit a lot of the really important points. Term of Reference No. 5, which is a bit of a mouthful, says: "There may be one or more exceptional electoral districts where, in exceptional circumstances, the estimated number of electors in the electoral district is more than 25 per cent above or below the estimated average number of electors per electoral district."

To that, and this end, I reiterate my continued support for maintaining the status quo of provincial electoral boundary. Our uniqueness may not be immediately obvious visually. It is, however, obvious culturally and socially. From Mount Uniacke to Enfield to Shubenacadie to Walton and all areas in between, sharing urban and rural sections, farm sections, business sections and working together for the betterment of this district, the municipal boundary and provincial electoral boundary being identical has afforded our residents with consistent representation.

Working with the province, whether on grant applications, infrastructure needs or community needs, and having one point of contact for all communities within the district streamlines the communication process. This meeting tonight, however, is specifically to address the sectioning off of parts of Milford and of Shubenacadie. This would not serve the goal of fair representation, with both communities sharing many commonalities and being part of the greater corridor region of the municipality. In addition, the non-contiguous outcome has been shown in Alberta, for example, to leave some residents poorly represented simply by this separation.

In closing, I thank you for your service, your efforts in hearing from the public and coming out here tonight. I hope your recommendations will reflect these points. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Are there any questions? You referenced the terms of reference. There is something at the beginning before we get into one, two, three and more - these terms are mandatory and not a matter of guidance. That's the sort of preamble before you get into one, two, three, four and so on.

In Term of Reference No. 1 - I think I stated this at the meeting in Bedford - there is a right to effective representation. We know that in terms of the Carter decision, in terms of everything else that's flowed from there. Then that sentence goes on: "elector parity is the prime factor in determining the electoral boundaries." This is the challenge

that we've had as a commission, which is why the title was described previously, is striking a balance between effective representation and elector parity. This is the challenge we've got.

You're right to point out Term of Reference No. 5 because, if I remember in previous commissions, we had no ability to go beyond the 1.25. But you're right in indicating that we can either go up or down this particular time. Again, we have the terms of reference that precede that to take into account.

[7:25 p.m.]

Term of Reference No. 2 says: "Deviation from elector parity *is* justified because of geography," so that might be something to argue. Then Term of Reference No. 3 says: "Deviation from elector parity *may* be justified" - it's a qualification there. I just want people to be aware of what it is that we have to face as a commission, that we have these terms that are given to us by the Select Committee of the House. In the past it might have said "guide" - that the commission should be "guided by" - but this time it's actually mandatory and not a matter of guidance. That's what happened back in 2012.

MS. PAM MACINNIS: If I may respond, Dr. Dodds. I appreciate that. In reading Nos. 1 to 4, before I cited No. 5, I thought, how relevant is it going to be to bring this up? Then it seemed to me that highlighting that little bit of latitude, regardless of Nos. 1 to 4, might be a good point of reference for our particular communities.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, we understand that, and we certainly respect that. At the BMO Centre in Bedford, after the formal presentation when we were looking at the maps, this matter was brought up by other people who were present that evening.

Are there any questions? Please.

MR. LEONARD LEFORT: A point of clarification: did you mention that you'd like to see the municipal boundaries in line with the provincial boundaries?

MS. PAM MACINNIS: Indeed, it currently is. So, yes, I would like to see that continue.

MR. LEONARD LEFORT: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. The third speaker is Kody Blois. Kody? Nice to see you again.

MR. KODY BLOIS: Very nice to see you as well, Dr. Dodds and commissioners. Again, I had the opportunity to address you in Truro on January 5th and also in Bedford

on January 14th, so I will try to be brief. There's a big room here tonight that wants to speak.

My focus will be - again, using your discretion as a committee - that there are really only two options that are available here. It's either to look elsewhere - and there has been presentation talking about other communities in the municipality that may be better aligned, notably Mount Uniacke. I'm not from that community, so I can't speak for that community. Hopefully perhaps there is someone here tonight who can speak to that.

The other obvious option is to use your discretion. Dr. Dodds mentioned that that discretion is always counterbalanced against the idea of voter parity, but the question becomes, at what point, at what threshold, does a community make it clear that they understand that there is that aspect of voter parity, but that they're choosing to forgo it to keep their community interests together?

The argument on the other side, for the commission, is what about the people who aren't at this meeting who care about voter parity, who think it's important? My response to that would be that they could be here. I don't know if the commission has received any correspondence from people who are concerned that there should be more effective representation for this riding. It is a concern, of course. Do we deserve more? Absolutely. But we're choosing to put the communities of Milford and Shubenacadie above and beyond that, and people recognize that. That's the counterargument to that.

Sandra and Pam spoke to - we've talked about - community. You've heard that for two meetings. It's now about what ability you have to make a decision that's justifiable and defensible, frankly, under the eyes of the law. We talked about, in the terms of reference, geography, historical, cultural, and linguistic settlement patterns, and political boundaries such as municipal boundaries. The communities of Milford and Shubenacadie have been within the municipal boundaries of East Hants since 1879. These are long-standing existing ties to the Shubenacadie River. Practically and socially, these communities have much more in common, as we've mentioned.

I'll just go back to your terms of reference again: "Community of interest is based on the recognition and acceptance of the idea that a geographically concentrated group shares a certain attribute in common. That attribute might be defined according to location, as with a neighborhood or a set of municipal boundaries" - in this case, Shubenacadie and Milford being within those municipal boundaries. "Drawing constituency boundaries according to a district's communit(ies) of interest is seen as a way of ensuring communication between citizens and their representative and enhancing the representational process generally."

[7:30 p.m.]

So, while I recognize that the focus of this community is certainly for African Nova Scotian and Acadian representation - that's clear - your discretion is not limited to those circumstances. The courts have said it's not. I would ask if you have the opportunity to seek legal counsel. The discretion is not limited to that circumstance. The courts have made it clear. The House of Assembly Act does not put that restriction on you. You have this discretion. We are asking you to use that discretion.

I just want to raise the possibility of using the provincial average of 51 seats. If the commission does choose to go to 55 or 56 and create exceptional electoral districts for minority communities, it brings the provincial average down quite considerably. That has been mentioned about being now 33 per cent or 38 per cent. I don't know what discretion this commission has to say, we are creating exceptional districts; maybe they should not count towards that provincial average of how we identify our terms of reference. If that is something available, I think that's something that should be considered.

