

**NOVA SCOTIA**  
**ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES**  
**COMMISSION**

**FRIDAY, JANUARY 11, 2019**

**Cambridge Inn Suites Hotel**  
**Sydney, 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. Clermont Charland  
Mr. Ronald Labelle  
Mr. Kenzie MacNeil  
Ms. Laurie MacCuish  
Ms. Barbara Corbett  
Ms. Lauren MacNeil  
Mr. Parker Donham

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**NOVA SCOTIA ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION**

**7:00 P.M.**

**CHAIRMAN**  
Dr. Colin Dodds

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for coming. My name is Colin Dodds, and I live in Halifax. I am the Chairman of the Nova Scotia Electoral Boundaries Commission and will chair this evening's public consultation. First of all, let me acknowledge that we are on the unceded lands of the many First Nations of Nova Scotia.

As many of you will know, the commission was here in September, when we presented a draft set of boundaries, but there are some new faces in the room, so I will now ask members of the commission to introduce themselves.

[The commission members introduced themselves.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for coming out on a very cold Friday evening - a little bit colder than it is in Halifax, I can tell you that, when we first arrived today. Last time, those of you who were here, I provided a context for the meeting in terms of how the commission was established and the controversy surrounding the interim and final reports of the 2012 Electoral Boundaries Commission. If there are any questions on this, I'll be pleased to clarify this later.

Subsequent to our September meeting, the commission did produce an interim report, which was tabled with the Attorney General on November 28<sup>th</sup>. The report is available on the commission's website. We have provided some extracts from that report showing the 51-seat, 55-seat, and 56-seat scenarios, and we'll come back to that in a minute. We have a few copies, unless they've all gone, of the actual report itself if you need it. We also have copies of the terms of reference, just in case you need those. I want to stress that they are quite broad, but they do give us the responsibility of seeking effective representation as well as elector parity.

The commission, as I think you know, was tasked with producing draft boundaries for 51 seats and at least one other. In our interim report, we proposed three further alternatives for public input, obviously then for a total of four. In summary, what we would like your input on this evening is the four options that the commission reported in our report.

First of all is the 51 electoral districts, which is the current size of the House, with a few adjustments, which included taking part of Bedford and moving it into Michael's constituency of Hammonds Plains. Really, it was a status quo. Second is the 55 electoral districts, which include the formerly protected electoral districts of Argyle, Clare, Richmond, and Preston. That was number two. Number three is 55 electoral districts but 56 seats in the House of Assembly. This would include the dual-member district of Inverness, which would have one MLA to represent the geographic electoral district and one MLA to represent the Acadian constituency. However, electors would have just one vote, not two. The fourth one is 56 electoral districts, which would include an exceptional electoral district for Chéticamp. Additionally, we have a bunch of maps here that are dealing with individual electoral districts.

What we'd like to know from you is are there any amendments you would suggest for us to consider. We did make quite a few changes from the September consultation we had, and we'd like to know if we actually got it right.

In our previous public consultations, we also asked for input on the concept of members at large to represent Acadians and African Nova Scotians, as well as using non-contiguous electoral districts. I have to tell you that in the 12 public hearings we had across Nova Scotia, we didn't receive much support for these alternatives.

Ladies and gentlemen, I can now turn the floor over to you. We do have two people who indicated in advance that they wished to speak. I'll call on them first, and after that I'll call for speakers from the floor. As well, as we did the last time, I'll ask people to use the microphones. I will ask you to state your name, and I would also ask you to spell it so that when the tapes are transcribed at the Speaker's Office we have an accurate name for you. As I mentioned, everything that is said from this side from the commission and also from the floor will be recorded and transcribed, and then become part of the public record. If you have written briefs you wish to give us, you are very welcome to do so. I just want to mention that our final report is due on April 1<sup>st</sup> of this year.

The first person who has asked to speak is Clermont Charland. Clermont, are you here? If you don't mind spelling your name.

MR. CLERMONT CHARLAND: They all know me as Monty, but my real name is Clermont.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's a very famous general named Monty.

MR. CLERMONT CHARLAND: I'm here representing on behalf of the Centre Communautaire Étoile de l'Acadie, and I'm also the Vice-President of the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse. I know that the federation will meet you tomorrow, I believe in Chéticamp, so I'm not going to tell you or sell you the scoop. I'm going to keep it for them tomorrow.

