

NOVA SCOTIA
ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES
COMMISSION

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2018

Black Cultural Centre
Preston, Nova Scotia

PROVINCIAL ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION

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

WITNESSES

Mr. Irvine Carvery
Mr. David Hendsbee
Mr. Connor Smithersmapp
Mr. Brian Mintus
Ms. Dolly Glasgow-Williams
Mr. Charles Taylor
Ms. Alma Johnston-Tynes
Ms. Pam Thomas
Mr. Ernest Simmonds
Ms. Justine Colley-Leger
Ms. Bev Doman

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6:00 P.M.

CHAIRMAN
Dr. Colin Dodds

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ladies and gentlemen, I think we should commence. It's a little after 6:00 p.m. Good evening. I want to thank you all for coming. My name is Colin Dodds and I'm the Chairman of the Electoral Boundaries Commission for Nova Scotia and will, in fact, chair tonight's public consultations.

Before we start, I do want to acknowledge that we're on the unceded lands of the many First Nations of Nova Scotia.

Tonight, we have eight of the Commission members with us and I will ask them to introduce themselves.

[The Commission members introduced themselves.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're missing Peter Butler because his wife had surgery today, so we've given him a pass with respect to that.

Housekeeping. I think many of you will be familiar with the exits and the washrooms. I do want to confirm that everything that's said from this side of the hall this evening, and then from the speakers, if you're going to speak at the microphone, that everything will be recorded, transcribed, and then will be part of the permanent record of Hansard.

Let me provide a context for this evening's meeting. An independent Electoral Boundaries Commission is established every 10 years by an all-Party select committee of the House of Assembly. But in the case of this Commission, only six years have elapsed since the last one, which was 2012.

The 2012 Commission produced an interim report, which the Attorney General did not accept, as it had continued the protection of the electoral districts of Clare, Argyle, Richmond, and Preston. He directed the Commission to go back to produce another report, which we did, with a revised interim, and a final report which was issued September 2012.

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

The terms of reference given to us by the select committee are quite broad. Copies are available. I think I caught everybody as you came in. If you need clarification, we'll be pleased to try to help you and provide answers.

We don't have a lot of wall space this evening, so on the walls is, first of all, a map of Nova Scotia, which contains all of the electoral districts that we are talking about in our work, and there are 55. That's the map you can see on my right.

Also, on my right with respect to Preston is the proposal that we have for this current round of negotiations or consultations. That's on the top. On the bottom are the current boundaries with respect to 2012; in other words, the boundaries on which the last election was fought.

In addition, we have some other maps. Again, because of a shortage of wall space, we have the Eastern Shore and we have the two seats in Cole Harbour. If you want to see those later, we can lay them out and you can have a good look.

Our proposal is that there would be 55 seats. Currently, there are 51. In the interim report, which was not accepted by the Attorney General, there were 52.

The total number of electors as of June 29th of this year, and those are the data that we are using, was 743,500. If you divide through by the number of electoral districts, which is 55, you end up with an average of 13,518. Then everything, in fact, goes from that average, so that then becomes one. I'll explain that in a minute.

What we'd like your input on this evening are the proposals that we're making. I think I've given most of you a copy of those. If not, they are sitting on that table over there.

The first proposal that's more important to you is that we are planning to restore the electoral districts of Preston, Richmond, Argyle, and Clare. These were previously protected, if you go way back to 1992 when they were created in the first place. Then in 2002, that protection was confirmed. Then in the interim report, as I mentioned, in 2012, which the government did not accept, they were continued. But when we were asked to go

back and produce a final report, we weren't allowed to protect those ridings because the deviation was too great.

Another proposal that we have is in respect to Cheticamp. The proposal there would be to either maintain Cheticamp on its own as an electoral district, to merge it into Richmond, because our terms of reference allow us to go non-contiguous, or to maintain it within the Inverness electoral district.

On the map over there we show it as number 99 because it's not included in the 55. If we were to protect that, we'd have 56 seats, not 55.

Obviously, if you start to make the changes that we are making and to restore Preston and the others, it then changes adjacent ridings. For Preston, the elector count would be 9,962 and would be 0.74 of the average.

Another proposal we have is to create two new seats in HRM. One would be in Bedford - we were at Bedford last week - and the other would be in Cole Harbour with some moving around. Cole Harbour had two seats before, but we've really focused on Cole Harbour as a community of interest, two seats there.

[6:15 p.m.]

Another concept that we have, and we'd like you to think about, is that of members at large to represent the Acadian and African Nova Scotians. We recognize, as you will, the dispersion of these populations around Nova Scotia. So, it goes beyond the protected areas of Clare, Argyle, Richmond, and Preston.

Ladies and gentlemen, with that beginning, I can now turn the floor over to you. Our administrator, Callee Robinson, unfortunately had a motor vehicle accident on Saturday when we were way down the South Shore, on her way to Tusket, so I don't have a list of who has already registered to speak. On that basis, I can simply call, and you can indicate if you wish to speak this evening. Stick your hand up, please come forward, and speak into the microphone with your name. Who would like to speak this evening? Perhaps you've already indicated that you wish to, but if not, we're in a position to welcome you to the podium.

MR. IRVINE CARVERY: Thank you very much. Irvine Carvery. I was just wondering if you could explain to us a little bit more on how you see the member at large configured and what areas that member would be responsible for, please.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Again, thank you for welcoming us to elaborate on that particular concept. There are various ways of doing it. The other evening when you spoke, I think you were talking about having one for HRM which I think you said would be about 75 per cent of the African Nova Scotian population. So, in that sense, that's one and then one you mentioned for the rest of Nova Scotia. At the time, I asked you if that means that

we don't continue to protect Preston and you said, let's listen to what people have to say. But I think the model, which we don't have working examples of right now, that I'm aware of, in Canada is that you would have two voting lists. Somebody would self-identify as an African Nova Scotian and they would vote, but they would not then vote twice in their own electoral district. That's the model; how you cut it up, as you asked the other evening, I don't know. So, we wanted your input on that.

MR. IRVINE CARVERY: Well, we're here now in the Prestons and looking at the revised map of the new Preston riding - my recommendation would be to hold that riding as it is and then a member at large representing the other African Nova Scotian communities. Now it may be asking a little bit too much to have one representative for the whole province. That would be a lot of travelling, so we may have to look at splitting the province: Truro being the centre, and to the right would be the Eastern Shore area down to Cape Breton and the other end down to Yarmouth and into the HRM area. As two members at large, that would make it more reasonable. I would imagine that the process would be very similar to when the school boards were there - the African Nova Scotian representative on the school board.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, I think it would. I do have to say that from some of the other public meetings that we've held in the Acadian ridings, that particular idea did not receive much in the way of support. I think one of the factors you just mentioned, the geography - how can you represent potentially the whole of the province or half of the province? And where do you live and how do your members come to see you? Would it be that you would - like the school board situation, you have a member, but then you'd use your existing MLA where you actually reside as your representative.

These are things that need to be discussed, but I do have to say there wasn't a lot of enthusiasm for that way. We're still going up to Cape Breton, but certainly in Clare and Argyle it didn't receive an awful lot of support. Again, if anybody wants to comment on that, please do so.

Who would like to speak next? Does anybody want to come forward? Mr. Hendsbee.

MR. DAVID HENSBEE: Hello, Dr. Dodds.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Nice to see you again.

MR. DAVID HENSBEE: Probably the third time for this Commission.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's the third time, exactly.