My final thoughts are this. We have had two sitting MLAs, Margaret Miller and Larry Harrison, both speak against this decision. We have had municipal councillors, community leaders, student leaders, and an Olympic athlete - bronze medallist Tracy Cameron - speak to this. I think it just becomes, at what threshold does this community have to show that they are choosing to keep their community of interest together as opposed to going towards voter parity? For the record, we have a room of close to 200 people here tonight. I haven't been privy to your other meetings across the province, but this has clearly struck a chord with the people of this community who care. We have more petitions to bring in to this commission as well.

All of that is to say, please use your discretion and keep these communities together. In 10 years' time, there might be a strong enough population that yes, we will have to split. In the meantime, use that discretion and keep our communities together.

The last thing, Sandra mentioned *East Hants: This is Us*. I come bearing gifts. Hopefully it's 50 minutes of enjoyment. I'm willing to make those part of the public submission.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If I could just pick up on a couple of things you said. The first is that we have not made a decision yet. This is, at the moment, something we're looking at. We have a meeting of the commission again tomorrow. This is the last public consultation. The first thing we'll do tomorrow is review what we have heard ahead of the transcripts. Later on, we'll get the transcripts. In the end, we will be making a recommendation. Of course, that recommendation has to be either endorsed or not by the House of Assembly. That's the first thing.

The second thing is with respect to what you mentioned about African Nova Scotians and Acadians. That was the basis of the Keefe commission. Yes, a lot of what they said in that report is contained in our terms of reference. But the boundaries that we're looking at are for the whole of Nova Scotia. It's not just with that lens or that focus of African Nova Scotians and Acadians. It's for Nova Scotia. Again, I come back to the title: *Striking a balance between effective representation and voter parity*, and there's the coat of arms of Nova Scotia. It's for the whole of Nova Scotia. It was the Keefe commission - its task was to come up with suggestions for how to increase effective representation for those two founding nations or founding parts of Nova Scotia.

Now to questions. Are there any questions?

MR. KODY BLOIS: Dr. Dodds, I would like to re-engage. Certainly, the House of Assembly has to endorse your report. I understand that, in most cases, that's a tick in the box. Using your discretion, if anyone asks, you can say in good faith that there's enough evidence here that the people of Hants East want to stay together.

MR. CHAIRMAN: This is the largest number of people who have been at any of our public consultations. We had a fair crowd in Bedford. This, again, shows the strength of your views. In some areas, we just had literally one or two. We had four, I think, when we were in Wolfville, for example - one speaker and four people.

We do want to thank you for coming out on a very cold night and making your views felt.

[7:35 p.m.]

MR. KODY BLOIS: I will just say my name for the record. It's Kody Blois. Thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The fourth speaker is Michael Perry. Afterwards, I'll open it up to the whole audience.

MR. MICHAEL PERRY: Good evening, my name is Michael Perry. I am a resident and the district councillor for Mount Uniacke. My apologies that I'm not more well-prepared for this. I planned to attend tonight's meeting to gather information. Then, upon looking at some of the scenario maps on the back wall, I felt compelled to speak because I saw something there that has not been communicated to me.

The topic of division within East Hants has always been Milford and Stewiacke. Some of the proposed map changes for East and West Hants have my community being cut directly in half. In some cases, the main entry point into my community is Highway No. 101 off Exit 3, transversing on Highway No. 1. In the scenario maps, everything along Highway No. 1 is proposed to move to West Hants. Meanwhile, the main tributary

in a large residential community around lakes off of the East Uniacke Road would be retained in East Hants, effectively cutting the community in half.

This is a vibrant community that is growing. We have economic development happening in our business park. It is currently undergoing another expansion. There are more residential homes and neighbourhoods being created as well.

Looking at East Hants as a whole, with upcoming developments, you will see that East Hants is one of the only growing municipalities in Nova Scotia. Based on the electoral numbers I've seen in this report and on some of your publications suggesting the number dropping down to as little as 13,000, it's foreseeable that within the next one to two voter cycles East Hants itself could exceed 26,000. At that time, it could make for a better choice to be split in half and keep some of the community ties and boundaries together. The division could be done not by geography but by community. In listening to you speak in response to the earlier presenters, one of the things I'm getting a feel for is that the main thing is fairness, parity. I don't think fairness or parity ever exists if you divide any community, regardless of where the community is.

Dividing a community across a river – a community that eats together, lives together, works together - is not the way to divide anybody, by a road is not the way to divide anybody. A community is a community by the whole of the sum of the people that make it up. Like I say, they work together, they live together, they go to the same school.

In Mount Uniacke's case, for many years we've been part of the Municipality of East Hants. As you know, the boundary - we're kind of down in the bottom corner. Over a long period of time - growing up in Mount Uniacke my whole life, moving away and coming back with work - I can say I'm proud to represent Mount Uniacke as part of the Municipality of East Hants because we are an active member of East Hants, and East Hants is active in our community.

Our MLA shows up for community meetings once a month to make herself available to the people of Mount Uniacke. Having the MLA who represents us coming from an area as far away as Elmsdale is not an issue for the residents of Mount Uniacke. What would be an issue for the residents of Mount Uniacke is if the core of our town were torn in half and divided between East and West Hants.

Looking over the terms of reference - again I apologize I'm not more well-prepared, I did not prepare to speak tonight – Term of Reference No. 2 says, "Deviation from elector parity is justified because of geography." I can't think of anything more geographical than a community over a land feature or anything else.

The right to effective representation and electoral parity is a prime factor for determining electoral boundaries. Effective representation does not happen when you divide communities. You become the lesser of the sum, and that means your voice does

not resonate when you make a call. It's for that reason - with the maps that you have here and the proposed scenarios for dividing East and West Hants and dividing the community of Mount Uniacke in two - I ask for you to please re-examine that. Look at the communities as a whole.

[7:40 p.m.]

I do not envy your job on the commission. I've sat on different boards for many different things with my day job, and it's not easy to come to a consensus and make everybody happy. But this is not about making people happy. It's about doing what's right. It's never right to divide a community based on any lines. That's all I have to say. Thank you for your time. (Applause)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Please wait to see if there are any

We did spend a fair amount of time today and in previous commission meetings trying to deal with the Hants East situation, if I can describe it that way. We had the same discussion in Bridgewater on Saturday with respect to Lunenburg, Lunenburg West and Queens. We heard a very strong argument with respect to school boundaries and using those in terms of communities of interest. But where do you draw the line with respect to a community? How big is a community?