I'm here in Sydney as the President of the Communautaire Centre. I strongly support Option No. 4, the 56 seats. It will re-establish, it will give justice to the things that happened in 2012 when those four protected electoral ridings were dismantled by the previous government. Also, I was surprised when I read the report that historically there used to be an MLA representing Chéticamp many, many years ago, and it's not there anymore. That's what I was going to say. I'm supporting Option No. 4, the 56 seats.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much indeed.

MR. MICHAEL BAKER: Could I ask you a question?

MR. CLERMONT CHARLAND: Oh yes, absolutely.

MR. MICHAEL BAKER: Thank you for coming out tonight. Thank you for voicing your opinion. The question I have for you is, we have had many speakers talk about voter parity - one person, one vote. In your mind, how would we best promote the exceptional district of a Chéticamp that has less than 3,000 voters? And we have to talk about budget.

MR. CLERMONT CHARLAND: Exactly. Like I said, I'm going to leave it to the president of the federation. I think they're going to have some kind of suggestion about dividing Inverness to include, I believe, Margaree or something like north of Margaree. There's lots of Acadians who are not only in Chéticamp-St. Joseph du Moine, but there's lots of them, apparently, in the Margaree area. If you were to divide, let's say maybe the Margaree River, north and south, there will probably be a lot more than 2,500 Acadians.

MR. MICHAEL BAKER: Merci beaucoup.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The second speaker who indicated that he wished to make a presentation is Ronald Labelle.

MR. RONALD LABELLE. Thank you. I had prepared some written comments, but I'll send those along to you. I just have a few notes. I don't want to speak too long. I am a professor of French at Cape Breton University with a specialty in Acadian Studies. I find this commission is an excellent initiative to try to fix the problem, to rectify the need for Acadian representation in the Nova Scotia government.

The return to exceptional electoral districts, with the addition of a fourth district for the Chéticamp-St. Joseph du Moine area, going all the way down to Margaree, is probably the most practical of the four recommendations that have been put forth. It would be a positive change because there are obvious problems with the other solutions, as Mr. Chairman mentioned. The non-contiguous ridings haven't got much support. One problem with that would be if you have someone at large who is supposed to represent the Acadian community, how do you define who is an Acadian and who is apt to represent the Acadian community? There are people of Acadian descent who have lost their language and their culture for generations, and there are other people who have come from outside of Nova Scotia who have become integrated in the Acadian community even though they are not originally Acadian. That would raise a lot of problems.

Still, looking at all the recommendations, I don't see any that are ideal. There are still two problems. One of them is that there would be no guarantee that Acadians would have a voice in the Nova Scotia government. Let's say just hypothetically in all four Acadian ridings, the Liberal Party elected a member and the Progressive Conservatives or NDP form the government, you could have a government where there is not only no Acadians, but you could have a government with no functionally bilingual members. I think the most important thing is that for Acadians to be well-represented in the provincial government. The most important thing is to have bilingual members of Cabinet who are familiar with questions related to Acadians. This should be a priority for any Party that is going to take power. This is something that would require some planning. It's not something that would necessarily need to be legislated.

If you look at the Canadian government, right now, there's no law saying the prime minister of Canada has to be bilingual, but it would be almost inconceivable that you would have someone who was unilingual who would become prime minister. That's just the way things have evolved. If the government would - if all Parties would recognize the need for bilingual members who could be members of the Cabinet, that would really have a huge positive impact for the Acadian community.

[7:15 p.m.]

The other problem I want to mention is that returning to exceptional electoral districts is almost like finding a solution to a problem that existed 50 years ago because it is outdated in a way. If you just look at the Acadian schools in the CSAP - Conseil scolaire acadien provincial - the schools where the enrolment is increasing by leaps and bounds are in the urban areas, around Halifax, in the Truro area, the South Shore, Antigonish County, and not in the traditional historical Acadian rural areas where 50 years ago the vast majority of Acadians were living. But with urbanization and mobility now, it's not the reality anymore.

What we found is that in a very few years we could have four Acadians in protected electoral districts and the majority of Acadians in Nova Scotia not living in any of these

districts. That is going to be the result in a very short time, so it really isn't ideal. With the example of Chéticamp that was mentioned earlier, I saw in the document that has been circulated that there are about 2,500 electors who would be in the Chéticamp electoral district.

In an ideal situation where 80 per cent of the people show up to vote, a Party could easily win the election with less than 1,000 votes. That would raise a situation where a well-organized, local, political clique could actually corral enough voters to make sure their candidate is always elected. I'm not even sure that would be a suitable representation for the people of the Chéticamp area. There's a lot of problems and not many solutions.

