

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION 2018–19
Draft Boundary Proposals for Public Input
September 2018

The Nova Scotia House of Assembly Act requires the appointment of an independent Electoral Boundaries Commission to recommend the boundaries and names for all electoral districts across the province of Nova Scotia. In 2017, the Commission on Effective Electoral Representation of Acadians and African Nova Scotia (the Commission on Effective Electoral Representation) was established and made a number of recommendations respecting the process for establishing the provincial electoral boundaries.

Based on this report and its recommendations, the House of Assembly, through its Select Committee, appointed the Electoral Boundaries Commission 2018–19 (the Commission) and established its Terms of Reference. They clearly set forth the criteria to review the current electoral boundaries within Nova Scotia, with a focus on effective representation and the practical implementation of the recommendations set down by the Commission on Effective Electoral Representation.

An initial list of communities with dates and locations will be publicized, and the Commission will consider holding additional public meetings to those currently scheduled. The electors of Nova Scotia will have the opportunity to contribute considerably to the electoral boundaries revision process in the province. To this end, your submissions to the Commission are invited, and they may be delivered orally at a location where the Commission is meeting, provided in written form, or both. To register to speak at a public consultation in your area, or for more information, please e-mail ElectoralBoundariesCommission@novascotia.ca.

The Commission is seeking input from the public on the following proposals:

1. to restore the seats of Clare, Argyle, Preston, and Richmond, as was recommended in the Interim Report of the previous Commission, 2011–12
2. in addition to 1 above, to make Chéticamp and environs part of the restored Richmond electoral district

or

3. in place of 2, to make Chéticamp and environs an extraordinary electoral district
4. to create additional Electoral Districts in Bedford and Cole Harbour
5. to obtain public input on the creation of a Members-at-Large group to provide for effective representation and voter parity

With restoration of the four seats as proposed, there will be adjustments in adjacent electoral districts, as there will also be from the addition of the two new seats and the imbalance of the other electoral districts that do not fall within the +/- 25 per cent range in the Terms of Reference. The Commission is very conscious of the unique character of the province and its richness, as the Terms of Reference suggest, and it has tried wherever possible to take account of community and other administrative boundaries.

A map showing all of the proposed changes will be available at the public consultation meetings, as will maps showing the impact of the recommended changes on the communities visited. The Commission wants to stress that this is only a draft of proposed changes, and that, after the public meetings and the receipt of written feedback, the Commission will prepare an Interim Report by November 30th, which it will table as required by the Select Committee to the Premier or his designate. Further public consultations will then be held prior to the preparation of a Final Report by April 1st, 2019.

The Terms of Reference to which the Commission is bound are as follows:

1. There is a right to effective representation, and elector parity is the prime factor in determining the electoral boundaries.
2. Deviation from elector parity is justified because of geography.
3. Deviation from elector parity may be justified because of historical, cultural, or linguistic settlement patterns and because of political boundaries.
4. Subject to number 5, the estimated number of electors in each electoral district may vary by no more than 25 per cent above or below the estimated average number of electors per electoral district.
5. 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.
6. Electoral districts may be non-contiguous.
7. The preliminary report must include electoral boundaries for 51 electoral districts and for at least one different total number of electoral districts.
8. For greater certainty, the final report must include only one recommendation of electoral boundaries.
9. The preliminary report is to be submitted to the Premier or his designate on or before November 30, 2018.
10. Subject to number 11, the final report is to be presented to the Premier or his designate on or before April 1, 2019.

11. The commission and the Premier or his designate may, by agreement, extend the deadline on or before which the final report is to be presented if the commission so requests.