MR. DAVID HENSBEE: Just a few things regarding the Preston riding. There are some boundary issues that have always been very convoluted or very difficult to differentiate. For instance, in the west Porters Lake area - I've always suggested that

perhaps the boundary line should use Highway No. 107 as the boundary line at Exit 19. As it states now you've got a little line that goes across the back lots of Christopher Lane. It may be 12 houses between that line and Highway No. 107.

I thought that if you used Highway No. 107 as a very distinctive boundary, it's very easy to understand where the boundary would be between the Eastern Shore riding and the Preston-Dartmouth riding.

The other spot is in the Mineville area - Candy Mountain Road. That boundary line is from the old county District 8 line. Basically, you're going up the old Candy Mountain Road over to the Old Mineville Road and cutting up through the back woods up to the highway. Also, houses on one side of the street are in one riding; houses on the other side of the street are in a different riding. I think there have been some issues of them being confused of what riding they're in or even missed in some of the enumeration.

The simplest thing to do would be to either cut the line at Crooks Bridge right there at Candy Mountain Road close to the Mineville Road intersection or perhaps use the other bridge on the Mineville Road. Therefore, that lower part of the Mineville Road uses the river as a potential line and Lake Echo water body; therefore, getting rid of that confusion in that area.

The option may be - I see that as a proposal, if you're taking the Myra Road out of Porters Lakes - another option could be to use Highway No. 107 and put Mineville into the Eastern Shore riding and still maintain the Porters Lake Myra Road with the Preston riding.

The only other suggestion I would make is the name itself, Preston-Dartmouth. I would prefer to see a Preston-Westphal name to it - something more significant. If you say Preston-Dartmouth, there's no distinction of what part of Dartmouth it is; or it could be East Dartmouth, which is what it was known as - parts of it. Preston-Westphal, I think, has a lot more of a significance to the area with regard to the historical township of Preston. It follows the Westphal region in those parts of town. Those would be my suggestions and some clarification of boundary confusion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The names can easily be changed. In fact, we made a mistake with Cole Harbour; we've reversed them, but the maps were already printed. Perhaps what you could do when we close - I've got some marker pens. I think I've got a red one and a black one, or whatever it is. Perhaps you could mark on the map what your suggestions would be. We do have one member of the Commission, Angela Simmonds who lives in Cherry Brook, so she is well aware of this particular area.

MS. ANGELA SIMMONDS: Live in Preston, but from Cherry Brook.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, yes. Perhaps we could talk about that afterwards.

MR. DAVID HENDSBEE: The only other confusion I noticed was the old Sunset Acres area with regard to the Westphal area having the weird line through Sunset Acres, Westphal, through Portland through the Forest Hills area. I guess you could say Forest Hills and Westphal have a bit of an identity crisis of where Westphal and where Cole Harbour start. There has been some confusion with that line as well. Perhaps this Electoral Boundaries Commission could also correct some of that adjustment. I always felt that if there was a line to be used that it should have been Auburn Drive coming up to Forest Hills Parkway would be the distinctive line because the subdivisions in that area along what we used to call Sunset Acres is still considered part of Westphal and that area's not considered part of Cole Harbour. Just some other suggestions as well.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well perhaps, as I say, when we close, get some marker pens out and you can help us. Thank you very much. Are there any other comments this evening? Please just come forward and state your name into the microphone.

MR. CONNOR SMITHERSMAPP: Connor Smithersmapp. I just have a few comments. This question that led us here was, I think for most, settled law. Unfortunately, the government at the time, because of political expediency, decided that they would rejig the ridings under the guise of parity. It wasn't lost on my community, the Black community, that, ironically, some of the very same MLAs who while in Opposition pounded their tables and railed that the government at the time was not doing enough and had not gone far enough to ensure the protected ridings, these very same members, once they were in power, then seemed to have very little problem allowing the ridings to then be changed.

I guess my question is - it's really rhetorical more than anything else, because the recent case was merely a reference case, I'm thinking that this may be another step in a situation that will repeat itself. Without some assurance that this will not happen again, there really is no guarantee that a sitting government may decide, we have the ability to change the ridings for whatever reason and have the support of the voting populous. Many rumours abound that that was precisely what that government did at the time. They did the polling and they decided most Nova Scotians don't like the idea of a protected riding, especially for the Black community. Because there was that amount of animus, they thought it wouldn't hurt them politically to get rid of the ridings.

The sustained lack of Black Nova Scotians among the ranks of provincial MLAs continues to be a shameful and embarrassing legacy from which we do not see an end. Without some ability, and there's never a guarantee obviously, I think my community like any other community wants good candidates, but they also understand that, by and large, European Nova Scotians do not vote for Black candidates. I know it's a gross generalization, but there's copious amounts of literature out there to substantiate what I'm saying. So, without protected ridings, you will not see people that look like me, for the most part, in the provincial Legislature. My Dad used to say, if you're not at the table, you don't eat. It is as simple as that.

[6:30 p.m.]

For a lot of people in my community, they'd say that having ridings that would assist in electing Black candidates moves the needle. For me it doesn't move the needle; it is the needle. It really changes the flavour and tenor of political discourse to have people of my skin tone sitting around the table. For a large part, we don't have that, and it is really an absolute disgrace when my friends and family from other parts of North America ask me why that is so. I can't really tell them anything other than it is quite simply racism.

For me, doing away with the protected ridings was a very bad idea. It was a bad idea poorly expressed. For many people in my community, this is more than a hope or wish; it is an urgency, really. When I attend meetings, I don't see people that look like me. When I visit various government departments, I don't see people that look like me. Invariably, these people have a very rudimentary understanding of the issues that affect my community. For the most part, they have the understanding of children, plain and simple. When I try to talk to them about the kinds of nuanced problems that my community faces, it's a very abbreviated conversation. A lot of the time it amounts to denial; me trying to prove that these certain problems relate to race and racism exist. It's almost like the five-year-old who shuts his eyes when he thinks there's a monster coming as if shutting your eyes is going to somehow alleviate that monster.

The world is a much different place for Black Nova Scotians than it is for European Nova Scotians. When I've been talking to people about the lack of MLAs from the Black community, I'll often have people say well, you know, there are one or two and they'll name the names. I would say look, you don't stick a knife in a man's back nine inches, pull it out six, and tell him he's making progress. It's kind of a silly thing to say, well you're making progress because there are one or two Black MLAs. This is a structural problem that requires a structural solution. I think most people in the know knew that the reference case would be successful, but without at a minimum policy, the most preferred option would be some kind of legislation, to ensure that these ridings continue. I'm kind of thinking that I'm going to be back here in another eight or nine years.

I was here seven years ago and I'm probably going to be back again unless the issue has a solution that is contingent upon the kinds of things we do when we want to fix something. When we want to fix something, we take a programmed management approach. So, we'll study the program, we'll benchmark, we'll talk to stakeholders, we'll devise a plan and a program, we'll implement it, then we'll do some follow-up, some analysis, and then we will implement some policy or some legislation around it. Racism seems to be the one thing that we don't do this with. It's a very ad hoc. It's very make it up as you go, fly by the seat of your pants and that is precisely the problem.

I think what I'd like to hear is has there been any thought to how this can be solved in a way that does not see us come back in eight years or 10 years or 12 years, when a sitting government decides, we can change it. We can change these ridings; get rid of it now. There won't be that much opposition and it will be good for us.

