

NOVA SCOTIA
ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES
COMMISSION

SATURDAY, JANUARY 5, 2019

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Hon. Margaret Miller
Mr. John A. MacDonald
Mr. Kody Blois
Ms. Pam MacInnis
Mr. Stephen King
Ms. Shannon McWilliam
Ms. Jean Miller
Mr. William Coney
Mr. Larry Harrison
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2:00 P.M.

CHAIRMAN
Dr. Colin Dodds

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, ladies and gentlemen. Sorry for the delay. We just had a few technical problems, but now we're in a position where we can commence. Good afternoon, thank you for coming. My name is Colin Dodds. I live in Halifax. I chair the Nova Scotia Electoral Boundaries Commission, so I'll chair this afternoon's public consultation.

First of all, let me acknowledge that we are on the unceded lands of the many First Nations of Nova Scotia.

I am pleased that we have all the commission members here this afternoon. I will now ask each of them to introduce themselves.

[The commission members introduced themselves.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Angela, by the way, is the vice chairman of the commission.

Just a few housekeeping items first with respect to here: the only exits are at the back there. In case we have a fire alarm, you need to know that.

I do want to say that there are microphones here. If you are wanting to speak, you should come forward and introduce yourselves. There are two microphones there, and everything that is said right now, including from the commission, is being recorded and will be transcribed. We'll be on the public record. That's why we couldn't start until we got the equipment working.

Let me provide context for the meeting this afternoon. Independent Electoral Boundaries Commissions are established every ten years in Nova Scotia by an all-Party select committee of the House of Assembly. In the case of this commission, which was established last summer, only six years have elapsed. The 2012 commission had produced an interim report of 52 seats, but the Attorney General of the day did not accept that report. That report had in fact continued the protection of the electoral districts of Clare, Argyle, Richmond, and Preston. He directed the commission to produce another report, the final, ultimately, which it did in September 2012. This has 51 seats, the current membership of the House.

You'll see that we have some maps available, and I know quite a few of you have been looking at them this afternoon. We have some maps for the total of Nova Scotia, and we have some more specific ones for Truro, Bible Hill, and the environs.

This issue as to why the commission was reconvened after six years is because there was a challenge to the Attorney General's action, and it was a challenge to the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal. It found, in January 2017, that the final report of the 2012 commission violated Section 3 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Subsequent to this finding, a Commission on Effective Electoral Representation of Acadian and African Nova Scotians was established, and it reported early in 2018.

This current commission was appointed in July 2018, as I mentioned, by a select committee. We did produce an interim report on November 28th. It is available on our website. I have made available not only the terms of reference, at the back there, but also the proposals that we're going to be talking about this afternoon. The terms of reference - and there's another big copy there if you need to look at it later - given to the commission are quite broad. They do stress the "right to effective representation and elector parity." If you need some clarification with respect to the terms of reference, please ask when I have finished my opening remarks.

This commission was tasked with producing electoral boundaries for 51 seats and at least one other. In the event, we proposed in the interim report three further alternatives for public input.

The data we've been using is as of June 29th this year. It's based on the 2016 census and then updated for: people who were underage at that point in time but who now are in a position where they can vote, two or three years later; and, at the same time, new Canadians who have gone through the process of becoming Canadian citizens.

The total number of electors on the data that these maps have been drawn, for June this year, were 743,500. The average number of voters in the 51 seats is 14,578. In fact, if we go back and look at the 2012 report, this is over 30,000 voters on top of what we had in 2012, but there has been a continued shift of population to the urban areas of the province.

What the commission would like your input on this afternoon are the four proposals that we have before you in the interim report but also perhaps issues with respect to the current boundaries because, as you probably know, we're not proposing at the moment any changes with respect to the current electoral district that we're in. However, you may have some items that you want to bring up with respect to the current boundaries or some of the adjacent boundaries as well.

Let me go back to the four proposals that we have in the interim report. The first is 51 electoral districts which is, as I mentioned, the current size of the House, but we have made some adjustments to that. In the case of Bedford, for example, we've taken voters out of Bedford and put them into Mike's seat, where he can vote, which is in fact Hammonds Plains-Lucasville.

The second proposal is for 55 electoral districts, which would include the formerly protected electoral districts of Argyle, Clare, Richmond, and Preston.