If there are any points - Carlotta?

MS. CARLOTTA WEYMOUTH: Carlotta Weymouth, Dartmouth. I have a quick question. Do you have a boundary line in mind that everybody is in consensus with?

MR. MICHAEL PERRY: I'm sorry, ma'am. I can't speak for the whole municipality or even the room here tonight. It is a diverse crowd. But I can speak for Mount Uniacke. The one thing I can say for Mount Uniacke is that we don't want to be broken up. We want to stay within Hants East. We've worked hard for the last number of years to be part of it. We have a very active community. It's growing.

Based on the lines of the map that is on the wall back there, the community would literally be fractured in half. You would not have divisions among geography only, but also one of the major divisions is literally the part that backs into Hants East and the part that goes to Hants West. The community, even by sheer numbers, would be divided in half. This means that the voice we currently have with our MLA, being together as a group when we speak, is more well-received because we represent a larger population. If those lines were to be fractured, we would be very slim because we wouldn't even be a whole community going to our representative. It would be fractured and split.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anybody else? Thank you very much.

Now is the opportunity to call for speakers from the floor. I'm going to ask, if you want to speak, please stick your hand up so I can get some idea of how many. This gentleman on the right was the first to stick his hand up. It gives me some idea with respect to timing. If there were a hundred people who wanted to speak, I'd have to limit you but, at the moment, I think we've got four people who want to speak. So, we've got a fair amount of time.

MR. LEONARD GIFFEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll try to be very brief. I think the previous speakers have made most of the cultural and connection points.

One that perhaps they weren't aware of is that we have three Lions Clubs on this side of the constituency: Shubenacadie; Milford; and Enfield, Elmsdale and District. We all frequently work together on various activities and projects. That's another cultural link that we have.

I respect the comments from the councillor from Mount Uniacke and agree that it would be, perhaps, not the right thing to split the Mount Uniacke community in two. Perhaps the whole Mount Uniacke community could be lopped into some other area, as opposed to splitting it. Regarding the connections between this area and Mount Uniacke, while we're both in the same electoral district and the same municipality presently, there is very little direct contact between the citizens of the two.

A similar situation exists with the northern part of our area, the Noel Shore portion. The Maitland through Noel-Kennetcook area has a long history of connections to Truro. They travel through Truro for business and all kinds of other things and, unless people are working in the Halifax area or this area, their tendency is more to shop and do their things in the Truro area. Similarly, from Burntcoat through to Walton, the tendency there is toward Windsor and Hants West because that's traditionally where they've gone for their business. So, if you're looking for alternatives, those might be things. I don't have the numbers that you folks have, so I can't figure out how many people you have to try and re-allocate. That's one possibility is those areas. Another possibility is Mount Uniacke. The fact is that none of those communities have the same really important connections that exist between Milford, Shubenacadie, Elmsdale, Lantz, and Enfield.

[7:45 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: The corridor.

MR. LEONARD GIFFEN: Yes, that's my point. Thank you. My name is Leonard Giffen, and I live in Milford.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I want to comment. As a result of the meetings we had with you in the BMO Centre, we did go back and see what we could do - which is reflected on

the map that's over there - trying to take something out. Perhaps we haven't done it very well but we did listen, and very intently, to what we heard before.

We're trying to come up with something. I recall - and I don't have my notes - there were three aspects that were given to us with respect to Hants East. It was the corridor, something, and something else. The corridor seemed to be the main issue that you had when we met in Bedford.

If we were to go back - and I think Kody mentioned this before - to restoring as is, that would push us probably about 1.36 or 1.37. I don't have the exact numbers. It might be more, or it might be less. With the new data set, we haven't had a chance yet to overlay it on the 51, the 55, and the 56.

We did have a look at Mount Uniacke, and that's why there's the map over there. We might not have got it right, but I can assure you we are trying to accommodate the corridor. Perhaps then we disenfranchise or make it worse for other people.

Thanks very much, Mr. Giffen.

The second speaker from the floor. Straight at the back, please. I can see a hand.

Again, if you don't mind, state your name and spell it, please.

MR. DAVID NEVIN: Pjila'si. That means welcome. My name is David Nevin.

What Ms. Watson was referring to is, in 1754, there was a mass house built by the Mi'kmaw people, with the assistance of Abbé Le Loutre, Abbé Trent, I believe, and Abbé Mouillard. They had it on the St. Anne Lake, which is now known as Snides Lake. That's just the information.

The difficulty for us as a First Nation is that we weren't consulted, nor was Millbrook. Under the law, we are supposed to be consulted about anything that affects us, even if it's not on our First Nation. That is the difficulty here. We felt that we should have been consulted prior to. That makes it very difficult for you to do what you have to do, because we're not happy with this.

The property that we're talking about - St. Anne Lake, or Snides Lake - we currently own that. We currently own across the road from it as well. We are doing ATR, which means additions to reserve. These lands will become First Nation property. Some of them will remain fee simple. Others, on the other hand, will revert to reserve, so that we can develop as we please.

What happens for us by changing the boundaries is that we are now competing with Millbrook First Nation for dollars. That makes it difficult for us. They are very successful. We do not want to compete with them specifically. We have a very good relationship with Millbrook. When we want to develop, and they have the information, they will share the information with us. Now that sharing may stop. So that becomes difficult for us because we want to develop our properties, we want to develop our businesses.

A lot of people don't understand what we're doing. However, we're trying to be good neighbours with the communities surrounding us, and that is difficult with these new boundaries that are being set. That means that we're going to have to deal with other governments as well, which complicates things for us, and that's why I am here tonight. Thank you.

[7:50 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, sir. Just for the record, the commission did approach the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq.

MR. DAVID NEVIN: I realize that, but all they do is administer programs; they are for the smaller First Nations. The larger First Nations, like us and Eskasoni, when we apply to government they cater to us. The tribal councils are usually set up for funding purposes. They are not as political as a First Nation. You should have come to Shubenacadie and Millbrook and consulted with us. Consulting with the Confederacy would be like me going to somebody else and saying I consulted with you. That isn't consultation, and as far as I'm concerned, this is not consultation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I understand. So, if I could be absolutely correct in terms of what you're saying - that issue of consultation is certainly a very important key - but in terms of the actual boundary that you're referring to, you would prefer to have a corridor?