The other thing I wanted to ask, too: the reference case. Was there, or is there, any possibility, or any ability, on the part of the commission to assist financially when these reference cases come up? So, when I heard the reference case was coming up, I made some calls in the Black community and said look, we should be a part of this and everybody said the same thing: we just don't have the money at the time. I'm just wondering if there's any ability on the part of the commission to assist groups, whether the Black community or other marginalized groups, in participating in reference cases in the future. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Let me take some of the points you make in order. Our Terms of Reference drafted by an all-party committee of the Legislature so it's not just simply a government dictate. It is all party. That's the first point. Second, our first Term of Reference talks about effective representation, but it also refers to parity as well in that first Term of Reference. But following up from that, of course, there was the Keefe Report. Three people went out across the whole province and came back. Their mandate, again, was effective representation of African Nova Scotians and Acadians. As I mentioned, that report came out in January of this year. Then the Select Committee did its work and this time around, the Terms of Reference are far broader than they have been in the past, and this is my third time on the commission.

In terms of permanence, once our final report is submitted that's the end of the commission. Will it be another five years or 10 years? I don't know but our commission is independent, and this was one of the issues that came up in the reference case that you referred to. My reading of the case was that the government didn't like our interim report, but they should've let us get on with our work, present the final report, and then throw it out. Our Terms of Reference this time allow us, on the interim report or the preliminary report, to come up with at least two proposals. We've come out with one particular proposal this evening, we've done it across Nova Scotia and we'll be in Cape Breton at the weekend, which has 55 ridings. Restoration of the four protected ridings. Little bit of tweaking with respect to Preston, if you look at the map you'll see, and a little bit of tweaking in Richmond, but Clare and Argyle are protected with those same ridings, those same boundaries, as they were back in the interim report and back in 2002 and 1992.

All I can say in response to your comments are the that commission has a life and every 10 years there's the potential for a new independent commission. I remember the commission way back in 1992 establishing those boundaries, which included the protected ridings, and this was following the Carter Supreme Court decision, which I think you're aware of. Then I chaired the one in 2002 that maintained those boundaries and I was vice-chair the last time around where we wanted to maintain those ridings. And here I'm back again, and this commission proposal is to continue protection. We've also been asked to look at a map that would contain 51 seats, which is the current seat count. The challenge we have with that is that because of population shifts, this one ride in particular, which is Bedford, would be way over the 1.25. I think it's 1.48 or 1.49.

Anyway, these terms of reference are quite broad. They allow us geography, historical, cultural valleys. All I can assure you right now is the commission's view, coming out on this particular set of hearings, is that Preston should be continued to be protected.

When we give our report in on November 30th, we have to come up with at least two sets of proposals. Our final report, which is due April 1st, we've been told one set of proposals.

All I can say is what we've come out with right now is not the 51. We've come out with what the feeling of this commission is. Time will tell, of course, but I want to thank you for your comments. But as I say, once that final report goes in on April 1st, then the work of the commission is finished.

There are two members of the last commission, Paul Gaudet and me, so we are the continuation. The next time around, I don't know, but I would stress that it's an all-Party committee that makes the selection of the members.

MR. MICHAEL J. KELLOWAY: Just a question. First of all, thank you for the presentation. Your viewpoint on members at large, I'm curious as to your thoughts on members at large.

MR. CONNOR SMITHERSMAPP: I'm not fond of the idea. I think it has very little application to my community. I think if we really want to follow the spirit of the reference case, I think we will be more strategic. For me, I'm thinking about ways to ensure more Black candidates can be successful. For me, I would say that the idea of encompassing the electoral boundaries of Black communities around the province should be expanded. The 1.25 is sort of a benchmark. As you know, it's not set in stone; it is a benchmark that has been noted a lot.

Having members at large, I do not think will be of benefit to my community. If we're serious about this, then we will be as specific and as laser-focused as possible in ensuring candidates from the Black community can have a requisite level of success. For me, a member at large is no different from me going to any particular riding and throwing my hat in the ring. I may have success. Chances are I probably won't, given all the literature and scholarship on the attitudes of dominant society concerning Black candidates. It could be of benefit. I don't think now that it will really amount to much for my community.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Simmonds, you've got a question.

MS. ANGELA SIMMONDS: Just a question. First, I acknowledge what you said. I completely have a lot of empathy. The anti-Black racism that exists here, I appreciate your acknowledgement in saying it. It goes broader than this commission, so there is no guarantee that we're not going to be back here in 10 years. But hopefully there will be people like yourself and me in here who will be at the table to raise the question.

But because we were part of trying to do a different boundary line for the Preston area, but then you said just now when you were speaking that you would actually go further out. I just want you to expand on that, not necessarily make the electoral boundaries smaller, but further out.

MR. CONNER SMITHERSMAPP: What I mean by that is, there is a legacy of Black communities in this province. Some of them haven't. I think one of the ways that they could have been assisted is by the application of political power for these Black communities that had really very little say. They were paying municipal taxes. They were doing all those things that they were supposed to do as good citizens, but they were receiving very little benefit in return.

[6:45 p.m.]

I would say that looking at the experience in the U.S., there are many jurisdictions in the U.S. that are, and happen to all be in Democratic States, no surprise there. But jurisdictions that are looking at helping these Black communities survive. One of the things that they're very adamant about is trying to devise ways to ensure that there are candidates from that community that are successful. I don't mean in terms of absolute numbers, making the boundaries bigger. I actually say, there are other communities in Nova Scotia, I think, that are similarly situated and should have a similar chance to elect candidates from those particular areas. That's what I meant by that.

MR. PAUL GAUDET: I like your phrasing "a structural problem needs a structural solution" and I'd like for you to elaborate a little bit on your meaning of that statement.

MR. CONNOR SMITHERSMAPP: Invariably, when there are problems in my community, and my community looks for assistance, we go hat in hand to the broader community to say, look we have these problems and we want you to help. It runs the whole gamut from racism in employment, to problems with education, to problems with access to capital and banking and finance. Oftentimes, when we make these appeals the solution is often dependent upon the personality of the person that we're asking to help. If the person is open-minded and has a good heart and is accepting and really wants the world to be a better place, then there may be some assistance. But that assistance often is not baked into the system. It's not's put in in terms of structure.

I'm very much about the three Ps: programs, policies, and procedures. I often ask people, if you have a problem and someone is saying that they're going to help you, if they're not putting it in programs, policies, and procedures, then they're probably not going to help you. To me, that is the easiest barometer of whether or not somebody is going to help. When I say "structural", I'm really talking about creating solutions that it won't matter who the government is. It won't matter who's in charge of implementing it. The players will be interchangeable because the system will be designed in such a way that it continues unabated and it doesn't matter if I'm there and I don't like Black people and I don't think about equality or you're there and maybe you do. It won't matter.

Too often if my community is dealing with somebody in the larger community that does care, then there might be some things done. If the person doesn't particularly care or see the seriousness of purpose that my community is trying to express, it might not be done. Quite frankly I'm tired. I'm almost 60 years old. I've been talking about the same crap for many, many years and it's not being fixed. Why? Because the solutions are seldom baked into the recipe. It's usually something that is ad hoc. It is dependent upon the personality of the person involved and when that person leaves, things fall apart. Things fall down. So, that's what I mean by having structure, not dependent on the personality or on someone's largesse or how nice they're going to be to my community.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Anybody else from the floor? If you can say your name, please.

MR. BRIAN MINTUS: My name is Brian Mintus. You and I met at one time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's right.

MR. BRIAN MINTUS: I see you've got a good memory. Unfortunately, that time was clearly indicating that there was a bit of a shamble happening with this electoral boundary at that time. Your professor of economics was also in the room at Saint Mary's University.

I appreciate the comments of my fellow speaker. I am from Cape Breton, I live here, and I really have a hard time trying to understand how the provincial government and the municipal government do not recognize the cause of the systemic racism that exists in the province when they do such a thing as make an electoral boundary that's impossible for a local African Nova Scotian to be elected.

