

**NOVA SCOTIA**

**ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES**

**COMMISSION**

**FRIDAY, JANUARY 4, 2019**

**Claymore Inn & Suites**  
**Antigonish, Nova Scotia**

**PROVINCIAL ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION**

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

**WITNESSES**

Mr. Ryan Smyth  
Mr. Joe MacDonald  
Mr. Neil Black  
Dr. John Hamilton

**ANTIGONISH, FRIDAY, JANUARY 4, 2019**

**NOVA SCOTIA ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION**

**7:00 P.M.**

**CHAIRMAN**  
Dr. Colin Dodds

MADAM CHAIRMAN (Ms. Angela Simmonds): Good evening. We're going to get started. I want to thank everyone for coming. My name is Angela Simmonds. I live in Dartmouth. I'm from Cherry Brook and North Preston. I am the Vice-Chairman of the Nova Scotia Electoral Boundaries Commission and will chair tonight's public consultation.

Before we begin, I first want to acknowledge that we are on unceded traditional territory of the Mi'kmaw and many First Nations of Nova Scotia.

I am pleased to say that we have six of our other commission members joining us. I'll start from my right side down for people to introduce themselves.

[The commission members introduced themselves.]

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Before we begin the meeting, we'll go over a couple of housekeeping things: the emergency exit is located to my right; the washrooms are located directly outside of the door; and there is water and coffee. If people want to have anything to drink, feel free.

To begin, I'm going to provide context for the meeting this evening. An independent Electoral Boundaries Commission is established every ten years by an all-Party select committee of the House of Assembly. However, in this case, this commission has only elapsed for six years.

The 2012 commission produced an interim report of 52 seats, which the Attorney General of the day did not accept. The report had continued the protection of the electoral districts of Clare, Argyle, Richmond, and Preston. The Attorney General directed the commission to produce another report, which would be the final report, which it did in September 2012. This had 51 seats and is the current membership of the House.

There was a challenge to the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal, which found in January 2017 that the final report of the 2012 commission violated Section 3 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Subsequent to this finding, the Commission on Effective Electoral Representation of Acadian and African Nova Scotians was established, and it reported earlier in 2018.

This current commission was appointed in July 2018 by a select committee of the House of Assembly. We produced an interim report on November 28<sup>th</sup>, which is available on our website. We do have a few printed copies, which are on the table directly over there. We have a French version and an English version available.

The terms of reference given to this commission are quite broad but stress the right to effective representation and electoral parity. I believe a copy of this is posted on the wall, or it might even be in our package there. If anyone needs clarification on our terms of reference, we can also provide a copy. This commission was tasked with producing draft boundaries for 51 seats and at least one other. In that event, we proposed three further alternatives for public input.

The total number of electors as of June 29<sup>th</sup> of this year was 743,500, and the average on the current set of boundaries of 51 seats is 14,578. This represents an increase in electors of over 30,000 since the 2012 report, and there has been a continued population shift to the urban areas of this province.

In summary, tonight we would like your input on the four options that the commission reported in the recent interim report. The first is 51 electoral districts, the current size of the House but with some adjustments. The second is 55 electoral districts, which include the formerly protected electoral districts of Argyle, Clare, Richmond, and Preston. The third is 55 electoral districts but 56 seats in the House of Assembly. This would include the dual member of the electoral district of Inverness, which would have one MLA to represent the geographic electoral district and one MLA to represent the Acadian constituency. The fourth is 56 electoral districts. This includes the exceptional electoral district of Chéticamp.

On the walls this evening we have three maps of Nova Scotia showing these options. As Option No. 3 is simply a variant of the 55-seat House, Option Nos. 2 and 3 share the same map. All the electoral districts are in alphabetical order with the number of electors and deviations from the average of the electors. Additionally, there are maps showing: the proposed boundaries for Antigonish, which remain unchanged from the current boundaries; those of the adjacent electoral districts of Pictou East, which I believe is No. 43; and those of Guysborough-Eastern Shore-Tracadie, which is No. 26. For Antigonish, your elector count is 13,987, with a seat entitlement of 0.96 on a 51-seat House and 1.03 and 1.05 for a 55- and 56-seat House respectively.

In our previous public consultations, we also asked for input on the concept of members at large to represent the Acadian and African Nova Scotian populations, as well as using non-contiguous electoral districts. However, we received little support for the concept of members at large to represent Acadians and African Nova Scotians, given their dispersion beyond the protected electoral districts.