MR. DAVID NEVIN: Yes. By the way, we have maps of where reserves were located in various towns such as Stewiacke, Shubenacadie, along the Enfield corridor. By centralization, we were all put into one area. The thing is that they put us in one of the harshest areas in the province. However, what they didn't know is they put us on the largest aquifer in Atlantic Canada. (Applause)

MR. CHAIRMAN: There is somebody on the left-hand side, if you could come forward. Please state and spell your name.

MS. ELEANOR ROULSTON: I'm from the Hants North area of East Hants/Hants East. I am a member of the municipal council, and I represent the Rawdon-Gore areas.

I didn't come prepared to speak tonight. I came prepared to listen but, as most people know, I have a hard time doing that. I understand the concept of voter parity, being one of the senior members on our municipal council. We've been through boundary reviews numerous times, and it's always a very difficult process.

While I understand the concept of voter parity, and numbers on paper that create voter parity look good, I don't think it's any secret that within the past number of years voter engagement in this province is not high. The turnout for provincial elections is not optimal, and to divide communities in any of the ways that have been suggested here, in my opinion, will not promote voter engagement. I think you will have sawed-off parts of a larger community such that people will say, why bother; we're going to be lost within the larger picture. That's concerning to me because I think we need more voter engagement.

[7:55 p.m.]

Generally, in the Hants East/East Hants area, we are more than just a group of communities lumped into a boundary. We're a family of communities. That has not been always easy. As within any family, there are fractious times, and there are good times. I can say that over the past 20-plus years that I have been involved in public life, the ties between all of the communities, from Mount Uniacke to Walton, through the corridor area and the central area, have strengthened, and the interaction between those communities has grown. I think East Hants/Hants East is a good, viable area, and I think we are stronger together.

I understand that we are probably hanging our hat on being made an exception because of this slightly-over-1-per cent variance. I would encourage you to make that recommendation. It does matter to people, and I think the last thing that the provincial government would have intended when it struck this commission was to start to pit communities or family members against one another in order to stay within the unit that currently works for them.

Earlier it was asked of someone if they had a boundary in mind that would work. Speaking for myself, I think the one we have right now just works fine.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Eleanor. Any comments from the commission?
No.

Next speaker please, the gentleman at the front.

MR. JOHN A. MACDONALD: Hello, John MacDonald. Thank you, Dr. Dodds.

I was here in Truro, so I'll make it really short. I know the number you have is the problem with the mix, but if you actually take the roughly 34,000 electors who represent

the five different districts, and you remove that from the 743,000, and divide by 51, which is what the rest are, it'll come into about 13,911 electors. By keeping East Hants together, it would come to 1.31 per cent. That's where it would sit.

For the last municipal boundary review that was done here, the Nova Scotia review, the URB made an exception in Shubenacadie because we exceeded the 25 per cent because of Sipekne'katik. I'm not sure of the exact number of registered electors. I'm sure the province has them somewhere. But if it's between 800 and 1,000, it puts the per cent down to about 1.22 per cent to 1.23 per cent, which is below your 25 per cent. If the URB permitted the municipality to exceed that per cent, because of the relationship between Sipekne'katik and Shubie, I don't see how they could then say, you can't use the same logic to make an exception when you're doing the provincial boundaries.

Thanks for the clarification. I was going to ask how Mount Uniacke got taken off. I read the report twice and I'm wondering, how did I miss it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: As a result of the meetings, we have been trying to come up with something that would fit our terms of reference.

Could I just ask you to explain again the concept?

MR. JOHN A. MACDONALD: My numbers? Which one? From the start. Okay, you have 743,500 electors, based on your report. There's 34,069, if I remember correctly. Only Preston will actually exceed your 75 per cent. Everyone else is below.

[8:00 p.m.]

So, if you took those numbers out of the total electors, we're left with 51 ridings. You divide that by 51, and you do come up with 13,911. For some of the people asking, does he really know his numbers? Yeah, I'm a numbers guy. I was a councillor, and I know my numbers. That would put it at the 18,000, which is what I picked (although I don't know what the final number is) based on December: 1.312. But that includes Sipekne'katik. I stated, since the URB permitted the municipality to exceed 25 per cent because of the relationship between Shubenacadie and Sipekne'katik, I think that gives you greater ability to do that. That would be the review that would have been done sometime between January and February 2016. It would have been done around that point.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I get it now. Thanks.

MR. JOHN A. MACDONALD: I was trying to figure a way to keep all of Hants East together, as I stated in Truro. Yes, it's over - but Hants East works the way it is. I would say there are probably a lot of communities out there that would love to have people saying, I want more people to be under this one MLA, as opposed to smaller.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What we heard from many of you before, in at least two of the public meetings, was that this is a growing community in terms of population. In terms of the demographics, therefore, it's not just a growing population but a more useful population. I guess in some ways that's our challenge for the future.

I don't know when the next Electoral Boundaries Commission is going to be - they're supposed to be every ten years. The reason we're meeting now is what happened in 2012; so, after six years, here we are. I don't know if the House will say, let's get back to 2022 - as opposed to saying, let's look at 2029. But whichever, I think you could probably put money on it that, whenever it is, there are going to be more electors in the existing boundaries than there are right now.

MR. JOHN A. MACDONALD: I would hope that, at that point, the government would realize that maybe the problem is the number they keep picking, and I don't mean the number of MLAs. It's the number of electors. Maybe the point is that they need to look at increasing that number instead of chopping out communities. As you pointed out, Bedford was way over at the last one - it hit a number where it was unsustainable and had to be split. I don't envy your job in figuring it out because it's not fun. Bedford doesn't have a bunch of lines where you can say, here's a river. But who knows whether in ten years there'll be a big boom or whether it'll stay static - nobody knows. I was amazed to hear that we were a minus. That surprised me.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I got the data yesterday, and I imparted that to the commission this morning when we met first thing. We actually had it on the board, and we had to recalculate for the 51 and the 55 and the 56. I just assumed it would be more, but it's not.