Then we have Option Nos. 3 and 4. Option Nos. 3 and 4 would, in fact, be 55 electoral districts, but 56 seats in the House of Assembly. This would include a dual-member electoral district of Inverness. It would have one MLA to represent the geographic electoral district and one MLA to represent the Acadian constituency. The fourth one, 56 electoral districts, would include an exceptional electoral district for Chéticamp.

As I mentioned, on the walls we do have a variance showing these options for Nova Scotia and, additionally, we have the maps for Truro. As I mentioned, they remain unchanged from the current set of boundaries.

For Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River, your elector count is 15,897. This gives a seat entitlement of 1.09 on a 51-seat House, and 1.18 and 1.20 for a 55- and 56-seat House respectively. So, what the commission does is take the total number of electors, which as I mentioned is just over 700,000, divide through by the number of seats and that gives us then an average, which we call one - and then either side of that average is what we have before you.

In previous consultations, we also asked people for their views with respect to the members at large and using non-contiguous electoral districts. We received very little support for those two innovations.

Ladies and gentlemen, I can now turn the floor over to you. If you wish to speak, please come forward, identify yourself, and then you're on the public record.

Just one last thing. Our final report is due April 1st this year, so we have some leeway. If we're a little late, we can ask for an extension. We could not do that on the interim report, but we'd be looking to have more public consultations. Last night the

commission was in Antigonish and, of course, this afternoon with you. Next weekend we're in Sydney and Chéticamp, and thereafter a series of meetings in HRM. Then we're going down the Fundy shore.

Do we have anybody who would like to speak first? Please come forward.

HON. MARGARET MILLER: Hello, my name is Margaret Miller. I'm the MLA for Hants East. I didn't bring any prepared notes because I just want to tell you a little bit about Hants East and what we do. First of all, I want to thank you for what you're all doing. It's going to be a tough, tough job. I can't imagine the travelling you're doing around the province, getting to learn every part of the province, and the work you're doing to put all this together, so I certainly respect what you are trying to do. You've certainly been given some tools from the report, but let's hope we can get all of this right.

When this first came out, I thought that Hants East would be unchanged. I knew that we were up to, I think, 1.24 so we certainly had an overabundance of voters. It's a doable riding. It's a big riding - 1,800 square kilometres. Primarily, it's in three different geographic areas. We have Hants North, which is around the Kennetcook area and north. There's a school in Kennetcook. A lot of the services are in that area. People from Hants North would normally come to Elmsdale for things, or they would go to the city or possibly to Truro, so they're pretty centralized there.

Then we have the Hants East area, the geographic area which would be the corridor area from Shubenacadie through to Enfield and Rawdon, all those communities in that way. They would certainly be around the Elmsdale areas where they would all congregate. That's where their services are. That's where their doctors are. That's where the grocery stores are. It's where the municipal office is. The majority of people would be in that area.

Thirdly, we have the Mount Uniacke area. Actually, the first time I was to Mount Uniacke was five years ago, when I first ran for government. I hadn't been there before, and we had just moved to Enfield. I fell in love with the area. It's a beautiful area; people are great. But what I heard at the doors is a disconnect. They didn't feel they were a part of East Hants, even though they are part of the East Hants Municipality. They don't go to Elmsdale. If I go down to Mount Uniacke, I have to go through Sackville and go past Upper Sackville and Middle Sackville to do constituency hours. I actually go to them - I don't expect them to come to me - because they don't, they won't. They may call, but mostly they ignore government because they feel they've been ignored by government.

They do have representation in the Municipality of East Hants, but certainly it's still separate from that core of East Hants and where it is. They feel they are better served by either the Windsor area or the Sackvilles - whether it be Middle Sackville or Upper Sackville - and then they go into Bedford. That's their area. They have trouble understanding why they are still part of East Hants.

I made it my mission to make sure that they were well represented because I actually go to them; I don't wait for them to come to me. That has been working very well.

As for the rest of the community of East Hants, as you know Shubenacadie - most of it is known as the corridor area between Shubenacadie and Lantz. It starts at Highway No. 102 and the river in Shubenacadie; it ends at Highway No. 102 and the river in Enfield. Throughout all that area - whether you're doing Shubenacadie, Milford, Lantz, Elmsdale, and then Enfield - all those communities are sort of blended together. You go from one to the next, and often there's not even a separation mark. They are all in that corridor area. They all work together. People know each other.