Ladies and gentlemen, I can now turn the floor over to you. We did have one person request to speak in advance, so we would go in that order if that person is interested in speaking. I ask that you use your microphone and state your name so that we have everything on record. If you have written notes or briefs that you want to submit, we welcome those this evening.

From the response, I think one person was not able to make it and another person is not interested in speaking at this time. If anyone from the floor has questions or wants to speak to the commission, please take a seat up there and then you can use your microphone.

MR. RYAN SMYTH: This doesn't seem like a very good idea to me at all. Sorry - my name is Ryan Smyth. This seems like an incredibly bad idea. It reminds me of *Animal Farm*, where all animals are equal but some are more equal than others. It stinks of social justice and pandering to different communities. We're supposed to be equal before the law and this is anything but that. So, on just basic, simple principles, this seems very much like a bad idea.

Ontario has 110 MPs, not MLAs - same thing. They have a population of 10 million or 11 million. We have an incredibly large number of MLAs, comparatively, per capita. We're looking at about five times as many. We shouldn't be looking at expanding electoral districts. We should be looking at collapsing them. I'm pretty much dumbfounded that anybody would think that any of this is a good idea. That's all I have to say.

MR. MICHAEL BAKER: Mr. Smyth, just so I'm clear, when you say this is a bad idea, for the record, you're talking about the protected electoral districts - 55 seats, 51 seats. What's the bad idea?

MR. RYAN SMYTH: Expanding seats, to start with, is a bad idea, and treating people differently is a bad idea. We're supposed to be equal before the law. This does not make people equal before the law when you pander to some specific group. It doesn't matter what that group is. We're either equal before the law or we're not. This is not equality before law - protected electoral districts or whatever. That doesn't seem like a good idea either.

DR. GLENN GRAHAM: We appreciate your opinion, for sure. You're definitely probably not the only person in Nova Scotia to feel that way. However, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms is the ultimate when it comes to interpretation of the law and directing the law. It is the highest order in the land. The Supreme Court has made some rulings as

well as Section 15 in the Charter, which do address the issues that we see to be important in our suggestion in returning to what other commissions have recommended, and that is with the scenario of readjusting back towards something relatively close to what was had when it comes to representation of Acadians and African Nova Scotians. That's where we're coming from. We're going by the law as well - the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Again, we appreciate your comments. One thing I would say in accordance with - this is a Court of Appeal decision, and this is why the commission was put forth before the ten years that it was supposed to - it is the fact that we aren't equal. That is the issue. We are supposed to be treated equally, but what the Supreme Court tells us is that we haven't been. So, there are things set up in our society, and this commission is one of those systems, that have been set up to try to increase awareness.

[7:15 p.m.]

MR. RYAN SMYTH: You're bringing up a point there, we are not equal. Nobody is equal, and nobody ever will be equal. It's supposed to be equality of opportunity. This changes equality of opportunity. Take any two people and you'll find disparities in income or levels of health or education or whatever. We can't have an egalitarian society. That turns into an absolute nightmare. That has been tried in the past. It ends up in mass murder.

This is a matter of historical record. Egalitarianism doesn't work. Trying to make people equal doesn't work. Equality of opportunity is what we need to be addressing, and this is not addressing equality of opportunity. This is trying to force some sort of distortion and make people unequal.

MR. MICHAEL BAKER: Mr. Smyth, this is your opportunity to be heard and be on the record. I'm curious; if you had your choice, what would you see: 15 electoral districts; 50 electoral districts, based solely on population; or is there room for marginalized communities?

MR. RYAN SMYTH: I don't believe in marginalized communities. I think that's all just a bunch of silliness. I just don't buy into it. We have equality of opportunity here in Canada. Nobody is being shoved off to the side with no choices.

If you want to live in a big city or you want to live in a rural area, there are certain costs and benefits that go along with that. If you're going to choose to live in the city, you're going to have a lot of conveniences and a lot more opportunities there. If you choose to live in a rural community, you're not going to have some of those opportunities, but this is a matter of your own free choice.

MR. MICHAEL BAKER: What is the ideal?

MR. RYAN SMYTH: For number of districts, fewer. I don't have an exact number to say 15 is the right number or 25, or we should have the same number per capita as Ontario, from 10 or 12. I don't have any kind of numbers like that.