Conversely, the strange thing is that we have one of the elected members speak with you and you agreed to point out the issues that he would think it's favorable for the boundary. That to me is a conflict of interest. Without any doctorate, you would have to see that. That to me is a bad start from the beginning. I think anything to do with those that are already in office to have any input into the existence of a new boundary that would allow the elected member of the community, would be a waste of time because we're not going to have it established in favour of someone that is able to continually be elected because the boundary suits his position. I think that point is made.

I've come to realize that one of the issues I'm hearing is also the policies and procedures plan that is obviously not in place to have those things established seems to be a question because I asked, how do you anticipate not being able to have this boundary that would allow an election to potentially, hopefully, be of African Nova Scotia descent when the Acadians are doing the same thing with the same interests? It's not going to be so visibly obvious, but it's equally the same thing.

If you were to have the, as well as in that Commission, the Acadian and African Nova Scotia Commission for Electoral Boundaries, be understood, it would obviously be a conflict in regard to the issue of fair play to have the Acadians be given three different districts of electoral boundaries and not the Prestons. I think it's in favour that if you give one, you would give the other. If you give three, you would have to more than likely give one to the Prestons. That to me is something that is in favour of having that Commission.

What I am trying to ask as well is, when this is brought up in closed-door meetings, I believe more often than not it's people like yourselves that are there as opposed to a majority of African Nova Scotians because I believe we're going to a point where the concerns for the establishment of an electoral boundary, that they elect an African Nova Scotian, is directly related to the problem we have with systemic racism in the province. That cannot be denied because the fear of having an electoral boundary is directly related to the fact that to give people of African Nova Scotian descent power to decide on their own is in contradiction to how the province establishes its control of African Nova Scotians. I don't want to go down that road because that's something nobody wants to talk about, but it's a directly-related issue to this problem we're having to establish presently.

As well, as time passes, this issue of systemic racism and electoral boundaries become two issues that are mutually exclusive as we progress because we're going to have people more willing to be considered paid-off than those who are willing to fight for their distinctive right.

I think it's a very timely issue to establish the electoral boundaries because at some point we're going to have to be able to make some viable reason for not having it when there is so much of an interest to benefit from it. To me that is a concern. That concern - and I'll be more frank about that - that concern is directly related to the fact that the people who can help are more likely to be interested in what they can get from the side that serves them, not the community. This is a big factor because the community is made of the total sum. Those who wish to go with, say the MLA or the MP or whomever, because they get residuals, that affects the community drastically. I think that over time people can be easily persuaded to go that way if there is no other option that is given to them as a matter of recourse.

The point I'm making, I guess the big point, is the reason that I don't hear from you is why the electoral boundary would be of interest. I believe it's mentioned more so with the Acadian boundary issue in the three ridings, it's for the establishment of heritage and culture. The Acadians have a proportion that's much greater than the African Nova Scotians, so when you look at it, it would be more critical for the African Nova Scotians to have the support and protection of their heritage and culture than it would be of the Acadians. To me, the cards are more in favour of what stacking the deck you have, conversely to the interests of African Nova Scotians.

I think it's a real odd way that the province has tried to minimize the interests of African Nova Scotians and put us in competition with others, only to realize that the Acadians are as interested to protect their heritage as are African Nova Scotians.

I would also like to ask: the evaluation of Preston's riding is a summation of your meetings, and then you come to a conclusion on what you get from the meetings that you have. That doesn't give me the sense of transparency so that we can understand that if all the cards are laid on the table, we are not having it stacked against us. That's something that I find, closed-door meetings for something that is so critical, I believe is not right.

I do believe that I've gone to a limit. I appreciate that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let me just tackle that last point you made, that these are public consultations, everything is on the record. We've had six. This is the seventh meeting so far, we've got five more.

[7:00 p.m.]

We will then meet as a Commission not only to review what has been said in these meetings but also the number of written briefs that we've received. We are getting phone calls, we have a website, and there is a Facebook page as well. All that material will be assessed and there are several things.

There are one or two key aspects. First of all, protection or no protection, so that's one question to be asked. Then if we are going to protect, which is what we are saying is our proposal right now, do we have the boundaries right? That's why the first point you made, people are saying no, you haven't got it quite right. That's why I made the point I did, perhaps have a look. The other evening at another meeting somebody came in with maps and said look, we don't think you've quite got it right; there's this community of interest here and this community of interest there. In that sense, that's why we're here - not only to look at the big picture, but actually, do we have that particular line right?

In the case of Clare and Argyle, our proposal is to restore the boundary as it was. In your case, it's some tweaking; in the case of Richmond, it's some tweaking. That's why we're inviting your comments, to see if we actually have that right. In the case of Clare and Argyle, the request was, from what we heard, we should restore it to exactly what it was back when it was created in 1992.

Thank you very much, do you want to come back?

MR. BRIAN MINTUS: You mentioned the tweaking of boundaries. Where do you go to the point where you have it established? Like the boundary for one person, depending if their property was, say, stolen from them, through either their lack of awareness of taxes or whatever, there are issues with that. I think that is a big factor and concern of property even where I live in East Preston, that people are not going to agree so much, because of

the property that was theirs is no longer theirs, because of the fact it was changed for one reason or another. I would say that's a big problem that you would have to overcome.

Protection and no protection, I think that's a done deal, because obviously, the curious interest is, why would there be no need for protection when we have no protection at the present moment? If you are here to change the property electoral boundaries, you would not want to do all the work and not have it protected.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Our proposal is to continue to protect. Thank you. Would you like to come forward?

MS. DOLLY GLASGOW-WILLIAMS: Good evening, my name is Dolly Glasgow-Williams and I was here, as my brother was, in 1992. Every one of these Commissions we've had, and it's like every 10 years we come together, and we're still fighting the same fight. I have to agree with my brother that a lot of it is systemic racism that has put us in these circumstances, and the fact is that I'm here to support that we go back to the protected Preston riding so we could have and know who we are.

One thing I'm very upset with is the fact that - and I have to go with Brian - I don't think elected officials should be speaking on behalf of a community. The elected bodies that are elected should not be speaking here on my behalf. I say that because Mineville is part of Preston. My mother was raised on Mineville Road. My family owned a lot of it, right down to the lake. When someone comes in here and says take Mineville out and put it someplace else, you've got to consult the riding.

I am very upset with someone coming here - we've already had our boundaries change. For instance, right now, we just had Salmon River Drive, which was always part of Preston - that name now says Westphal, without consent from our community, without consent from the voters. I'm a taxpayer and I am tired of coming to these meetings when people take away my rights and our property in our communities without consulting us, as taxpayers in our communities. I am very appalled at the fact that you allow politicians to speak on behalf of the communities. They don't speak; they get elected. Everyone does not necessarily vote for that person, so I don't think they should have a voice in this proceeding, especially in the Preston area. We are coming to get our designated protected area back - we need that - and to say, take Mineville out. Unless you know the history of the community, don't talk about removing things. We've lost too much.

It used to be, at one point, Preston had a Black person; Wayne Adams was elected and that was because we were all together to do that. We can't do that anymore. We have what is called Preston riding, but who gets elected? I don't know when the last time was we had a person who looked like me sitting in the Preston riding.

You know what? It's okay to come here and say, let's do this, let's do that. But if it's about Preston, if it's about me, and I don't see myself in the room, I'm getting tired of somebody else speaking on my behalf without consulting us. I would like to see - and I

came here tonight saying, I'm not going to go there, I'm not going to get upset, because when I come to these meetings - you know what? Right now, my stomach, my heart is pounding.