The one high school in the area is in Milford which, if we go with any of these - and I think all of them show the separation of Milford and Shubenacadie - we would have children outside of our electoral boundaries going to school. If they became part of Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley - and I have no problem with the representation because Larry Harrison is a wonderful MLA, and I think he's doing a great job for his area - but I truly believe Shubenacadie and Milford don't belong there. This is part of our East Hants community, part of our corridor, known as our corridor. Many of the businesses are "corridor" something; it recognizes that this is one entity along this stretch of road and along this stretch of homes and businesses and that they all work together.

I've never had so many calls in my office as when the report came out and it was made aware that these were being taken out of the electoral area in the proposed plan. That's why I'm here today. I know you don't see a lot of MLAs who come out to these things. Sometimes people are very cautious about what they say. I'm not running again, so I don't have to be quite as cautious. I can be totally honest with you. And I really feel that any adjustments that could have been made to this should have been made on our southern boundaries.

[2:15 p.m.]

I believe the last suggestion showed Mount Uniacke either - I don't remember if it was going towards Hants West, or if it was going towards the Cobequids, or if there was a split there. I believe that, in this process, this was a flaw. This is something that I really believe is going to impact people. It will bother people that they're not included in East Hants. I think you're going to see that as part of voter turnout.

When I'm saying that people of Mount Uniacke don't feel like they're part of East Hants, I don't think the people in Shubenacadie and Milford will think that they're part of Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley. They will also feel like the afterthought, as the people of Mount Uniacke do now.

Like I said, it's a big constituency. I also do constituency hours in Maitland. There's no change that can be made for any of that; we have a big area. Certainly, it's not like a lot

of these city locations. I hear about some of my colleagues who have two square kilometres in Halifax, and they're all apartment buildings. I'm thinking, you have to be kidding me. I have three miles between some houses. For me to talk to a voter is a whole lot different than for them.

But we all have our challenges. Certainly, when you're looking at the Clayton Park areas and the size of those - I think Kelly Regan's area was up to 1.60 or something like that. I didn't see the numbers there - but massive. That is unwieldy.

I do believe that Hants East should be left within that geographical boundary. I think that the 1.24 per cent is doable. As an MLA, I know it's a lot of work, but you can make it work. They can be well represented within the boundaries. If there does need to be a change and those numbers do have to be dropped, I think it should be in the Mount Uniacke area.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Could I just respond to that? Overlaying the most recent data, which was June data, to the existing electoral districts would in fact put Hants East at 1.26 per cent, and that's a little bit over the 1.25 per cent, so that's what drew our attention.

I can assure you that the commission is not doing boundaries simply to make life difficult for everybody, but we are challenged to justify anything over 1.25 per cent. You mentioned Bedford - in fact, that comes out at 1.48 per cent overlaying the data on the existing 51 seats.

So you have given us some food for thought. If you did want to put this in writing as well, perhaps more detailed, that's up to you. You could send it to us by email or snail mail, please.

Would anybody else like to speak? Please, come forward.

MR. JOHN A. MACDONALD: My name is John A. MacDonald. I live in Lantz, part of Hants East.

My big question is, your reference says no less than 51, but had you gone to 16,000 instead of 15,000, the new Acadian ones would have not added four or five to it, which would have been less of a burden on the taxpayers of Nova Scotia. I do commend you guys for doing a full review, saving us from doing this in six years again.

Just so you realize, I agree with Margaret because I ran against her. And 1.24 per cent, it is doable.

One thing also is, the Shubenacadie area has a very close relationship with Sipekne'katik First Nation, which is in East Hants. Based on this, you would have them have a different MLA. We had a school review a little over a year ago, and that was one of

the key factors. Shubenacadie and Sipekne'katik have built bridges that, over the years, have made things a lot better. Any change to that would be detrimental.

Only one other thing I'm wondering. When this was done, it took me a bit to find out, to realize, that Hants East was changing. One of the confusing portions that happened is a lot of people thought they were being changed from what municipality they were in, what school district they were in, what TIR. I'm not giving you guys a hard time, but that change caused more uproar than anything else. People were saying, my kids are now going to Colchester? They're going here and not with their friends? So just to make a point that, when it went out, I found it and I understood it, but a lot of people looked at it and said, I'm not even in East Hants anymore! I'm now in Colchester! I'm sure you guys have had a lot of questions, so I'm just leaving you with those.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The change was something like 1,600 voters that we made the change, but you've given us something to think about. This is why we're here - not just to talk about the seat entitlement of 51 or 55 or 56, but also to hear your views with respect to the boundaries. Either the current boundaries that we have right now - the 51 seats - or what it is that we're looking at.