I wanted to end by coming back to the idea that whatever decision the commission makes, it should recommend that bilingualism be a factor in the choice of candidates in provincial elections and also in the choice of Cabinet members for the Party that is elected. Thank you for giving me a chance to speak.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I've got a quick question for you. The logic of what you said is if there is an exceptional electoral district for Chéticamp, given that the totality of the population is not necessarily Acadian, you could conceivably have somebody who is not bilingual and not Acadian but, because of the Party system, is the member of a particular Party. If there's a sweep, as there was in the last federal election, you could get the same thing provincially; so, you're not guaranteeing just by having an exceptional district for Chéticamp that that person would be Acadian.

MR. RONALD LABELLE: No, but in all these protected districts where the majority of the population is French, has French as their first language, even though there are more and more anglophones who are living in the Chéticamp area, you would expect that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You would expect it, but it is not guaranteed.

MR. RONALD LABELLE: No, it wouldn't be guaranteed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. MICHAEL BAKER: Again, thank you for coming out, Mr. Labelle - a quick question. You spoke about the urban/rural divide and the fact that there is a majority of French-speaking citizens who are now living in HRM in what we call metro. Would you think that a better balance would be to have possibly an Acadian seat for metro or Chéticamp?

MR. RONALD LABELLE: An Acadian seat for metro Halifax?

MR. MICHAEL BAKER: Yes, so we would have somebody representing the Acadians in HRM, if the majority of Acadians are living in the Halifax area. Would you say it would be more apropos to have that seat for the HRM area, or would you support Chéticamp?

MR. RONALD LABELLE: I wouldn't compare the two and say that one is more important than the other.

MR. MICHAEL BAKER: I don't mean to put you on the spot, but I'm just interested in ....

MR. RONALD LABELLE: Like I said, there's the difficulty of establishing who would be - there could be some dissension about who could properly represent Acadians. Is it someone who speaks French? Is it someone who is of Acadian background and speaks French? It would open a whole can of worms, and I don't think it would be possible to come to a practical arrangement around that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mike, for that. Peter, are you going to ask a question?

DR. PETER MARSHALL BUTLER: Mike has, in part, asked my question. You might be interested to know we have heard people in the metro area say to us that the largest distribution of francophones is in metro now, not in the rural areas of Nova Scotia. It does raise some questions about what you said, which is whether a suitable representation is possible.

By the way, I have much interest in your observations about bilingualism, which seems only appropriate in the context of a broader community or a country that says this is how we want to live. So, that's no question for me.

The broader question is something that I've raised at a couple of meetings now. We acknowledge a dwindling rural population. We're trying to keep alive something that is almost guaranteed not to be relevant in a very short period of time. So, should we concentrate on more metro seats? As controversial as that is, it has to be asked.

MR. RONALD LABELLE: What do you mean by concentrate on having more seats?

DR. PETER MARSHALL BUTLER: A larger number of seats being awarded in metropolitan Halifax and less in rural Nova Scotia.

MR. RONALD LABELLE: Because of the larger population, to have it strictly proportional ...?

DR. PETER MARSHALL BUTLER: What is equitable? In this particular case, what's equitable is probably that the voices of a larger population need to be heard.

MR. RONALD LABELLE: Well, they are heard. There are several ridings in the Halifax area, and every region of the province needs to be represented in the provincial government. You mentioned the large francophone ....

DR. PETER MARSHALL BUTLER: Forty-eight per cent, I think it's going to be, in two years.

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MR. RONALD LABELLE: But you also mentioned the fact that there is a large Acadian population in metro Halifax.

DR. PETER MARSHALL BUTLER: I didn't say Acadian. Remarks that we heard in one of our meetings were that the largest concentration of francophones was probably in metro Halifax.

MR. RONALD LABELLE: Yes, a large concentration of francophones. But in an area like Halifax, the number of people who are speaking French in their daily lives is much lower than the number of francophones or people of francophone origin. The same is the case here in Sydney, where francophones have been coming to live since the beginning of the industrial period, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Most of them assimilated over the years, and there's all the difficulty of preserving language.

It's important to make sure that Acadians living not only in the traditional historical Acadian regions of the province but Acadians everywhere have a voice in the government. They need services in French, need to be well-represented and have a voice. One example is the fact that, when you're going all around the province, in places like Digby and Isle Madame there's simultaneous translation provided. Here we have to speak English because we're in Sydney and we don't have the right to translation in Sydney. We're used to that because we're in a minority situation in an urban area.