What we don't have is where that loss of about 11,000 electors in that period of time - we'll have that information tomorrow, I think. They'll overlay the new dataset on the boundaries. Is that in Halifax because of the mobility of people? Is it in the rural areas? We don't know. We can conjecture, but we should have a better idea tomorrow. But it is over 11,000 fewer, which I think for all of us - certainly for me - was a complete surprise. I just assumed it would be Of course, what that does is it helps the smaller electoral districts because now we're looking at a smaller average, for one; and it hurts those that are hitting the 1.25 and beyond.

Any questions? Thank you, sir. (Applause) Would anybody else like to speak?

[8:05 p.m.]

MR. LAWREN ARMSTRONG: My name is Lawrin Armstrong. I was the returning officer for this district for Elections Nova Scotia for nine years. I can certainly relate to everything that people have said so far this evening about the district and wanting to keep it intact. One thing we really have to keep in mind - and I know you've

already referenced it yourself - is that it's such a fast-growing area, especially what we call the corridor. Down the road, inevitably, the district is going to have to be carved up a little bit somewhere along the way.

If you're able to leave it the way it is right now, using the arguments already put forward, well and good. But if you feel you have to stand by the average number of electors, you may want to take a second look at your proposal for Mount Uniacke. Rather than divide Mount Uniacke between West Hants and East Hants, as a returning officer and knowing the area, I would suggest that the whole of Mount Uniacke could be kept together and consideration perhaps be given to attaching it to Sackville-Beaver Bank.

If you did such a move, you would find that Sackville-Beaver Bank numbers would come up because it's quite small compared to some of the others, at least by the numbers that I read on the internet today. That would keep Mount Uniacke together rather than split, as our Mount Uniacke friend would like to see happen. Even if it did separate it from the rest of East Hants, it would still be part of the municipality. However, being a member attached to Sackville-Beaver Bank would probably give them quicker access to an MLA than they have now. If you look back over the years, the MLAs for Hants East have inevitably been elected from this side of the district - from the corridor area. You can go back as many years as you want and find that's been the case. That's an alternative suggestion from me as a former returning officer and knowing the district inside out as I do. Thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions? We actually have been looking at Sackville-Beaver Bank as well. A lot of these things, once you start, there are knock-on effects. This is why we brought maps not just for Hants East, but we brought maps for the surrounding area. Once you make one change, unfortunately it triggers others.

MR. LAWRIN ARMSTRONG: Sure, it triggers others around them. But, if you want to keep East Hants as intact as possible, and yet have to be ruled by your average number of electors, the alternate route would probably be to take Mount Uniacke and attach it to Sackville. I think, if you did the numbers, you'd find out that - by doing that - the number of electors you would be taking out of Hants East would be the same as you're already proposing by taking Milford and Shubenacadie out.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We've been doing some work on Sackville and Beaver Bank already, but that's for another day. I do want to thank you because, as I say, we listened before to the importance of the corridor, which is perhaps why we didn't get it right. Obviously, we didn't get it right, but we were looking at taking Mount Uniacke out.

MR. LAWRIN ARMSTRONG: I suggest, if you plan to take Mount Uniacke out, keep them together rather than split.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We've heard that tonight from the previous speaker and we've heard it from you. Thank you, sir. Would anybody else like to speak? It's nice to see you again.

HON. MARGARET MILLER: Thank you so much and nice to see you again. First of all, I want to thank you for taking the time and coming here tonight. I think this whole community can really show their appreciation that you made the time to come here.

I also want to thank Kody Blois and Sandra Watson for all the work they did on this. They are amazing representatives of the community who made sure that they were heard. We were all at the - I don't believe Sandra was there, on January 5th. I was there and Kody was there on January 5th with about ten other people from this area. I couldn't make the Bedford meeting. I understand there were a lot of citizens from Hants East there as well. You can see what the impact has been tonight. There's a lot going on in East Hants tonight, so to get 200 people in a room is quite an accomplishment at any time. I really want to thank them all too for coming.

[8:10 p.m.]

The last time I spoke I talked about the significant areas of East Hants and what they meant. I talked about Hants North, and where the people who were in Hants North did their business. The same with the Hants East area and how it's very central to the corridor area. Then our third area is Mount Uniacke. We talked also about where they do things, whether it's coming to Hants East or whether their business and their sports activities and everything are in that other area.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That was the three areas I was thinking about. Do you remember? I mentioned it.

HON. MARGARET MILLER: Exactly. That's why I thought I would mention it again.

As the MLA, the last two elections, campaigning in all those areas, Hants East is 1,800 square kilometres. It's a massive area. Sometimes I think about my colleagues in the city, and they have two square kilometres to campaign. I'm thinking I sometimes have three miles between houses, where they don't have three miles in their whole constituency. It becomes quite a challenge. With time management, you can make it work. As somebody mentioned, I do hours in Mount Uniacke once a month at least or whenever it's needed. I do the same thing in Maitland. I don't believe people should always have to come to their MLA. Sometimes, it's up to the MLA to go to them, beyond having the office in Enfield now, which is pretty central to the whole constituency.

I know you have had a lot of debate. There have been a lot of different ideas brought forward of how we can make this work. One of the things I have heard people talking about in the last while is, what happens when? We know there are 2,000 more units coming to the Lantz area within the next few years, and they are going to have to be considered at some point. We know our population is still going to grow a lot, and we're going to be dealing with this again in the future. It's something that should be considered. I don't want to leave that behind and say nobody brought that up to the commission at the time. We know that may take awhile. It may take fifteen or twenty years. We don't know how long that will take. This area will continue to grow as it has been; all you have to do is drive through and see. In the last five or six years, just since the time I have been the MLA here, we have so many more apartment buildings. I think I used to have one, and now we have several. We have more housing going up all the time, and they're all full. We can see that this area is going to grow very quickly, and I know you have a very difficult consideration to make.

If there were to be a division of Mount Uniacke, if there needs to be, the one thing that I would ask you is to keep all of Mount Uniacke together and, in naming a constituency that has Mount Uniacke in that constituency, to use the Mount Uniacke name. I think they need recognition. During the time that I was campaigning there, I heard from many people who wondered, why should I vote? I don't get any kind of representation from Hants East. It doesn't matter. My MLA - I won't see you, or I didn't see previous MLAs. That's why I go there, because I want to make sure that they are appreciated, that they are recognized for what they do, as being part of the Hants East constituency. I just want to make sure, with any change, that they are also recognized there.