MR. JOHN A. MACDONALD: I think Sipekne'katik with its relationship to Shubie justifies why it may actually exceed the 1.25 and actually make sense to exceed it, but I'm not the one who has to do the final report. That's you guys. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Appreciate that. That is a line of argument that we haven't heard before, so it's very useful to have that. Thank you.

Please, come forward.

MR. KODY BLOIS: Good morning, committee members. My name is Kody Blois. I'm the president of the East Hants Sport Heritage Society and the Come Home East Hants Association, which are two non-profit groups. I'm an alumnus of Saint Mary's University, Mr. Dodds, so it's great to see you here.

Very similar to Margaret Miller and John MacDonald, I'm here in relation to how the proposed solutions would impact the boundary of Hants East. Some of what has already been said would be what I would echo. Essentially in our community, in Milford and Shubenacadie, a lot of people haven't become aware of this until just before Christmas. I wrote an op-ed in *The Weekly Press*, which is our local paper, to advise and try to encourage people to get active and understand.

There is an undertide of - I don't want to call it opposition - but people who are concerned about how this impacts them. There is a number of people who are registered to speak on Monday, January 14th at the BMO, so I think you'll see more people who can speak to their own personal views on this.

I think certainly we're not here to divide communities. For East Hants traditionally, the riding has been the municipal boundaries. You certainly don't want to keep one community in to the detriment of the other. But, as John and Margaret have said, when you look at the residents of Mount Uniacke - if I'm a parent from that community, my children go to school at Avon View High School, which is outside the district. If my children are involved in hockey, they play in West Hants minor hockey in Brooklyn, in Windsor, at the beautiful new facility that they're going to have in a couple of years. If I'm going to go to entertainment or social, it could be Sackville, it could be Windsor. It's a long-standing tradition.

That being said, we don't want to play communities off against one another. I can understand the impossible position that you, the committee members, are in when trying to make this all work. But I guess, bringing it back to Milford and Shubenacadie, there is a long-standing historical, social and political connectiveness between Shubie, Milford, and the rest of what we consider the corridor area in East Hants as a whole.

As the president of the East Hants Sport Heritage Society, our mandate is essentially to model what happens at the provincial level with the Hall of Fame and an awards ceremony to recognize children. The feeder systems into those sport organizations that we generally recognize include Milford and Shubenacadie. I know that doesn't impact our premise - this is a provincial election - but when organizations like the Milford Recreation Society, groups from Shubenacadie, are looking for provincial representation, they are now lopped off from the rest of East Hants. The entire municipality stays except for those two communities.

I do understand the 1.26. I understand that the commission is bound by the terms of reference - the plus and minus 1.25. Although I would reference, of course, there are exceptional electoral districts. Traditionally they have been used for cases of minority rights, particularly, in this case, African Nova Scotians and Acadians. Obviously, that is where it has traditionally gone.

I have had the chance to read the *Carter* case from the Supreme Court of Canada, which the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal has cited. It relates to, in some cases, geography, political boundaries - and it's right in your terms of reference.

I guess my suggestion would be that, if there's a way to keep East Hants as a whole, great. Even with the 1.26, we have both the MLA who says it doable and the individual who ran against Margaret - both believe that that is still doable for a riding.

Whether or not the commission has the ability to invoke that discretion, to use the exceptional electoral district to keep us together as an entity, I'm not sure, that will be your discretion. I think it is valid under the case law. While it has traditionally been used to validate communities that are smaller than the plus or minus 25 per cent, why not allow it for the community that would be 1 per cent above and beyond the terms of reference?

If that's not an option, then I truly believe that there should be some consideration into whether or not Mount Uniacke is a better fit because of the practicality, the social integration of those communities outside their district. I can guarantee you that a majority of people in Mount Uniacke would look to someone like Chuck Porter as someone they wish they could advocate for because all their activities happen - not all of them, but the majority of them - go in those corridors.

As John mentioned, the last piece is Sipekne'katik, the First Nation community. From my understanding and looking at your proposed solutions, right now the reservation stays within the boundary of Hants East, but the integration of the band and its members are so much in with the community of Shubenacadie.