MR. MICHAEL BAKER: Would you see it based on population or geography?

MR. RYAN SMYTH: I think it needs to be a hybrid of both. You can't just go population-wise because you're going to end up with some crazy boundaries. You can't go just by geography because then you're going to have population disparities. It needs to be a balance between those.

MR. MICHAEL BAKER: Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you for your comments. Is there anyone else who would like to speak, or any questions?

MR. JOE MACDONALD: I'm Joe MacDonald. I'm just wondering - you say that certain populations - ethnic, is it - should have representation. When we started tonight, you said we're on somebody's land ....

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Unceded Mi'kmaw territory.

MR. JOE MACDONALD: I've never heard that. If we're sitting on their land, maybe that should be looked at too.

I'm with him on less population - less representation. Eleven federal ones in Nova Scotia and they're doing 86,000 now and we're talking about 10,000 for one person. There should be some equalization there.

The problem is, if we give one part of the province more power, the lesser areas are not going to have equal representation. That's my biggest concern.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Is there one out of the four that you would suggest, more than the other?

MR. JOE MACDONALD: This is probably shooting myself in the foot, but they can't agree now with 51. If you're putting more in there, the more they'll not agree. I don't know if that's any benefit to doing things. I would stay with 51 at the maximum, and maybe look at going down if the population doesn't go up significantly. Within Atlantic Canada, we have the largest population of the four provinces, and they don't seem to have a whole bunch more. No other province within Atlantic Canada has more seats, so I think we should stay where we are.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you, I appreciate that. Did anyone have questions? Thank you for your comments.

Is there anyone else who would like to speak or has a question, provide comment?

MR. NEIL BLACK: My name is Neil Black and I live in Sherbrooke, Nova Scotia. I will be on the other end of the wagon. I believe we should embrace the 56 seats in the House. A lot of these people in the areas we're talking about really have not had proper representation. It's really that simple; they have not had proper representation.

I lived in Dartmouth for a good number of years. I enjoyed it. I was a banker in those days, and I would provide funding for the general area. One of the areas was Preston. They never had a voice, and they were treated like second-class citizens. This is in the banking area I'm talking about.

In general life, that's not my place to go there; but I will say, because they were non-descript, they were there, that was all. I know a bit about Clare and Argyle but Richmond not so much. If we're going to be citizens of the Province of Nova Scotia, then we should all have the same rights. I believe, by extending to the 56 seats, that will do it for us.

I also live in Guysborough-Eastern Shore-Tracadie. If I want to see my MLA, I will call today. Maybe he is in Canso or he is in Sheet Harbour or East Ship Harbour, so trying to get an appointment with the chap is a trick and a half simply because it's a very large riding.

I look at that and I say, what do I have in common? I'm rural; I'm the country mouse now. What do I have in common with East Ship Harbour or with Sheet Harbour where they are commuting to Halifax? In fact, Sheet Harbour recently changed their waterfront to become part of the Halifax Port Authority. So, logically, there's really nothing in common with that group of people. Yet we have an MLA who has to service them when I want to be a little bit selfish in having him service the rural areas of Sherbrooke to Canso to Larrys River - and there's a little sliver of Antigonish County around St. Andrews that's part of it. But we all talk the same talk and we walk the same walk. I don't like to use those crude statements but that's fact.

I would cheer for your insight to say 56 is the right number, in all fairness, to all the people of Nova Scotia, whether it's at that end of the province or it's across the Canso Causeway. Give them some pride, too, in being Nova Scotians. Thanks very much.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, I appreciate your comments. Is there anyone else who would like to speak or ask a question?

DR. GLENN GRAHAM: If I could make a comment to the last speaker, I see what you're speaking about there. You're speaking about communities of interest, essentially, that's how Electoral Boundaries Commissions have looked at this in the past. They are

taken into consideration when we're talking about creating ridings, for instance, or redesigning them in a sense. Similarly, if you look at Term of Reference No. 3, I'll just read it to you: "Deviation from elector parity may be justified because of historical, cultural, or linguistic settlement patterns and because of political boundaries"; and also Term of Reference No. 2: "Deviation from elector parity is justified because of geography." If you look at a couple of those scenarios, I think that some of this would be seen to be addressed in the 55-/56-seat scenario.