We sat before. Yvonne Atwell and I did a presentation - if you can remember, you might have been there, Dr. Dodds - about the Preston riding and what we didn't want to see lost. But that document was put on the shelf and not even looked at.

I think that we need to come together. It's fine to come here, my brother says, and do this stuff, but who is benefiting? And who is going to be appointed? It is because of personalities, are we coming through politics, programs? Are we going to be doing this legally, documenting, and without the racism piece that sticks in there?

You know, whether we like it or not, racism is alive and well in Nova Scotia. I'll tell you why. I went to a beach last week, down to Martinique Beach with my daughter-in-law and my grandchildren from Regina. On Martinique Beach, we put the blanket down and I heard this woman say to my grandson - I thought she was saying, "My keys are lost". She said to him, "Move your black ***". I don't want you sitting beside me."

Excuse me? This is a public beach. You're in Nova Scotia. I said to her, maybe you need to move your blanket and move down, because you're living in Nova Scotia and we're here. We're not leaving. So, every time my grandchildren go out, or my niece and nephew, go out and face that kind of racism and then, we come here again today, to talk about protected area when the government removed it.

It was legislated and then taken out. So, what's the point of having government legislate things when another government can move in and take it out? We need to make sure that if this is going to go in there, it needs to be stabilized, permanently done, so when government comes in and changes its colour, it doesn't change the focus of where our boundaries are.

For me, I am tired of coming to these. I am 73 years of age and I am damn tired - excuse my language - of coming to these meetings, fighting for my rights and my community. I am sick and tired of it. I figure when I came the last time, one of my grandchildren coming up, what is the boundary? They're going to say, well, Nanny, that used to be here. Preston used to be out by Musquodoboit Harbour. Where are we now?

We have a lot of resources in these Preston lakes. You name it, we have it in our communities. So, people keep coming in and trying to pinch off pieces of it. I think when you do the boundary, you need to put in structure that needs to be permanent so when people go in, the government doesn't change it all the time.

I could sit here and give you history, but I'm not because you already have a document presented by myself and Yvonne Atwell some time ago. I am saying, this Commission is back again. Let's hope in 10 years, we're not coming back again to go

through this same sort of process. I want to see Preston where it was originally. We would have a protected area, and no government is going to come and change that because they want to because they don't like me and they don't like who I am. Or, you want to move to my community? Well, I am Black. We are Black. Don't move into the community and change boundaries. Don't come into my community and then say you're going to change the boundaries because you don't want to be in a Black community or change the name.

I think it's very important that you're here today, and you hear what we're saying, and it's too bad there aren't more people here because most people are just getting off work at five o'clock, so six o'clock in the evening is not a good time. I'm looking around the community and a lot of people aren't here because they are probably on their way home from work. I think we need to focus. Again, protected areas need to be put in place.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Perhaps, later on, when we close you can have a look. We have the one from 2012 which is the one the last election was fought on and then we have our proposal. As I say, this Commission has Terms of Reference. We have copies for you to see and we're trying to follow those. We have to follow those as best we can.

MS. DOLLY GLASGOW-WILLIAMS: Good.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But, as I say, right now, our proposal is to restore.

MS. DOLLY GLASGOW-WILLIAMS: Good, thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please come forward, sir.

MR. CHARLES TAYLOR: My name is Charles Taylor. Just listening to everybody here, I'm sure I'll reiterate a lot of the points people made. One thing I will say is I'm not very old, in terms of being around that long, but in the time that I've been around I've watched the Black community shrink immensely. Every Spring there's a new subdivision. There's a road going in on Montague Road that's supposed to go to the airport, but it cuts behind the Black community.

I've watched government operate for the last 30 years and one thing that's for certain is that Black people always lose. We lose our land. I've read the Charter and we have no rights. We have no land rights; we have no rights at all. For this to work you have to give us rights. You have to give us a voice because having a seat means nothing if somebody can just come and take your land.

They changed the boundaries; Salmon River was East Preston and Cole Harbour used to be Preston. I mean my mom, she's not that old, she walked to Sir Robert Borden every day to go to school, and that was her community. All it takes is for a white person to own it and then they can change it because we have no rights.

If this Commission does anything, give us our rights, because we have none, and the government hasn't given us any since we've been here. At the end of the day that's the issue. You can give us a seat, you can do whatever you want, but at the end of the day it won't be respected until we have rights in the Charter; until we're represented in law, nothing matters. That's the first thing that has to change.

I look at the boundaries. All of North Preston isn't even in that boundary. If you're not going to include the entire Black community in it, what's the point? It's everybody and if it's going to be right, then it should be the original Black community, not what we have now, because what we have now is what we've been left with, and that's not fair. We've never had a chance to grow, we've never had a chance to do anything. We basically are forced to accept whatever we're given and then, when we complain about it, again you're told, well at least you have a little bit more than your father, at least you have a little bit more than your grandfather; you're doing better than him, so you should be happy.

It's not acceptable for any other group of people in this province. No one takes land from Indigenous people because they have a right to it. No one takes it away from Métis people because they have a right to it, or Inuit people because they have a right to it. We don't, but we've been here just as long. We've been here before the Cities of Dartmouth and Halifax were even established. Yet Dartmouth, Westphal, Cole Harbour, whoever they are, can come into the community and say oh, we'd like to expand, you're not using it anyway. But when you're told it's Crown-designated and no one can use it, when you're told it's watershed-protected and no one can build on it, and a white person buys it and then it's in a new subdivision that's no longer the Black community, all that says is that Black people don't matter.

Even though we're here and this is great and everything is good, I've been around long enough to know that even though all this stuff happens, nothing really happens and we're still stuck where we are.

I'm 36, I have a four-year-old. He sees East Preston exactly the way I did when I was four years old. What other communities in Nova Scotia in 30 years have had no development? The reason we have no numbers is because we're forced to leave because we have nothing. If we want a job we have to move to Westphal. If you don't have a whole lot of money well, you've got to find a cheap place in the city. That's why we don't have numbers.

The Black community is not made for Black people to survive. It's not set up so we will succeed, it's set up so that eventually we lose our house to taxes and then white people can own it. That's the way the system works. That's the way the system is set up, and until that changes, nothing you guys do is going to matter.

It's not about boundaries; it's about rights. It's about right, it's about wrong. What's going on to Black people in Nova Scotia is wrong, period, plain and simple, bottom line. You don't go from having hundreds of acres given to you by the King to having a tiny little

community that's split into three. That doesn't happen in a place that's not racist. That doesn't happen in a place that's not discriminatory. Until the government really admits that for the existence of Black people in Nova Scotia they've been treated immensely unfairly, nothing is going to change because the way we're split now is so that our voice is silenced. I vote with Eastern Shore, they're not going vote with me. North Preston votes with Westphal, we're not going to vote with them. Cherry Brook votes with Cole Harbour, forget it. We have no voice and it has been purposely taken away.

[7:15 p.m.]

Like you said, in 1992 this was a protected seat and the government still managed to take it. But it's because we have no rights. Like I said, I read the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We are not in it. Black, coloured, Negro, nothing. It's not there. So how can I feel good about having a seat in a province I don't exist in? That's the bottom line, because if we had rights, we wouldn't be here now. Because our land wouldn't be taken. Our voice would be heard. We would have a candidate. So, with no rights, what good is a candidate? He has no voice. He's in a room by himself, just like I am every day I go to work.