I can tell you this - it is doable. This is not an issue. Under your proposed 56-seat solution, you have Hants East at 1.27, which is above and beyond the terms of reference. My question would be, why propose it at 56 seats but be resistant to other scenarios? I think we have to look at all those scenarios to be able to move forward in a way that's going to protect all of the citizens of Hants East.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I want to reference again the fact that, if you look at Table 3 - not everybody has Table 3, which the 56-seat scenario - for Hants East, it's 1.24. That is with splitting the corridor. If you put that back in, then we're up - I don't have the math in front of me, but we're probably up about 1.36 or 1.35, something like that.

[8:15 p.m.]

HON. MARGARET MILLER: Sometimes Shubenacadie and Milford, especially Shubenacadie, doesn't quite feel as engaged with the corridor because they're not as centralized. But I think it's very important for them to stay. I think that if they were in with Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley, they would be seen to be an afterthought, and I

don't think the residents of Milford and Shubenacadie deserve that. They are a part of Hants East, and we'd like them to stay that way. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Miller, we will be meeting as a commission tomorrow. We will have our ninth representative with us tomorrow. The first order of business will be to discuss what we heard tonight. The fact is, we've already heard a lot before, which is why we tried to make that adjustment with Mount Uniacke. Obviously, we got that wrong. I assure you, we're trying to get this done. We heard loud and clear the importance of the corridor. For most of us, you just drive up and down if you're going to Truro or whatever - but these are very powerful arguments. The fact that you persuaded us - and we didn't need much persuading - to come here, and the fact that there are so many people here this evening tells you that we're going to try to do our best. But as I said, the prologue to the terms of reference is that they're mandatory and not a matter of guidance. Again, it's a question of that give and take. We were talking about that very thing today.

Again, thank you very much indeed for representing your constituency.
(Applause)

This lady on the side here. Please, your name and the spelling.

MS. VIRGINIA PETER-PAUL: Sure. My name is Virginia Peter-Paul. I just want to let you guys know that I really believe that we're all a family - East Hants, Shubenacadie, Milford, Indian Brook. I'm also a councillor from Sipekne'katik. I'd like to thank David Nevin for coming up and speaking on our behalf because this isn't consultation to me either.

We have a relationship with the surrounding areas, and we always had relationships with them. We spend a lot of money through the economy of Shubenacadie and Milford and the surrounding areas. We shop in Elmsdale. We play hockey in Elmsdale. We go to school in Shubenacadie. There are a lot of relationships within our communities.

I won't talk very long - because I can talk - but I just want to tell you a little story. At one time, the Shubenacadie Elementary School students went to the Riverside school, and the non-natives were speaking Mi'kmaw and they didn't even know. So, when they spoke to the people from the other communities they spoke Mi'kmaw, and the kids were like, what are you saying? They said, I'm saying this. And they were like, what does that mean? That's not English. And they replied, what do you mean, it's not English? So, from Grade Primary to Grade 5, they built that relationship.

I also want you to know that having people all together with their different races reduces racism. You know, we have a good community; right now we have a good relationship with Milford and Shubenacadie. As I said before, we have dollars coming in

with them, and we're the same with them. So I really want you to know that I think we should stay together as a whole, because we are a family. We're East Hants. That's what I wanted to let you know. (Applause)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Any comments from the commission?

We have one here, one on the side and one in the middle there, so we've got three more at the moment. We've got plenty of time.

MR. WILLIE COURTNEY: Good evening. My name is Willie Courtney. I'd like to thank all of the speakers who came here tonight. I'm not a numbers guy at all. I learned a lot here about numbers. I can't imagine the challenges you have here as a committee to do what you're doing throughout the province.

[8:20 p.m.]

But I am a community guy. For the historical record, the corridor area started in Shubenacadie. It was the commercial centre of this area of East Hants. The first municipal office was in the basement of a high school, HERH. It started in Shubenacadie. It grew towards Halifax. We were the commercial centre. Truro was a hub; Shubie was a hub towards Windsor and Maitland. It is an insult to our grandfathers that, if you're going to cut off a corridor of people, you cut off the centre of where the place started. That's very bothersome to me. It started Shubenacadie.

Our first speaker said, it was all called Shubenacadie. Lenny Giffen said the first Lions Club was in Shubenacadie and it went to Enfield-Elmsdale. That was the nemesis of this community. To hear this recommendation that we're going to cut this community apart, and we're going to cut off the head off it - it just isn't fair. I wanted to say that because it has been bothering me. I thank you for letting me speak.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Our pleasure.

MR. STEPHEN KING: Good evening. My name is Stephen King. I had the privilege to speak in Truro on January 5th and, like many of the speakers there, I talked mostly about geography, history, and culture. I'm a long-time resident of East Hants. I live in Elmsdale. I've lived there probably close to 40 years. I'm also a municipal councillor for Elmsdale-Belnan.

We've talked about natural history and geography, et cetera. I just want to talk very quickly about manmade history and infrastructure. Infrastructure can either be the boom or the bust for a community. I want to mention in particular the corridor area. At one time Shubie had its own water system, and Elmsdale, Enfield, Lantz had its own. They're all one now. There's a new water tank in Shubenacadie. The municipality is looking at other things in the future.

The reason I mention it is that, most often if not always, infrastructure is a big cost, and it's usually cost-shared provincially, federally, et cetera. I know East Hants as a municipality has done projects in Milford and Shubie in the past, and I know there are things certainly on the radar for the future, but they all involve cost-sharing. It's usually provincial, federal, and municipal.

I think it would be very difficult if you're looking at projects in Milford and Shubie, which are very much a part of East Hants and the corridor for that type of cost-sharing. You could be looking at two different representatives of government. You could be looking at different priorities.

I strongly believe that the growth of Milford and Shubie is paramount with East Hants. I wanted to mention that. I know it's a little bit different, but it's a practical thing. If those communities are broken away, I don't think you're going to see that type of growth with infrastructure, and I don't think you're going to see the same priority. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, sir. There's somebody on my right-hand side.

MR. PETER GIFFEN: Thank you very much to the Electoral Boundaries Commission for coming to East Hants for this meeting. I know the fellow residents and I very much appreciate the time you're coming out and spending in the communities affected by these decisions. You have a difficult job - no question, it's not easy.