That's why I think that, with a strong bilingual presence in whatever government forms the Cabinet, we'll be better defended that way.

DR. PETER MARSHALL BUTLER: I take that point - it's fine, yes. It's just that the other broader one is - we've got to talk about something. I said in Antigonish the elephant in the room is rural versus urban seats, and we have to continue to probe that because we haven't talked about it enough. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Labelle. We have our two designated speakers who have now presented, so the floor is open to anyone else who would like to come forward and make a presentation. We do have coffee at the back later on. If you could state your name.

MR. KENZIE MACNEIL: My name is Kenzie MacNeil. We divide our time between Sydney and East Margaree, so I know very well the riding that is being discussed, and I agree with it entirely. The shore from the national park down to and including the village of East Margaree is Acadian. There's absolutely no doubt about that, and overwhelmingly Acadian. Because of the distribution of the population, I don't think there's any fear of a non-Acadian ever getting elected by any Party, so I don't think that's an issue.

In terms of the issue of francophone as opposed to Acadian, the Chéticamp district represents the Acadian things so well, in terms of the heritage. It's a jewel in the heritage of the province. Also, all along that shore is one of the most stunningly beautiful spots in the world, and it has tremendous potential. Whatever the population status is now, that could change. But if you add the populations of East Margaree all the way up the shore to the national park, you have a much more considerable population.

In addition, the people of that area have done a remarkable job of preserving and developing their culture. They really, truly have. It's quite distinctive. As a people they are very industrious, they are very productive, and they are very organized. From the point of view of the heritage of the province, I think it would solve a long-standing hurt in Nova Scotia to have that distinction and have the riding dedicated to the issue of Acadian representation. I think that would then be addressed, no matter what political situation developed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, sir. Paul.

MR. PAUL GAUDET: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. One question you raised, and it has been raised just a couple of times but it's of keen interest to me, is that distinction between la francophonie et l'Acadie.

MR. KENZIE MACNEIL: It's genuine. There are solid, historical reasons for it.

MR. PAUL GAUDET: I would like for the people of Nova Scotia to realize more of what you're saying of the Acadian cultural identity, which is at the core of the mission that we have for this commission. The fact is that we're sitting earlier than ten years to revamp this and have a look at Acadian representation. But la francophonie is totally different. The danger could be - and it's kind of strange to say this - that the francophonie could engulf l'Acadie.

MR. KENZIE MACNEIL: It could, to our regret, I think. That's my point. In the history of Nova Scotia, the Acadian people have stood out as an independent culture and a distinctive culture. You would be wrong to call them francophone; you would be wrong to call them anglophone. They were very proud of being both and of being bilingual and of being on their own, so they are entirely different.

MR. PAUL GAUDET: So, you see a connection between the electoral boundaries or ridings and the Acadian cultural identity? You see a close connection?

MR. KENZIE MACNEIL: Very definitely.

MR. PAUL GAUDET: It's not only representation in government but also a statement in Nova Scotia.

MR. KENZIE MACNEIL: It's culture. That's right.

MR. PAUL GAUDET: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think you'll see that reflected actually in some of the written parts of the interim report, a discussion about that.

Who would like to speak next?

[7:30 p.m.]

MS. LAURIE MACCUISH: Hello, Mr. Chairman, committee members. My name is Laurie MacCuish. I am in the constituency of Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg. I would speak this evening in favour of proposal 56, in terms of preserving culture, identity, and the importance of language. I would stress that that is very important because we are in danger of losing culture. My ancestry is not Acadian, it's Celtic. We work very hard in Cape Breton to preserve the Gaelic culture. I don't speak either Gaelic or French, but I think it's very important to preserve the culture and the language of our peoples.

I think geography, culture, language, and the name of a district is extremely important. The last time I was here I said that the name Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg was cumbersome at best. I thought it was problematic because in identifying certain communities you are automatically excluding others by not naming them.

The old name, which I think would be ideal, would be Cape Breton West because it identified to those of us in the district exactly where we were, and it was very familiar. I see in the new proposals a proposal for the name of Cape Breton East. I would suggest that that is problematic as well, because there is a former constituency named Cape Breton East, which included Glace Bay and the surrounding areas. I think that would be confusing.

I know you have a difficult challenge, trying to balance all these interests and needs across the province, and you are hearing lots of different concerns being raised. I would highly recommend for our association the name Cape Breton West.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. Please, Glenn.