If you want to be a success, you live amongst white people. That's just the way it is, and that's not the way it should be. We have too many skills. We have too much pride. We're too good at the things that we do not to be able to sustain ourselves. At this point, we should be able to govern ourselves. We should have our own everything. This government has done nothing to help us in any way, shape, or form. They have us fighting amongst ourselves for the same little bit of stuff. We have to step on North Preston if we want anything, or we have to push Cherry Brook out of way if East Preston wants anything.

Based on the ridings, we can't be together because we've been separated in a place that we're supposed to call home. We're the same people. Literally the same people. So, at the end of the day, to be divided by politicians and government is ridiculous. We should have a voice of our own with no one in it because it has been proven that this province is not for us, so we should represent ourselves plainly and that's it. We should be heard all the time. It's to the point now where it's laughable. Like I said, our seat is protected, that should have shut down the last government right there, but it didn't. Because like I said, we have no rights. If you take anything from this, it's that those lines don't matter because our voice is silent regardless. Thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, thank you for your intervention. As I say, our role is one of boundaries, but your comments are on the public record and they will be read, not just by this Commission but by anybody else who wants to access that and including, I'm sure, the select committee. Our proposal right now is to restore the boundaries for Preston. Please come forward, Madam.

MS. ALMA JOHNSTON-TYNES: Good evening everyone. I'm Alma Johnston-Tynes and it seems that it has been quite a while that I've been in front of this board. Back

in 2012, 2011 - I was fighting for Cherry Brook. I'm from Cherry Brook and we were fighting for boundary changes. I know that's in your history. It took us five years to get the boundaries changed. We went before the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board and we laid out our case - Cherry Brook, Lake Loon, Montague, and Cole Harbour. Lorelei Nicoll was our councillor and she came onside with us after some persuasion. They managed to get the boundary changes. You're talking about tweaking the boundaries now so that they can be changed, and I look at this crowd here tonight - it's not a big crowd. We hadn't been properly notified about this meeting taking place here tonight.

I look at your time limit that you have to have this information in, it's only a little over a month. It seems that we're meeting and we're going through the actions, but your mind is already made up with what you're going to do. It's about time that our Black communities get what they should have. As I've said before, when we talk about Cherry Brook-Lake Loon, we are in the Cole Harbour riding. But when I look around at our community and what the other communities have, we don't have the same. We have trees growing over the highway. We have no place to walk on the side of the road. We were talking about in health committees to get the people to walk about and so on, but you can't walk about on the roads when the shoulders are so narrow it's very dangerous. No sidewalks, but I'm paying for that in the taxes.

I would say that if you're going to think about changing boundaries, the people in the communities should know about it. They should have a say instead of just meeting once, showing a few maps, and saying, this time, we'll change the boundaries. I hope that myself and all the other people who worked so hard to get Cherry Brook in the Cole Harbour riding won't be sorry that they did.

I feel that if we didn't have discrimination in Nova Scotia, in Halifax County, we wouldn't have to go through this. We wouldn't have to say, well, we got put extra people here because it's Black and then you put the person in and the person may not have any connection whatsoever with Blacks, but they're there representing Blacks and they'll tell you this is what's good for Blacks. It's about time you listen to the people living in the communities and have more than one meeting. Just meeting here tonight and hearing the presentations isn't enough. I hope that Cherry Brook, Lake Loon, Humber Park, will not be changed, that they will stay with Cole Harbour.

By the way, when it comes to the county, Cherry Brook is supplying the water. Cherry Brook is also supplying electricity and the sewer system for the new developments. Cherry Brook has also supplied education. Cherry Brook is the first Black community in Nova Scotia to have a high school, and in that high school, students were brought from at least 13 or 14 communities. I'm saying on behalf of Cherry Brook, Lake Loon, Montague, and Cole Harbour that our boundaries stay the same. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much and we do have our proposals for Cole Harbour - the maps over there - if you want to have a look at it.

MS. ALMA JOHNSTON-TYNES: Okay, I will have a look at it. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We did bring them, and we will be in Cole Harbour tomorrow night.

MS. ALMA JOHNSTON-TYNES: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you.

Who's next? I think there was somebody else. Yes, please, Madam.

MS. PAM THOMAS: Hi. I'm Pam Thomas. I wanted to know the name of the website that you mentioned for the . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah, we can bring it up. There you go. Okay?

MS. PAM THOMAS: Okay, that's one on my questions. My comment also was in reference to the necessity of having a historic Preston. I'm in my 50s now, but I went back thinking about the historic communities. My mom told me about Africville. I don't know where that is anymore, other than the fact that it's a piece of land; it's not a community of anything. Slowly, through government intervention, it got demolished.

I'm looking at the Town of Beechville. When I was a youth, I saw the community. Now I go there - you don't recognize Beechville because Beechville is Beechville-Timberlea-Lakeside, and even the word "Beechville" is almost erased. That is the way it is done. You over-assess the property of someone who is economically depressed and that has been the method of eliminating the heartbeat of the community.

I feel it's so essential that we do have - we need - a united voice for the Prestons. The Prestons are united because of the history of our people. It didn't go by one little spot here, one spot there. I have relatives in all three communities, and I know how essential it is that we should honour our history.

Part of the problem also lies in the education system - not putting our history out there the way it should be. We're always kind of left on the sidelines, and we need to move forward. Preston needs to remain on the map, including East Preston, North Preston, Cherry Brook, Lake Loon - that was the Prestons. There was a pastor I knew years ago - he has since left, but his heart was passionate. He said, "Don't forget your history. Do not forget where you come from." Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. Does anyone else want to come forward? You can just state your name, please.

MR. ERNEST SIMMONDS: Good evening. I'm Ernest Simmonds. I'm a little concerned. I would like to know - where do the Preston areas start from? I look back at

Africville - gone. Preston now is pretty well gone because our zoning is opened up wider. The boundaries were opened up because people wanted to get votes from this place and votes from that place. We've lost everything that we had.

I'm up there in age now and I look at years ago, East Preston, North Preston, and Cherry Brook had a boundary, and Lake Major. Lake Major is now Westphal. Preston started down here at the rotary, and where are we at - back here in North Preston on the barrens they call it, and we're left there. So, we need to put our boundaries back to where they were so that we can see our young people - my kids can come up and say where they live.

That protection that you talk about - that should be protection so that when our kids grow up they'll be able to - nobody will be able to change those boundaries again. It needs to be stopped, not for another five, 10 years down the road - forever. Put the boundaries back and leave them. That's all I need to say.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. That is a consistent theme, so I appreciate that.

Please.

[7:30 p.m.]

MS. JUSTINE COLLEY-LEGER: Hello everyone. My name is Justine Colley-Leger. The reason why I wanted to get up today - and it's not so much about the reason why we're here, but more so to talk to you individuals who are sitting in front of us. You are all in a position of privilege. I'm not talking about the colour of your skin or how much money is in your pocket. A lot of people here today have spoken a lot of truth about our communities - what reaches far beyond what's on that map.

After this Commission board is complete, each of you is going back to your respective worlds, your respective jobs doing whatever it is you do in your daily lives. But, one thing that I'm hearing a lot of within this group is that there is a lot of racism, a lot of systemic racism. I've experienced it a lot myself and I'm not even 30 yet.

One thing that the Black communities need the most are allies. You are all in a position to be those allies for us. We've talked a lot about land being stolen, about not having a voice. As we have already mentioned many times, on the municipal level, we don't vote together, so we have no voice together. But where you come in place is that once you leave this board, you have a position to go back to wherever you come from - Cape Breton, down South Shore, Eastern Shore - and start spreading the message that Black people are facing racism and systemic racism. When jobs post that there need be diversity, it's not about making the janitor the black person and everybody else at the table is white. It's making sure that the diversity person - or people, because it shouldn't be just one - but those people of colour should be at the table. I really hope that when you leave here and

you continue on your voyage throughout life, not just after this board is complete, that you continue to be allies, if you aren't already, for the Black people. That's what we need at this point.