For example, the children who go to school off reserve would now be going to school outside the boundary. If someone from that community has an issue with a provincial issue that happens at Shubenacadie Elementary, there's now a mismatch with the MLAs. Likewise, people living in Elmsdale/Lantz who send their children to Hants East Rural High, to Riverside Education Centre, which are the feeder schools for Grades 6 to 12, if they have an issue with the school or a provincial issue within those boundaries, they would now be going to someone like Larry Harrison. As Margaret mentioned, he's certainly a superb advocate, but those people don't vote for Larry. You can see where that effective representation is lost.

Certainly, I think there's going to be a push; I think we're going to try to have more people. I think a lot of people are finding out about this. I don't know whether or not this is a possibility because I know you guys are taking your Saturdays and going all across the province. While this is not relating to minority rights, it certainly relates to the representation and connectivity of what we consider East Hants. If there was an opportunity to have a public consultation in our community on how this impacts, I would certainly be willing - Margaret would certainly be willing, and John - anyone in our community would be willing to try to make that happen so people can have their voices heard.

Thank you very much for your time. I know it is challenging to make everyone happy and to try to find a solution. Again, I know April is fast approaching but, if there's a way to revisit this, please try to find a way. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, indeed. Again, a lot of food for thought. We would entertain perhaps after to have a closer look at the maps, if you wish.

Any more people wanting to speak? Please.

MS. PAM MACINNIS: Thank you. I'm Pam MacInnis. I'm a municipal councillor representing Shubenacadie. Nothing new to say, but I just want to say that I support the previous speakers, that the importance of maintaining the corridor and the integration and

co-operation between Sipekne'katik and Shubenacadie has grown so much over the years. I'm just thanking them for speaking. Thank you for listening and hope we can go forward. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. Anybody else like to come forward and make a presentation or some comments? Please.

MR. STEPHEN KING: Thank you. My name is Stephen King. I'm also a municipal councillor from East Hants, and I represent the Elmsdale-Belnan area on the other end of the corridor. I certainly thank you for the opportunity to speak briefly here. I'm a big proponent of smaller government. I'm not a Republican or anything like that, but I'm certainly a proponent of smaller government.

[2:30 p.m.]

I know your terms of reference were quite strict, and you had certain numbers that you had to maintain. What I hear from folks when I meet them on the street or at Tim's or whatever - we've gone through a lot of things recently in our community. We had to fight for our schools. We no longer have an elected member - there are no elected members of school boards anymore. Even at the municipal level, we've had major reductions in the number of people. Our own council has had a reduction of 15 per cent. We went from 13 to 11. If you applied that to the province, you would be looking at 6 or 7, at least, less MLAs.

Kody Blois who spoke before me is absolutely right. In our communities, I think if it hadn't been for his editorial in our local newspaper - people didn't realize what was coming about. We can blame ourselves for not staying on top of things, et cetera, but it has kind of hit people hard with everything else that's going on.

I certainly support what the previous speakers have said. I have lived in Hants East for 40 years. My wife grew up there. My kids have gone to school there. Shubenacadie and Milford - we've lived in those communities - are very much a part of what we are.

As Margaret Miller said, when you drive what we call the corridor area you don't know whether you're in Lantz, whether you're in Milford, or whether you're in Shubenacadie. It's just one contiguous community. We all consider ourselves as part of East Hants, and our kids all went to Hants East Rural High School.

Again, I'm very supportive of what the previous speakers have said. I know there has been some reference that if you do have to adjust the boundaries, perhaps something on the southern end. I'm of two minds about that, but I'm very supportive of what people have said, to keep Milford and Shubenacadie very much a part of what we have been for 150 or so years. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. Would anybody else like to speak? Please come forward - long way from the back.

MS. SHANNON MCWILLIAM: My name is Shannon McWilliam, and I'm a constituent of the Hants East electoral district. I also want to be on public record to support Margaret's and everybody else's words that the corridor is a part of our community, so if we could keep that intact. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. Any other comments? Any general comments? Please, the lady in blue.

MS. JEAN MILLER: Good afternoon. My name is Jean Miller, and I am a resident of Shubenacadie. I'll tell my age. I have been there for 66 years, so I have a long history with the East Hants corridor, and I totally agree with the previous speakers. We all are one community.