DR. GLENN GRAHAM: We certainly take that into consideration. When looking at that riding, of course we remembered and had your suggestions recorded. Looking at the map of Cape Breton Island overall as a region itself, this is where we get into discussion of regions within regions and sub-regions. When you look at the Island of Cape Breton geographically, there are people on the island who are not in the post-industrial or industrial region of Cape Breton who would say, according to the map, that should be Cape Breton East if you look at it, in general, because they are wider - or from the outside looking in, the wider perspective of looking at that geographic area.

It's just when you look at it from a larger perspective, we thought geographically that putting East on there but still having Cape Breton might be a bit of a compromise between one side of the island and the other. There's going to be tension there, I suppose, or contention. Some people will be happy or won't be happy.

Once again this is just a proposal, a suggestion, that will be put in the interim report. We'll probably struggle with that a little bit, but we're very happy that we're getting these views presented so that we can make a decision on it. Thank you.

MS. LAURIE MACCUISH: Okay, I thank you for that. I also thank you because it seems that our concerns were heard about the boundary lines themselves, with county lines being natural boundaries, and rivers, and Highway No. 125, which was pretty important. I see in the new drawing that those concerns were taken into account, so I thank you for that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think we did have a very productive session in September. Afterwards, what people had referred to in the discussion, they actually put on the maps. Then we were able to take that back.

There was discussion, as Glenn has mentioned, with respect to Cape Breton West and Cape Breton East. I think sometimes the challenge in Nova Scotia is what is east and what is west and so on.

Again, we are here this evening if there are other particular concerns with the maps. If you don't want to raise them in the session here, we can talk about it afterwards. Please, Paul.

MR. PAUL GAUDET: If I hear you correctly, you are okay with the boundaries, it's just a question of the name?

MS. LAURIE MACCUISH: Yes.

MR. PAUL GAUDET: Okay, thank you.

MS. LAURIE MACCUISH: The last time I had both concerns.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, we did discuss your concern. Anyway, there's nothing etched in stone.

MR. MICHAEL KELLOWAY: To build on your point about these maps, after the session is over you can actually look at the ridings. There are pens around so, if you want to look at a particular piece of the riding and draw a line as you would see it, please do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We are here to try to get everything as accurate as we possibly can. Again, thank you very much. Who would like to speak next? Please.

MS. BARBARA CORBETT: Good evening, Mr. Chairman and committee members. My name is Barbara Corbett. I live in Grand Mira North, and I am completely dissatisfied, as are most of my neighbours, with our current riding. We have zero connections to Richmond. We drive through St. Peters, we may get coffee at Tim Hortons, that's it.

All our community, family, banking, everything we do is through Marion Bridge, Sydney, Sydney River, those areas. I am completely overjoyed to see us within the county line because it puts us back in with our family, whom we have been away from for several years now. It's a waste of our votes really, we don't have any representation as it stands now, so this is brilliant, I must say.

Just to pick on Laurie - or to add to Laurie's words I should say - if you are looking at it geographically, I don't really have an issue with the name, but maybe you want to go with Cape Breton Southeast because that's where we are.

Having said that, I'd also like to throw my support behind proposal 56. I believe Chéticamp should have a voice. I think it's a beautiful area with rich culture and history, and they need to be recognized and protected. I don't care if there's three people living there or three thousand people living there, they deserve representation. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. Would anybody else like to come forward? Yes, please, the gentleman in the back, but we'll have this lady first.

MS. LAUREN MACNEIL: Good evening, my name is Lauren MacNeil. I'm not Acadian, but I wish I was. I just want to make a couple of quick points. This is the first time I've really seen what feels to me like a serious attempt to redress some of the wrongs that have been dealt out to the rural districts in Nova Scotia. All governments that I can remember for 20-plus years have all been giving it lip service while the money is poured into Halifax and metro.

To me, if you go with Option No. 4, I know it means more MLAs, but I think it's absolutely critical to try to retain the notion of Nova Scotia as complementary urban and

rural, particularly here in Cape Breton of course. We've seen this really disintegrating in the last 10-15 years. A relative doesn't go to Halifax without coming home to compare what they have to here.

In East Margaree, the people have been so patient. Year after year the members have been returned. They have been from Inverness or south. They are all MacNeils or whatever. The people up there have been so patient.

Our road in East Margaree, they just did a little work this summer, but it's a wonder that a school bus didn't go over there into the river in the last 15 or 20 years, the road is absolutely horrendous. There's nothing like a walking track down in the village. There are so many things that need to be attended to.