Hopefully, what you do is you bring back our seat. But as we've already talked about many times, even though you do that now, in 10 years we could be having this exact same conversation.

I really do hope that when you leave this building, you actually listen to what has been said in terms of what our people have been facing since we were placed here back in the late 1700s. Our communities are older than Halifax. Our communities are older than Nova Scotia. Our communities are older than Canada. The fact that we're having this conversation about Black people not having a voice is ridiculous. You all have that voice that we need to advocate for us because, like I said, you are in a position.

The fact that you're up here right now, people put you in these positions because they trust your opinion, they trust what you believe, they trust what you have to say. I really hope that the feedback that you've heard tonight about the challenges that Black people are facing in this province, you take with you and you start being the allies that we need out there in the world to help get that diversity be more than a one to 10 ratio, so that it eventually becomes equal at the table. That's all I have to say. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. We have another speaker?

MS. BEV DOMAN: Thank you. I'm Bev Doman. I don't live in the Preston riding, but I live in a neighbouring riding. I intend to come tomorrow night and hear about my riding. First of all, I want to say that I do support protecting the Acadian and African Nova Scotian ridings. I think it's very important. I also want to acknowledge that there is racism. I do want to own up to the fact that I have a Black niece and nephew. I have Chinese grandchildren. I have Arabic grandchildren and I have grandchildren of Colombian descent, so I have a multi-racial family myself. I do want to acknowledge that the Black community - I'm not so sure about the Acadian community, but they probably do encounter many barriers because of their distinct culture. Certainly, any of the comments I make, I make with no disrespect to any of the communities.

I want first to say that I would like to know how the Black community considers the boundaries with regard to the change that was made at the last Commission with regard to Caledonia Road, Roleika Drive. This was added to the community. I'm wondering how they feel about that addition.

I'm also wondering, you know I've listened tonight about how the Preston-Dartmouth riding itself - well not the Preston riding but the Preston boundaries have shrunk because I do know that they did start at the Rotary and they considerably shrunk. One of the reasons I believe that was an issue was voter parity and the Preston riding and certainly many - Clare and Argyle, for example, the Acadian communities - have smaller numbers.

When you go to configure the parity, that was an issue. I think that was addressed in the Preston riding by trying to increase their boundaries.

I'm not so sure that I like the boundary of Caledonia Road, Roleika Drive, that area, separated by a major highway and the watershed in between. I'm not sure that that area belongs to the Preston-Dartmouth riding, and so I'd like to hear from the community how they feel about that because I want their wishes respected.

I also listened to the Mineville area. I don't know if that's currently included or not. If it was historically part of the Preston-Dartmouth boundaries, if we're talking about voter parity and we want to include it, if it's not already included, I suggest maybe that be looked at for inclusion.

Voter parity is very important to me. I look at ridings like the Eastern Shore, where the geographical area is overwhelming for an MLA to represent a community, but the numbers are low, so how do you balance that as well? I look at Clare and Argyle, I looked at the numbers tonight when they were on the screen, if you put both of those communities together you still don't get your 1.0, they are less than 1.0, two communities.

I believe strongly that there's a case in Clare and Argyle that they don't have to be connected. Geographically, when you look at Guysborough-Eastern Shore-Tracadie, it's huge geographically when you look at Clare-Digby and Argyle-Barrington, that would be swallowed up in the Eastern Shore. I think that's something.

I know the communities are distinct and different, but I think that voter parity-wise, that Clare and Argyle could perhaps be one MLA for that boundary. I didn't get to any of the meetings down there, so I'm sure they brought up various points why they should be separate.

I also wanted to speak about the Preston-Dartmouth riding. I've listened very carefully to many of the discussions tonight and I'm curious about the representation of the Preston-Dartmouth riding. Does the community want the Preston-Dartmouth riding to have a Black representative? Please forgive me if I'm saying Black instead of African Nova Scotian. If I'm saying the wrong term I don't mean disrespect. Do they expect to have a Black representative who comes out of this?

Because I can speak as someone who has been on a candidate search committee for one of the Parties and we have tried, in more than one election, to get a Black candidate to step forward. Now maybe I'm in the wrong Party and maybe no one wants to come to our Party and be a representative.

But I do also know Yvonne Atwell was a Black representative, but the Black community, since I returned to Nova Scotia, has mostly been held by a non-Black representative. Is that one of the things that they expect, that a Black riding would get a

Black representative? Is that something that is in the mandate of the Commission to put that recommendation in?

I'm just going down some more in my notes. You mention the member at large, so I want to give you my thoughts on a member at large. I would love to see a member at large for the Aboriginal communities; I would like to see them involved in our election process more than they are. I do believe in the protected ridings for African Nova Scotians and Acadians. I think perhaps if the Aboriginals eventually do get more involved, then maybe another boundary review will look at protected seats at that point, but they're not there.

With regard to the member at large, I think there are some practicality issues, not from the electorate point of view but from the administration of it. You would have one MLA, but what if I'm in Cape Breton and my MLA physically lives in Kings County? That's extremely difficult. I heard the suggestion that perhaps you would go to the MLA who is in Cape Breton and get your issue dealt with. Personally, I don't think that's fair for the offices of the MLAs to be expected to take on additional constituents who are not their constituents. There are practical issues like that - and what happens if you're in a member-at-large seat? Maybe you can double-dip. Their vote then is worth twice my vote because they have a member at large they can call upon, but then they also have their local MLA they can call upon.

One of my key reasons for coming to these meetings over the last several times is because of voter parity. I want my vote to be worth just about as much as everybody else's vote. I will give them the 25 either way, but more than that they are eating into my representation.

I didn't know there were online presentations, so I welcome that because when you get down to specific streets I think those are easier addressed online.

I think that's all I have to say, that I was hoping to get some feedback from the community on a few issues.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Could I just mention with respect to First Nations-Aboriginal communities - there is a member at large that was created; the communities did not take up that seat. I think I'm right, 1992, there was another seat created, a member at large, but that has not been activated.

MS. BEV DOMAN: I see one other note that I missed. You mentioned a new seat in Bedford. Bedford-Clayton Park is a huge development, as I'm sure you are aware. Dartmouth also has a huge development in the Baker Drive area, currently part of Dartmouth South boundary. But that is a huge development, and a lot of it has already taken place, but there is still land there for future development. So that can be taken into consideration. But I'm glad to see perhaps additional seats to take in future developments.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. Anyone else want to come forward and speak?

Yes, please, Justine, come back.

MS. JUSTINE COLLEY-LEGER: I just have a question for you. I know in the piece of paper you passed out you said there are two proposals - one was to give back the protected seats and the other was to give Bedford and Cole Harbour their own seats and then have members at large. Is it not an option to give us our seats as well as to give Bedford and Cole Harbour those additional ridings? What does that look like? Is that a possibility? Because, as she mentioned, Bedford is growing at a very rapid rate in terms of Larry Uteck and Clayton Park, so I understand that there is a concern there. But we obviously have our own concerns as well, so is that an option for a proposal, to have a combination of what you're currently presenting?