We would appreciate, if you do have time maybe at the end of the meeting, to take a look at what's proposed there and see if there might be anything that you see that doesn't quite fit or if you have any recommendations as to the boundaries that we could put together.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Is there anyone else who wants to speak? If not, I would ask Peter to speak. My fellow commission member has something he wants to contribute.

DR. PETER MARSHALL BUTLER: I do because I think the elephant in the room is the division of the province into rural and urban areas. While I have talked about it privately in commission meetings, I haven't really raised it very much when we have been "on the road." We do need your advice and insight into the dilemma that we face, and it is a dilemma because nothing is settled yet. An interim report has been produced, end of story. Not everybody agrees with the interim report. I certainly am not in complete agreement with the interim report. Whether there's 52, 56, or 41 is still open. It's not settled.

The one thing that we have not found ourselves, I think in some ways, capable of raising is, what do we do about the division of Nova Scotia and the services we provide and the electoral distribution that we face between a growing metropolitan Halifax and a shrinking rural Nova Scotia? Somebody came to me privately and said, "It's simple. The matter you folks face is you haven't been able to do what other provinces have done. Newfoundland cut off its services. Shrink the population of rural Nova Scotia. Then you won't have a problem."

Halifax is going to continue to grow - no question. I'm not especially happy about that because it is getting impossible for me to get from street to street. It is going to grow. It probably will be 52 per cent or 56 per cent of the population within five to ten years. What do we do? Do we forget about them and continue to have the seats we have serving reasonably well a large number of people? Or do we allow the growth of seats and the growth of influence to be where some people might say - I don't know and I don't say this - it rightly belongs, and it rightly belongs where the population is? It's not going to change; you can't turn that around. No government can, wouldn't touch it because you would put them out of office.

What do we do? I don't want to go away from this exercise in democracy without having made some kind of meaningful contribution to the future of Nova Scotia. I'm getting old. A few years ago I may not have cared, but I do now. What I care about is your advice as to what the hell we do.

Are we going to continue with 56 seats representative largely of rural Nova Scotia? What are we going to do for the people who say, I'm new, I'm here, I want to have a voice, and I live in Halifax, so give us 40 of those seats?

Thanks for the rant, but I do feel - not for the commissioners because they're going to get it later - that you should tell us what you think. I don't think you're doing that right now.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Just to follow up, I want to reiterate that this is an interim report. This is why we continue to come out and have public consultations and ask for feedback. I think tonight was a great night because we did receive several different perspectives. I think that's what we all can contribute here.

[7:30 p.m.]

Is there anyone else who would like to speak? Again, you can always send in some information, a draft memo or any of your comments.

DR. PETER MARSHALL BUTLER: I'm a professor. Neil and I have been on another board together. It would be interesting to see what you think about it.

MR. NEIL BLACK: I'll come back up, if I may.

DR. PETER MARSHALL BUTLER: I'd love it.

MR. NEIL BLACK: If we keep the status quo, what do we create? Nothing.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Sorry, again, just state your name.

MR. NEIL BLACK: Mr. Neil Black, Sherbrooke. So, if we stay as we are, we create nothing. We leave the same - I could say unrest, that's probably not the proper term - the same situation that we've had since the House of Assembly was established. The people in Clare have no representation. You might say, yes they do, they were represented by so and so or such and such - but not with the same language or interests. It's that way throughout the province.

With the 56, we are giving an opportunity, and that opportunity. For instance, if I can spend more time with my MLA, will we create something? Will we have an exchange of ideas more often from people within the riding? Will the people of Clare swell up with

their pride and dignity and say, we're going to do more here in Clare because it's ours now? The same with the other adjustments that are being looked at for the province. That's a challenge to the people of Nova Scotia - we've given you 56 seats, now do something with them.

DR. PETER MARSHALL BUTLER: Would you be really upset if we said one of those 56 is now going to be in Halifax - not here now, but we'll put it in Halifax?

MR. NEIL BLACK: Well, technically, the 56<sup>th</sup> seat will be in Halifax - let's say it's in Preston.

DR. PETER MARSHALL BUTLER: That's correct, another one in addition to that, let's say. Would that be a problem for people who are worried all of the influence ...