In the past, I had an opportunity to work in one election - one provincial election. Having campaigned or done the cold calls to the different constituents in the area, we definitely felt that the Mount Uniacke people did feel not really part of the East Hants area, and it's their location.

Anyway, I just want to thank the other speakers here today for saying their feelings. I know there are a lot of people in our area who don't know about this. I just happened to catch it on Facebook. That's how I found out. I thought, I have to come today and find out what's going on. I just wanted to express my thoughts on it as well.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you for that. The gentleman at the back.

MR. WILLIAM CONEY: Hi, I'm William Coney. I am the agricultural economics student rep at the Dalhousie Agricultural Campus.

First of all, one comment about the Mount Uniacke area. A lot of times driving down to the Windsor area and the Valley mostly for agricultural stuff - I have a lot of the same observations of a lot of other people. My main line of inquiry is, I'm wondering if the commission has any comments that they can say at this time and/or direction that they'll be talking with Elections Nova Scotia about.

Specifically, with the proposal for 55 electoral districts, 56 seats and the Inverness dual member electoral district, basically I'm wondering what the heck is going to be happening with relation to specifically organizational processes at the electoral level within that. Looking at page 24 of the report, as you all specified, it doesn't really have a huge amount of detail about that kind of stuff. That's stuff which will be left to Elections Nova Scotia to somewhat suss out in their own consultation process, I suppose, as well.

Would we be looking at two EDAs for that area, or one EDA with the responsibility of putting forward two candidates? Any kind of process like that can varyingly influence how able those EDAs are to put forward candidates or for an independent candidate to put their name forward for the ballot, all that considered.

I'm mostly wondering in the sense where - I've only lived in the province for about eight years now, but I am kind of wondering, because as far as I understand, this is the first super-serious proposal for a dual member or multiple persons within the same district boundary. This would kind of be - whatever the heck happens here.

Even if we don't have the dual members seat, but it's considered again in the future, just what that means for future seats with the same electoral districts but then multiple members representing because that's going to be taken as a sign, method, structure for those kinds of future proposals probably. I would presume so. I'm wondering if the commission has, at this time, any specific thoughts on how they're going to try to manage that kind of stuff. It's both at the same time going to be weird - to use the technical word. At the same time, it's going to give the ability for much more under-resourced campaigning, given some of its realities, but at the same time also a lot more.

Honestly, you're going to have to be campaigning throughout the entire thing for both candidates anyway - even if you are designating it because I would presume that generally most parties and independents will be like, cool, we're going to cut our losses and try to put most of our effort behind one candidate or the other in any kind of party-managed system.

I'm wondering what's happening, especially in the context where it would be the only dual-member seat. Any kind of details you could give on that would be welcome.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're still working on the details, which is why we're asking for input from people like yourself. There has been a history of dual-member constituencies in Nova Scotia - I think right up to 1978, albeit not in terms of Acadian vis-à-vis non-Acadian, but I think it was in terms of Catholic and Protestant back then. Glenn, I don't know if you want to

DR. GLENN GRAHAM: In discussions with Elections Nova Scotia officials, we didn't sort out the details because we're continuing to just present this idea to the public, but it would involve a couple of minor administrative issues. You would have to go in and say if you would like to vote for the geographical MLA or if you wish to vote for an Acadian MLA, so you would see the separate ballot box notion going on.

Beyond that, we haven't discussed a whole lot of the details, but we do have the precedent and we do have past examples that could be looked upon as to the administrative arrangements that would occur because of that. Other than that, we are once again, just looking to the public for their expressions on this option.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would anybody else like to speak on this topic?

MR. LARRY HARRISON: I'm Larry Harrison, the member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley. I was listening to the comments from Margaret and others. I do agree with them.

Rural communities are really struggling for identity. When I do something in the Musquodoboit Valley, it usually involves the whole valley. If I go to the Stewiacke Valley, it's the same thing - there is an identity there with all the communities. I'm afraid if we go into that corridor there's going to be an identity taken away from some of these communities, and I really do get concerned about that. The rural communities are losing so many things. Identity shouldn't be one thing that they lose.

Anyway, having said that, I just want to make one more comment. I have one family in Porters Lake. I don't know how that came about, but I have to travel through Cole Harbour, down to Porters Lake, down the Myra Road - one family. That's a disconnect, I think, but a great family - I love them, they are a nice family. It just seems strange that that one family is in my district. Maybe that will change with this, I'm not sure.