My wife and I live here in Milford, just about 500 metres away from this hall. I have three children. My mother lives here as well. I've lived here all my life, and I'm an active member of the recreation association and a leader of our local Shu-Mil 4-H club, which stands for Shubenacadie-Milford, by the way. I am a video editor and a director, and my wife is a pastor of a church plant in Truro.

There are probably very few things I can say that haven't already been said by Sandra and Kody and everyone else tonight and that you've heard over the last couple of meetings: the confusion that it would bring to the education system with schools' issues, potentially dealing with two MLAs, dividing communities, and the potential confusion that having two MLAs might cause.

[8:25 p.m.]

I know you have a difficult job to do, and I understand that there are real challenges in the rural areas of our province, with population decline and economic development. Hants East is no different. But I simply don't see how this change makes sense. I'd like to echo my friend and president of this facility, Sandra Watson: we are a

growing municipality and a growing community, and we don't want to be split from the rest of Hants East, be it by an electoral boundary or in any other way.

In my experience, when it comes to difficult and emotional decisions, people sometimes struggle to explain how they feel in a logical way. It's not easy. I am certainly no exception. I personally have found that I do my best writing with audio and video so, like Kody, I have also brought you a gift of the film that we worked on. It is a copy of the film that I was honoured to direct last summer, called *East Hants: This is Us*.

It doesn't really touch on any of the issues we're talking about tonight, but it will give you a unique perspective on our shared history, people groups - including our Aboriginal community of Sipekne'katik - industry, geography, and the future of this municipality. You'll probably have a few I-didn't-know-that moments and a few laughs, and it will really help you understand that this is us and all these people.

There must be other options to be looked at for keeping Shubenacadie and Milford where we need to be within Hants East. I support the status quo of the Hants East electoral boundary. It's obvious that it really matters to people. You can tell that from tonight and from your other meetings. I don't have to show you that.

Now, I know what you're saying: Peter, I don't own a DVD player anymore. You may not, and that's okay, because I've also included my business card in them if you want a link to watch on your phone or iPad. Send me an email and I'll send it to you, no problem. (Applause)

I just want to express that it's not a token gift. This is a project that we worked really hard on. As Margaret mentioned, this is a big municipality, and covering it all obviously was extremely difficult. But we tried to do our best, and I think it will give you that historical context that you should probably watch when you're making these kinds of decisions. I brought some with me so, between Kody and me, we probably have enough for everyone.

As I said, I'm sure your decision-making process is very difficult. Again, thank you so much for coming to Hants East - not just Milford, but Hants East - to listen to the concerns of the community. I appreciate that. (Applause)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. I'm sure that most of us still have DVDs, and some might actually have 8-track kicking around.

This lady's next, and then you, sir, will be following.

MS. COLLEEN SMITH: Hello, commission. My name is Colleen Smith. I didn't come here prepared to speak, but I feel obligated to raise one incident that I think speaks to the strength of our communities.

About two years ago, the schools in these areas - the school in Shubenacadie and the school in Lantz - we were told that one of them was going to close. Our community came together. At that time, we could have torn each other down as communities, but that didn't happen. The communities stood together, and they showed the importance of Sipekne'katik, the Shubenacadie area, Milford, Lantz - we came together and we saved both schools.

I think it speaks to how strong we are together, as a corridor. We are a family, and we want to remain that way. (Applause)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. We heard a very similar story on Saturday with respect to a school in the Lunenburg West - Queens area, that the community came together, and they saved a school.

[8:30 p.m.]

MS. COLLEEN SMITH: Right. Now we want to save our electoral boundaries. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Gentleman here, I think you indicated that you wanted to speak.

MR. NORVAL MITCHELL: I will speak. Norval Mitchell. Following the last speaker, I was on that review committee for the two schools, at Maple Ridge, Shubenacadie and Lantz. The big problem with that was trying to decide which school was better? Which one we should keep? How would people feel if we closed Shubenacadie and moved them to Lantz? How would Lantz feel if we closed and moved some of those students to Shubenacadie? It was a tough decision. We had to convince the whole school board. Staff at the school board wanted to close one or the other. But through hard work by the community behind us, from our digging into research from the province, we were able to present to the school board, which governed Chignecto Central, enough information to convince them that Shubenacadie was an important part of the corridor and the culture of East Hants, that closing Shubie wasn't good for the race relationships between the Mi'kmaw people, the white people, and as you can see behind me, there's not many people of colour.

I'm here this evening to support all those friends that I have in Shubie, Milford, and Mount Uniacke who may be on the cutting edge of this decision. They didn't ask me to come. I came because I consider them my friends. Staying together as a community helps us become stronger. If you watch what goes on below our border in the U.S. - my sisters, one in Southfield, Michigan, and one in Chicago; Uncle Willie in San Diego; and my aunts and uncles in Massachusetts - people are struggling with trying to have an identity under the present conditions. I don't feel that way up here. I feel that my friends treat me just like I treat them, as a human being.

I can't see that cutting Shubenacadie and Milford off from the whole of East Hants is going to make them stronger. They are part of us. I'm hoping you can see beyond the numbers. Put yourself in their spot. What's the right thing to do? I know what the right thing is to do, but I have no clout. I can just give you my opinion.

I thank all those people behind me for coming. It's a tough decision. They're very passionate about where they live, what they want, and what the future holds for their children and grandchildren. Years from now, I'll probably be lying some place quietly looking up at the grass and hoping that the communities that I left behind are growing strong and are growing together.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

Do we have any more speakers? I think we have heard a fair range of arguments. As I said, the whole issue of schools was brought up before, but we heard it very much on Saturday when we were in Bridgewater. Would anybody else like to come forward?

Please, come back.

[8:35 p.m.]

MR. KODY BLOIS: Thank you. Just one point Margaret raised about the different proposed solutions, and we talked about it. From what I read on my phone and what I'm seeing here, under the solution for 55 districts but 56 members it shows that Hants East is 1.27, and that would be on page 44 of your report. I'm presuming that if the 56 members is an option, which of course it is since it's on the table, the commission has shown that in that circumstance, they're willing to go above and beyond the 25 per cent. It shows 27 per cent here. It's proposed under 56 members, 55 districts, on page 44 of your proposed electoral distribution. If you have used your discretion there, we would ask you to use your discretion elsewhere as well.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We are aware of that as well but, as I said, there are no decisions yet on this side of the commission. In the end, all we do is make recommendations, which then the House can either accept or reject.