DR. NEIL BLACK: No, because you are absolutely correct. Our opportunities and challenges in rural Nova Scotia are not to try and take something away from Halifax. It's to develop something where we sit and where we sleep and where we eat, where we go to our religious quarters. That's our opportunity.

If we adjust, for instance, Guysborough-Eastern Shore-Tracadie, we would be reducing the number of voters, but in turn we are giving that number of voters much more opportunity to participate and be with their MLA. It's sort of like being a doctor today; you've got 500 patients, but maybe you should have only 300 patients, to look after them well. So, I go to our MLA, let those MLAs look after us well and work with us.

I sit on a group of small boards within the District of St. Marys, and we just cheer when we know we can get hold of our MLA - not because he's not there, he's everywhere, he's busy. It's an extremely large riding. I think it's larger than the whole province of P.E.I., if I'm not mistaken. That's one example.

Let's go down the shore. Let's go to Clare and say, we're going to give you your opportunity and your dignity, now do something with it. Look out! I'm sure those people will jump on that and be very proud. We'll see things, enhancements, happen there. If we can create a small business because we have more communication with our MLA or MLAs, then bravo!

That's where I get back to say, we don't want to take anything away from Halifax. We want to work with Halifax, but we want to work in our own location, in large rural Nova Scotia. Maybe we can come up with a mousetrap that says we're going to have people come here and develop small businesses. That's where I'm coming from. If we stay as we are, we gain nothing and we go nowhere. And Halifax will eventually keep creeping out, crawling out. Will that be good or bad? From my standpoint, I see no advantage to it. Traffic - I paid \$25 for parking last week when I was in there for the day!

I don't know if I can add anything more. Are there questions or anything?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I appreciate your comments, Mr. Black. Do any of the commission members have questions?

MR. MICHAEL J. BAKER: Just to put some reason to it .... Ideally, if every 4,000 Nova Scotians had an MLA, they would be better represented. Is there a budgetary concern? What are the limitations, in your mind? What do we have to look at?

MR. NEIL BLACK: When you say what are the budgetary limitations ....

MR. MICHAEL J. BAKER: Yes, we would like to have perhaps 60 seats. Anecdotaly, it's said that the cost of an MLA and an MLA's office is really inconsequential compared to the cost of government, yet we have to be reasonable. We represent all of Nova Scotia.

MR. NEIL BLACK: Again, I go back to the point, if you don't spend anything, what do you get? You get nothing. This is something at our turn in life, and as Peter says - Peter's getting older, I hope to catch up with him someday. You, as a commission sitting here, eventually will have a recommendation to make to the government. You could be really safe, fold your hands, and say, 51, we're not spending any money. We're holding the line. What did you do? You did nothing. Whereby, if we go with 55 or 56, we did spend some money. We took a chance. But we believe that, in all of these cases, the adjustments that we want to make are frugal yet give these people an opportunity, give them something that you can't buy called dignity and pride.

That's really what it's boiling down to. Do we look at what's happening in Ontario or some of the newer territories, Alberta and so on and so forth, and set our cookie-cutter agenda in line with what they're doing? No, we don't. We're Nova Scotians, and we will determine, I think, based on our history and where we want to be. We want to be fair and just people. And that says, give these people their pride and let them see what they can do.

Can they create fair government within their district, their constituency? Can they represent all the voices that live within Argyle, Clare, Chéticamp - wherever it may be? You're only going to find that out if we move forward. If we stay at 51, you didn't make any mistakes, but we didn't gain anything either.

MR. MICHAEL J. BAKER: To reiterate the chairman, this is not a science. If anything, this is magic. To find that perfect balance is very difficult. It's only through the contribution of yourselves that the commission gets an idea of what the province wants. We are all leaders in our communities. We all come with very, very distinct ideas. Thank you for stepping up and taking the microphone.

MR. NEIL BLACK: I'll leave you with one thought. I used to be a banker at one time in my life. Before I would give you anything, I had to know that I would get it back. If I looked at this with my banker's hat on, I would join with those gentlemen who said, this is crazy. You don't go that way. You stay pat, or you reduce your costs.

But this really has nothing to do with costs. This is making Nova Scotia what we believe Nova Scotia should be, a fair and just place for everybody who wishes to live here or was born here or decided to come here because it's such a great place to be. I'll leave it at that.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Black. I appreciate your comments. I think we all do. Is there anyone else who has any further comments or wants to speak? You can sit up at the table here, and then we'll speak with you. If you would state your name into the microphone.