Anyway, I don't envy you your job one little bit. I know you put a lot of effort into it, and I know we're trying to find something that's going to be workable for years down the road. Good luck on your job, but I do hope you take into consideration the identities that rural communities are really trying to keep. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. Perhaps you could indicate not the name of the family but actually that particular circumstance, so we can try to fix it. We have tried bit by bit, particularly this last time, because Elections Nova Scotia - in fact, the mapping links are even better than they were six years ago and certainly better than they were before that. If you go way back, people used to have to use tracing paper, whereas now it's just really the click of a mouse. You will see on our website the ability to actually move back and forth. There is a mapping tool actually on our website, if you want to use that.

But seriously, if you can let us know because we do have in Elections Nova Scotia some dedicated mappers. They really have been trying to fix the little issues that have arisen, where there's a small community perhaps. We've tried to go back and look more closely at community boundaries so that we could actually keep that community of interest.

I think you'll see from the point of view of the report, if you've had a chance to read the whole report, that this commission is very conscious, as in previous commissions, in terms of community interest. It's not always easy to exactly identify what that interest is. In the past, boundaries were based on county boundaries, but with population shifts - so perhaps you could let us know on that particular instance, and we can go back and try to fix that.

We have another gentleman who wanted to speak. Please come forward.

M. JÉRÔME BREAU: Bonjour, Jérôme Breau, Truro. C'est juste peut-être un commentaire. C'est juste pour dire, moi, comme Acadien, je supporte les 56 circonscriptions. Chéticamp est d'une importance majeure pour la survie des Acadiens en Nouvelle-Écosse. C'est pour dire que je supporte que Chéticamp ait sa propre circonscription pour la survie des Acadiens. Merci.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Paul or Leonard, do you want to respond to that?

M. PAUL GAUDET: Merci beaucoup pour votre présentation. On n'a pas d'interprétation simultanée pour traduire vos propos, mais vous pouvez être assuré qu'on chargera de faire la traduction à la Commission de votre intention, de votre volonté. Je vous remercie également d'être venu à Truro pour exprimer votre point de vue. Ça va sûrement aider dans le débat.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Perhaps for everybody you could give a brief English version of that, Paul.

MR. PAUL GAUDET: Oh, he just wanted to support an MLA for Chéticamp.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. The whole issue of Chéticamp is that whole issue of Inverness and the difference between the 56 and the 56, the dual seats, against having Chéticamp as an exceptionally designated electoral district. Does anybody else want to speak?

Okay, going once. I don't want to make this like an auction but, in fact, we are here - we were scheduled to be here until 4:00 p.m. so, when we've closed the formal proceedings, if you want to have a look at the maps and want to chat privately with us as well, please feel free to do that because we're not just going to be rushing out the door.

I do want to thank you most sincerely for giving up your Saturday afternoon to be with us. You've certainly given us food for thought with respect to Hants East and some of the arguments that could be used to keep Hants East over the 1.25. As I think we've identified in our terms of reference, we are allowed to do that. In the past we've not been able to do that, but the terms of reference given to us this time are sufficiently broad.

Again, one has to have arguments, one has to have justification. Below the 0.75, the argument usually is minority constituents. We have to really have a justification and I think you've given us some interesting lead points, which personally, I've been on the commission three times, so you've given us some arguments to build on.

Any comments from other commissioners? Well I gave the first time, the second time, the third time - again, thank you most sincerely.

Next weekend, as I mentioned, we'll be in Sydney and then in Chéticamp. Then we're in HRM, as was mentioned, the BMO Centre; we'll be in Preston; and we'll be in Dartmouth. Then we're going down to Digby and coming back up to Wolfville.

We have had some requests for additional meetings but just to let you know, April 1st is our deadline, which can be extended, but the whole process of getting a report together is not just writing it but is then getting it formatted and then getting it translated. So, we can be looking probably at close to three weeks to get a report of the current size translated. That then takes you into early March or the end of February to get everything ready.

We don't want to rush it, and that's why we're out to talk to you.

Again, if you want to stay behind, there is some coffee at the back; there is some water. Please stay. If you want to talk to us individually, please feel free to do that. Okay, thank you very much.

[The commission adjourned at 2:48 p.m.]