

Brief presented by
Regroupement des communautés Évangéline
September 13, 2004
Members of the electoral reform committee

I want to thank you for coming to our area and giving us the chance to present our points of view on your preliminary report on the electoral boundaries. It is also appropriate that we meet in this center, the anchor of our tourism sector, but even more important this center showcases the best Acadian artists to our visitors. This center plays an important role in keeping the Acadian culture and its language alive by promoting and developing our economic sector.

I wish to present to you briefly the relatively new organisation who we represent here today, Le Regroupement des communautés Évangéline.

Our organisation came to be two years ago when a need to have a body to coordinate the development of our area was identified. From there our organisation was formed at a public meeting. A 5 member executive was elected and a counsel made up of representatives from 8 different sectors of our communities and the municipalities of Wellington and Abram's Village. We are also unique as our board activities are in both languages, French and English.

We were given the mandate by the community to : Faciliter le Développement de la Région Évangéline en travaillant ensemble pour atteindre les objectifs communautaires formulés dans le but d'améliorer et de valoriser tous les secteurs et les organismes au sein de la communauté.

Following the adoption of this mission the following priorities were identified:

- Creation of diversified and permanent job opportunities
- Development and creation of new activities and attractions for tourism
- Educate local residents on the importance of supporting local entrepreneurs
- Roads that favour development
- Effective community communication
- Increase efforts to prevent assimilation

Presented by: Mr. Edgar Arsenault

- Modern and affordable housing for seniors-Number one priority of the community
- Improved Health services including services of bilingual doctors
- Adequate community infrastructures

The community has also adopted a 5 year vision plan in order to guide our future development.

From this plan stems our interest in the work of your committee. In a continuing effort to prevent assimilation and to promote the French culture we see a major negative impact on our community in what you are proposing. There seems to be a gap, when you say you want to protect the minority but then turn around and propose to dilute further the francophone vote in your reform project.

We agree with your goals, principals and facts that you used to guide your work. In particular on page 3, article 5, were you state that there are 3 communities of interest which need to be respected in proposing revisions. They are the Acadian and francophone community, rural areas of the province and the 4 big municipalities.

We also agree with your statement on page 19, where you state the fact that there is a distinct community of interest which must be recognized in revising electoral boundaries. You also state that if necessary, a variance somewhat higher than that in other areas will be justified.

Where we strongly disagree is with the conclusion you came up with: The boundaries of the proposed electoral district of Evangeline will see this tradition continue with the great majority (75%) of the electors being Acadian and or Francophone.

We asked staff of your commission for referenced documents to justify these numbers that we believe are very inaccurate and misleading.

From this we decided to put numbers together that would better describe the old district 24 compared to the new district 4 that you are proposing. These numbers are taken from Statistic Canada.

Electoral Boundaries District 24 (Proposed #4)					
Existing	<i>Total*</i>	<i>Anglophones</i>	<i>(%)</i>	<i>Francophones</i>	<i>(%)</i>
Lot 15	1155	380	32,9%	775	67,1%
Lot 17	445	380	85,4%	65	14,6%
Wellington	360	115	31,9%	245	68,1%
Abram-Village	335	70	20,9%	265	79,1%
Miscouche	750	635	84,7%	115	15,3%
Stemon Park	500	467	93,4%	33	6,6%
Total	3545	2047	57,7%	1498	42,3%
Proposed	<i>Total*</i>	<i>Anglophones</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Francophones</i>	<i>%</i>
Lot 15	1155	380	32,9%	775	67,1%
Lot 17	445	380	85,4%	65	14,6%
Wellington	360	115	31,9%	245	68,1%
Abram-Village	335	70	20,9%	265	79,1%
Miscouche	750	635	84,7%	115	15,3%
Lot 14	775	660	85,2%	115	14,8%
Lot 16	675	540	80,0%	135	20,0%
Linkletter	330	320	97,0%	10	3,0%
Total	4825	3100	64,2%	1725	35,8%
<i>* Total population as per 2001 Census</i>					

We therefore come to the conclusion that there is a major discrepancy in your report when calculating the % of francophone in our area.

By calculating the number of voters in the old district vs. the proposed new district, using the election results we come out with a very different figure than the 75 % Acadians and francophone that you supposedly maintain in your proposal.

You added 236 voters in Linkletter, 356 in Arlington and 356 in Lots 16, and then you take out 363 from Slemond Park for a net gain of 584 voters. Being very generous I would estimate based on Statistic Canada numbers that 10 % of the added electors in the new district 4 would be Francophone, therefore you are adding a high number of Anglophone which will diminish drastically the minority vote in our area.

Members of the Committee, the changes you are proposing go against the basic principles and points you had indicated were important in your document. We believe that the number of electorate was satisfactory as it was, in the 25 % differential, and with the increase of voters in the last 10 years, the old district 24 would always be around the PEI average. So why change our district?

The only change in district 24 that we believe would make sense would be to take away Slemon Park from our district in exchange for Lot 16.

Furthermore when we look at population changes in the last 10 years, District 24 shows a 9% increase in population during that time period. We therefore don't believe that there is a need to increase the electorate or make significant changes to the electorate at this time.

The Commission needs to focus more on rural communities and maintaining a strong proportion in government therefore it is important that communities such as ours continue to be well represented in government. We should not be diluting this representation but rather find ways to strengthen it.

Members of the commission, you only identified one minority community. Your work should have been to protect it and not to dilute it to the point were it will not be recognised like what has happened to the other francophone communities in the province.