DR. JOHN HAMILTON: I am Dr. John Hamilton. I am a country doctor. I do clinics in Chéticamp, Baddeck, Arichat, Port Hawkesbury here. I have ancestry from St. Anns Bay and Pictou County. I am also a member of the Réseau Santé de la Nouvelle-Écosse.

One of the things that's striking in these deliberations frequently is that the boundaries are often sketched to disrupt natural communities. One of the interesting things that I've discovered from doing clinics in Chéticamp, people in Neils Harbour and Bay St. Lawrence buy their vegetables at the Co-op in Chéticamp, not in Baddeck, not in Sydney. Also, Guysborough County is two distinct communities. So, we shouldn't disrupt those communities. Frequently that, as Mr. Black points out, causes us to have to consider further representation. We should stop breaking up natural communities.

The natural communities are really based on their market areas. These are quite well defined. You can go to Cape Breton University. You can go to St. F.X. here. You can go to the marketing people at Dalhousie. They will tell you what the natural community boundaries are. Those are different than the political county boundaries.

Your most recent recommendation, in fact, has accepted some of those things, and that would yield more MLAs. So, any issue about the cost of MLAs is really irrelevant because the civil service wastes a lot of money having meetings. They would, in fact, have better representation and fewer meetings if the representation was more coherent. That is all I've got to say.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Mr. Smyth.

MR. RYAN SMYTH: Ryan Smyth from Antigonish. Regarding Halifax, it seems like some people have concerns about Halifax having too much representation and too

much power in the province. I don't know if you're aware of this, but there are other systems that address exactly that issue.

In South Korea - this is at a federal level - you have provinces and you also have special cities. So, Seoul is the capital. Then you have Incheon, Busan, Gwangju - a bunch of other cities that are special cities, special districts unto themselves, and they're governed as such. I don't know if you've ever heard that or thought of it. It's just something that's a possibility.

There was something else I wanted to say, but I've forgotten. I'm sorry.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: That's okay. Thank you so much for your comments. Do any of the commission members have any questions?

DR. PETER MARSHALL BUTLER: I want to know what the special cities might be. Are you talking about growth areas? So, we would have in Nova Scotia a regional centre in Sydney probably; in the centre of the province, a growth area around Truro maybe; Halifax; and then another one in South Shore-Valley, maybe Kentville. How would that relate to decision making in government, for example?

MR. RYAN SMYTH: It's an entirely separate district. Incheon is a city, but it's a province unto itself of sorts. The analogue here would be something of concern; Halifax would be a city and province unto itself. (Interruption). Yes. There are six or seven special cities in Korea.

[7:45 p.m.]

DR. PETER MARSHALL BUTLER: That would be innovative for us.

MR. RYAN SMYTH: It's setting up a different system as opposed to the current system that we have now. I wanted to bring it up as an idea.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you for your comments. Does anyone else want to speak? Do any of the commission members have any questions or further comments?

MR. MICHAEL KELLOWAY: I want to say that I am really enjoying tonight because I think there is some great discussion for the panel but, more importantly, great discussion from you folks. I think over the course of the past six months that we've been together - it feels like it has been longer some days and that's all good - there are things that we're juggling as a committee, as you can see, around parity versus effective representation. Is there that perfect match - rural, urban, distinct groups, and things of that nature? To hear all the comments tonight, some of them are very divergent, but it's very helpful.

I keep saying to people - people who know me personally, who know that I'm on the panel and are friends of mine - I keep telling people to come to these events because we are listening to everything that you're saying and we're discussing everything that you're saying. I just wanted to give a shout-out to you folks tonight for some really candid discussion.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I will further say the same thing. I thought tonight was very fruitful. As in many of the consultations that we attended, I really appreciate getting the feedback from the public and from the members here. I think it's important because that's what we're travelling for. What we want to know is what people think. I want to thank everybody for their comments tonight.

I also want to say that our final report is due April 1<sup>st</sup>, so there's still a lot of time for people to comment. Again, visit our website or email any of your comments or feedback. Please go on and view the interim report, so that you can provide comments.

Again, it's only early. The maps are up. We'll stay around for a little while longer if people have further questions or want to have more intimate conversations with people individually. Other than that, I want to thank everybody for attending.

[The commission adjourned at 7:48 p.m.]