You're quite right. It's 1.27, and we're conscious of that. But we haven't finished our work. We can't finish our work until we finish our public consultations. This is the last one. I think it would make 23 that the commission has done since September. We did 12 in the first batch and then 13.

If nobody else wants to speak - please, yes, you can come back.

MR. MICHAEL PERRY: Michael Perry. It's kind of funny sitting on this side of the table and asking this of you guys.

In all of the areas that are being affected, all of the communities that are being affected, before any of them are moved or shifted, is there any community engagement with those communities before it happens? In the ones that are publicized, as we're dealing with now within Milford and Shubenacadie, they're able to give their story. I imagine there are many other communities that, in the past, weren't given their story when they were taken away. I don't believe that we should repeat any of the same things that got rid of some of the electoral boundaries in the past or repeat the mistakes without engaging the communities that are affected.

I said before, you guys have a very difficult job. As you can tell by the number of people here, the we're-one-community sentiment is pretty strong. That goes, as was said by many other people, for all areas of the municipality.

I want to ask that of you as a commission. If there is anything to be done, whether it's in Hants East or not - if it's in the South Shore, the North Shore, Cape Breton, HRM, or any of those areas - I would implore the commission to at least hold public consultation in the affected areas so those people have a voice. In the 23 areas you have visited As I said tonight, I didn't even know that they were being split off - and I'm the councillor for Mount Uniacke, and it's not in the report. It was one of the working solutions that has come out - one of the working solutions - I know it's not a final solution. I understand that, and I think everybody else does as well. They're not final solutions. There's still a lot of work to be done after public consultation.

But now that that has been put on the table, I 100 per cent can tell you right now that the majority of my residents and the residents of the community don't even know that's a possibility. They'll be informed when I leave here tonight. But if anything was to happen, I would hope that you would give the community a chance to echo the same community thoughts and ideas that have happened here. I can literally save you the time. You're going to hear the same thing there as you heard here because we are together as one. We feel that way.

I can give you an example. We have a Tim Hortons in Mount Uniacke, which is great - we have one, yes. But unfortunately in the Mount Uniacke area, we don't have a food bank. All of the proceeds from the Mount Uniacke area fundraising come here to the corridor for places in the corridor to support the food banks in this area. These are the ties that we have. It might be considered in other regions of the electoral district. However, it plays a vital role in more than just the community we live in. We support the general area as well. I want to make sure that that is known and thought.

[8:40 p.m.]

As I said before, I don't envy your position. I know it is difficult, and the deliberations after the public consultation will probably be just as long as the public consultation. I would ask you to think. There have been plenty of things presented tonight

about numbers and about exemptions. Commissions in the past have stuck to numbers and stuck to mandates. As I sat here tonight and was going through some of the exemption opportunities you have, I believe that the ability in this commission might give you leeway in interpretation and a recommendation not to make some of the mistakes that led to the previous report about the electoral boundaries and to ensure that the electoral review for Nova Scotia is not impacted in the same way involving other communities.

I'd like to thank you for your time, and if you ever want to come to Mount Uniacke, you're more than welcome. (Applause)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. If anybody else wants to speak, please do.

MR. KEITH RHYNO: Hello, I'm Keith Rhyno, Municipality of East Hants. One of the other councillors spoke there, and she said she was one of the oldest ones. Well, I guess I'm very close to her in municipal years, good or bad.

I've heard different people put different proposals to you tonight, one of which was splitting Mount Uniacke or taking Mount Uniacke out. I've also heard the Hants North area congregate toward Truro and that. I am here to support the whole of Hants East, not just cutting some of it.

When I came in here tonight, I looked, and I had sort of an idea. But I've changed my mind with regard to taking Mount Uniacke out. I think we are stronger as a whole. I can imagine that the legislature people who sanctioned this commission for you to sit would not be stuck on numbers that would split a community.

I must remind you that numbers are cold, hard things. These people behind me, they don't want to be seen as a number. They want to be seen as a community and stay together as a community. They're not numbers. I can't imagine anybody in the legislature sitting down when they receive your report, no matter what it is, and saying, Hants East is over by 1.26 per cent, so we're going to accept your thing.

We've been through this at the municipal level before. We've gone above - I think ours was plus or minus 15 or 17 per cent. We've gone above that and it has been accepted by the URB. Don't judge us on parity. I love to be equal, but sometimes in life you just can't be equal at everything.

Thank you for letting me speak. (Applause)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, sir.

Unless there's anybody else wanting to speak, I would like to thank you all for coming out. Thanks go to Sandra Watson, who invited us in the first place and made the space available. Thank you very much for the coffee and so on.

I do want to thank our IT staff, who follow us around, and Julia Kinsman, who is the person at the end of the phone and on Facebook and who looks after the website. Thank you very much. (Applause)

This would make 23 meetings. Now, some of those are duplicates, because we have sometimes gone back somewhere a second time. As I say on behalf of the commission, we did hear you loud and clear before, which is why we're here this evening. We did do some work prior to coming, which was trying to look at how we might accommodate - because although you're courting the 1.27, if you make it whole, it's going to be in the 1.3 area. I just want you to be absolutely aware of that and clear about that.

We have heard over and over again that people don't want to be numbers, and we understand that, which is why we're here. But we have a job to do as independent commissioners, and we have our marching orders, as it were, in the form of terms of reference. What we have heard in all of the meetings is the importance of communities, large and small. Somehow, we have to strike that balance between effective representation, which goes back to the Carter decision. It goes back to the Supreme Court decision, therefore. It goes back to the Charter, Section 3. It goes back to the court challenge in Nova Scotia after the 2012 boundaries. It goes back to the Keefe commission, which reported, and now to us.

I want to thank you all. As I said before, this is the largest gathering that we have had at any of the meetings. That says a lot for your communities and says a lot for your family. Again, I think the word that has been mentioned many times is the concept of family. Again, thank you so much for coming. I don't know what the temperature is outside, but it was pretty cold coming in. Again, it has been very warm in this room. Thank you very much.

[The commission adjourned at 8:46 p.m.]