MR. CHAIRMAN: They're not mutually exclusive, so in other words they're just Point 1 - restoration of the protected ridings, and Point 2 - the only discussion there is how we might treat Chéticamp. They are, in fact, inclusive in that sense. Point 1, restore the protected ridings. Point 2, with some discussion about Chéticamp, some discussion perhaps about Cape Breton-Richmond, about exactly what will be included - we'll be there tomorrow night - and then, two additional seats, Cole Harbour and Bedford, and then members at large. The members at large is more just a discussion item to see how we might, again, increase effective representation. The seats in Bedford and Cole Harbour would not be at the expense of the protected ridings. Those are part of our essential proposals.

[7:45 p.m.]

MS. JUSTINE COLLEY-LEGER: I do want to go on record to answer a few questions that the previous lady had. Obviously, I only speak for myself because I cannot speak for the entire Black community. Yes, we do want to have someone in the seat who looks like us. I understand there were probably struggles in the past in finding someone to fill that seat, but she is not aware of the lived realities of systemic racism. To have someone in that seat who looks like us to enter a room where they are one of 51, 54, whatever that number looks like, and to have their voice continually silenced, that's a really difficult challenge to give someone who looks like me.

I understand in the past it might have been difficult to find someone of African descent to fill that seat, but they also need to realize - those of European Nova Scotian descent - that it's very challenging to be that token person in the room. I went to a predominantly white high school. In my graduating class of 52 students, there were three Black people. Two of us were fully Black. The other was only half-black. It's very challenging to be the only Black person in the classroom to voice your opinion about very challenging issues. You know that there are 50 other people who are going to vote against you. It's not an easy task, asking someone, whether it's a minority from the African

community, the Aboriginal community, the LGBTQ community, it's very challenging to fill that seat knowing that your voice is just going to continue to not be heard.

I just want to go on record to let that individual know that, yes, we do want a Black person in that seat, but the systemic racism that's in place as of right now, makes it very challenging for someone to fill that seat, knowing that their voice is not going to be heard.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Anybody else want to come forward? Please.

MR. CONNOR SMITHERSMAPP: I think this young brother and Ms. Williams as well talked about our voices not being heard and consultation not being sufficient. As a lot of people know, the gold standard for consultation right now in Canada is the federal government's model for Indigenous consultation. It's very comprehensive, very complete, very inclusive. This process is a far cry from that. That's the first thing, so I have a bit of a problem with how the consultation is being conducted, especially in light of the fact that there are very good models out there to which the Commission did not avail themselves.

Second thing is the term voter parity. Voter parity is a pretty modern convention. It's not something that was sent down from above on a stone tablet. It's something we kind of made up. If you look at the Hansard transcripts of discussions around voter parity, both federally and provincially, there were, again, politically expedient reasons why voter parity became an issue in the first place. I think a lot of the court cases have commented on that – that voter parity can be a good thing - but it's not something that's on some tablet that Moses was given.

Now, Mr. Kelloway, you asked me about members at large. I want to clarify. In the Black community and in other marginalized communities, boundaries are a very Euro-centric way of looking at life. Boundaries are really artificial; they're fiction, really. For me, yes, I want the Preston riding protected, but if we're considering members at large then there ought to be specific opportunities for Black members at large.

When I meet a Black person on the street, it doesn't really matter if they're from my old neighbourhood; it doesn't matter if they're from Preston; it doesn't matter if they're from Cherry Brook; it doesn't matter if they're from Lincolnville - it doesn't matter. I see a kinship and a commonality with them because of our shared lived experience.

Boundaries are convenient for government, and of course I understand why we do it, but if we're to be really sincere about this please understand that in the Black community physical boundaries don't mean much. Having said that, I believe there are models that exist in East Asian countries and I think the same thing is being done in Australia with Maoris, where everyone has the ability to elect an ethnic minority if they are a member of that community. It doesn't matter if your community is not physically contiguous with another community, and it doesn't matter if this community is proximate to that community. That may be an opportunity where members at large have the ability to speak for the broader, the larger Black community.

Another thing I want to say is, as far as I know, the Terms of Reference didn't include things like development issues or naming issues. As I understand it, that is not really in your purview, to consider a development issue, nor is the ability to somehow ensure that Black communities have the ability to keep their names. It really should have been because, as some people mentioned, we have situations now where others are coming into the Black community. As you know, on the peninsula of Halifax they're not making land, and it's very expensive. Because of that, people are encroaching on outlying communities because it's cheaper to buy a house and buy land. And once they do that, they are then appealing to government to change the name, to attach a name of a white community that's proximate to where they are - whether it's Westphal and not call it Preston.

That really needs to stop. That is, for me, a very obvious vestige of racism and unless it is acknowledged and stopped, it's kind of a broken process. It really doesn't mean much. This is another reason why, as the brother said, the Black communities are shrinking; they are dying. There is no political power, names are being changed, subdivisions are being built, and they don't look like they used to look when I was a kid.

In reference to the lady who asked whether we want a Black representative in Black communities - of course we do, why wouldn't we? It's kind of a silly question. That's why we're here, right? As someone who has been involved with political Parties in the past, I can say unequivocally that the Parties do a very terrible job of outreach, of getting out there and encouraging Black candidates, especially, to offer. They do a really, really crappy job of that. We have a combination of that and Black people not seeing a whole lot of Black faces in the provincial Legislature, so they don't offer.

It's not as if Black people don't want to. It's not as if Black people don't want to share in the decision making. There have not been a lot of avenues of encouragement to do that. There are a couple of initiatives to introduce women to the prospect of offering for political office. For some reason, there has not been a similar effort done with the Black community.

I think that's all I wanted to say. For me, again, the whole idea of boundaries is very artificial and very European. I hope the Commission would consider the fact that the communities don't have to be contiguous because what one Black person suffers, we all do in our communities. How we are looking at this and the perspective we have may be fundamentally very different at the front end, which will cause problems I think through the whole process.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. Please.

MR. IRVINE CARVERY: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I didn't want to leave tonight until we had a little bit of discussion around non-congruent seats, which you have the mandate to consider in your deliberations. Basically, what that means is that East

Preston, North Preston, Cherry Brook, Lake Loon, Hammonds Plains, Beechville in Halifax and Dartmouth, can all be one seat.

All of the people of African descent within that seat - because the majority of people in those communities are of African descent - would vote for their representative. We would have traditional historical ties between our people, the shared experience, and we would have probably the best chance of having an African Nova Scotian elected to the House.

Even with the changes to the Preston-Dartmouth riding, there is still no guarantee that it's going to be an African Nova Scotian elected. Number one, African Nova Scotians vote by Party lines, so if we take our current MLA for the Preston-Dartmouth riding, he's Caucasian. He's Caucasian and there were a lot of people within the Prestons - East, North and Cherry Brook - who voted for him. So just by changing that boundary, there is no guarantee. The three major Parties brought forward a candidate. The Progressive Conservatives was Black. The NDP was Black. The Liberal was white. The Liberal won, so there's no guarantee. But if we were to consider a non-congruent seat, the chances of having a Black Nova Scotian elected rises up all of a sudden.

I would like for everyone to think about that for a minute. It's very similar to a member at large, but it's geographically-centred in HRM. That's just another option that the committee has at its disposal to consider. Thank you, Colin.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen, it's almost 8:00 p.m. I do want to thank you for coming out this evening. I do apologize with respect to the notice of the meeting. It's a very short timespan, I appreciate that, and also the timing at 6:00 p.m., I do understand is not always conducive. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you so much. If you want to contact us, you can do that by Facebook or you can use our website. If you want to put in a written brief on anything with respect to our proposals, please feel free to do that. Then they do become part of the record. (Interruption)

Yes, you can address that to me. Thank you very much indeed.

[The Commission adjourned at 8:00 p.m.]