Just one more thing in that vein: if they do get an MLA up there, I would think that that person's job is to fight for their region, to try to get more services. You know we're talking about everybody of Acadian descent going to Halifax, but their job is to try to retain some of those things for their community so that the population won't keep shrinking. That is the most important thing in these historical areas, especially the Acadian areas, that the population doesn't shrink, doesn't keep shrinking. It's really important. And to find ways to bring immigrants in - there's lots of people who would love it up there. We have some lovely Syrian families up there now. It's really important. It's a really special area.

I'll say just one more thing about getting representation for Acadians in an area like Dartmouth. There's nothing preventing wonderful Acadians to fight for nominations in Dartmouth. They can stand up and put their name forward, like anybody else can. I don't think we should have something like a special thing set up for them to do that, to share power within metro. There's already a lot of power in metro, and anybody can go and fight for a nomination. Hopefully in Chéticamp it won't be a MacNeil, it will be a Lefort or LeBlanc. Anyway, that's all I have to say.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. I think there's a gentleman at the back who indicated he wanted to speak. Thank you.

MR. PARKER DONHAM: Good evening, my name is Parker Donham. My role here tonight is to fart in church. I think we're faced with a world-wide phenomenon of people leaving rural areas for urban areas. We can complain and rail all we want, but that is an inexorable force that we are dealing with. I think there's an obligation on you to reflect reality. The idea that we should cast our eyes backwards to where we came from, to the fact that a portion, a generally vastly exaggerated portion of Nova Scotians came from Scotland - just read Ian McKay's book if you want to know the reality about that, or read the letter that was sent to Angus L. Macdonald when he decided to turn Nova Scotia into New Scotland and created the Lone Shieling and the bagpiper at the Amherst border and the Gaelic College as an effort to market Nova Scotia as New Scotland.

Nova Scotia always had a more diverse group of people than we acknowledged. The idea that we should somehow encase that in glass and force it into our electoral system is so wrong-headed and so contrary to the best interests of this province. I think there is one group and only one group that needs electoral protection in Nova Scotia and those are African Nova Scotians, who obviously face a level of prejudice and discrimination that is far different from that that Acadians or Gaelic people or Americans like myself or anybody else faces here. They face real, systemic obstacles.

[7:45 p.m.]

There's no need on God's green earth to be trying to protect little Acadian enclaves. This is 2019, and if there is a future to this province, it is in attracting immigrants. We're not going to attract immigrants by making ourselves a province of Scottish kitsch or Acadian kitsch or anything of the sort. All those founding groups of Nova Scotia, with the exception of African Nova Scotians, have the wherewithal to make their own way. They don't need special protection.

Now do rural ridings need special protection? Of course, they do, and the Supreme Court has acknowledged that there can be a plus or minus, I think it's 25 per cent, so that if a riding is really big, say like Guysborough, obviously there are structural obstacles to representing Guysborough, it's a very dispersed population, a huge geographical area. But if we keep baking into Nova Scotia's political life this entrenched idea that we need to protect these - founding cultures are vibrant, and they are doing just fine. It's a very difficult process in front of you, but don't complicate it by assuming that we need some special ethnic protection. I just don't believe we do need that.

It's not that we don't value that contribution, it's just that baking it into our political system distorts the process and separates us as Nova Scotians. I doubt if you'll hear many people saying this but that's my view. Thank you very much for the chance to speak to you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much indeed. Would anybody else like to make comments to us?

Well, again the commission wants to thank you for coming out on a Friday evening. Tomorrow we will be leaving to go to Chéticamp. Next week we have four nights in HRM, and then we go down to Digby on Friday night and up to Wolfville on Saturday. Then, because of some other comments we've received, we'll be looking at some other potential venues that we'll be at.

April 1<sup>st</sup> is our final report. Although we've come out with four options, the final report can contain only one, so that is our decision to make in terms of a recommendation. The government, e.g. the House, but effectively the governing Party, can accept or reject.

I think the only thing they've done in the past, apart from what happened in 2012, was perhaps make some adjustments to the names of the electoral districts.

In terms of our timetable, because the report has to be translated and both be issued on the same day, we are looking to complete our work sometime towards the end of February/beginning of March. Again, that's our timetable.

If you want to stay behind and chat with us, please do so. If you want to further reflect on the maps, that's why they are here, and we do have some pens, as has been mentioned.

One last chance for anybody else who wants to speak to us. Hearing naught, thank you very much indeed for coming.

[The commission adjourned at 7:49 p.m.]