

Mr Justice McQuaid, Mrs Hubley, Mr Mitchell. Members of the general public.

I have been asked by the fifth district PC Association to present their submission to you.

I would like to thank them for the honor of presenting to you and thank you for listening to their presentation.

There are several areas in the interim report where our Association suggests change to strengthen electoral districts. Having said that, I would like to recognize the time and effort the commission has put into delivering this report and realize it is a very difficult job they were asked to undertake.

At the very start of the report, the Electoral Boundaries Commission outlined some general guidelines they felt they had to adhere to. These were, I think 17 in number, and if you accept them as carved in stone, then it is hard to argue with their findings. However, the association feels there are interpretations made in this section of the report that have a profound effect on the conclusions reached by the commissioners.

The traditional strength of the Island economy lays in the rural based industries of farming and fishing. To sustain these industries, we must keep an effective population base in the rural areas to provide a strong knowledgeable workforce.

The trend in recent years, has been an erosion of this workforce with a move of population to the urban centers. We are concerned that the commission has looked at this trend and has submitted a report that will accelerate and perpetuate the move of people to the urban centers.

This is outside the mandate of the commission. Loss of representation in the Legislative Assembly will hurry along this unhealthy trend, and rural areas of the Province will no longer have the strength to fight for the programs and services they need to survive. This is not a cry for representation of rural areas at the expense of urban areas but instead a cry for influence in the assembly to the benefit of all Islanders.

Successive Governments of PEI have fought to slow or reverse the trend of urbanization.

The proposal presented by the Electoral Boundaries Commission will speed this

process along. The commission is doing this by overlooking the very reasons the 25% variance was established and accepted by the Supreme Court of P E I .

This variance was also upheld by the appeals division of the supreme court of P E I .

It is our contention that, this variance was established to give rural areas the maximum representation possible in the Legislative Assembly. This Electoral Boundaries Commission has not recognized the importance of this variance and the reasons why it was established.

Our concern is that the Electoral Boundaries Commission has used the variance to benefit urban areas of the province and allows these urban ridings room to grow. This is a complete reversal of the reasons the 25% variance was established. With the variances used in the interim report, the Electoral Boundaries Commission is stepping outside their mandate and trying to establish districts that will last 20 or 30 years.

We suggest that subsequent Commissions apply the variance when appointed.

In support of the 25% variance we would also like to point out that the large urban centers receive representation from their municipal governments. A municipal government removes entirely, some areas of responsibility from the district MLA and frees that MLA, to devote more time to the responsibilities they have remaining. Municipal governments are also in a unique position to lobby for, and champion the causes of their citizens with the provincial government. This is a great benefit that is lost to the members of a rural riding.

Our second major point is that the new electoral districts should respect communities of interest.

The consolidated elementary school districts were established after a great deal of consultation determining common communities of interest. For example the consolidated school districts respected the old one room school district boundaries. They also , as much as possible, took into account such boundaries as parishes, fire departments, womens institutes, arena spheres of influence and traditional local trading areas.

We strongly recommend that new boundaries give stronger consideration to consolidated school areas and multiples thereof.

Our third point is in respect to district numbers

We feel the commission should stick to an East to West format that will keep the maximum number of electors residing in the same numbered districts as before the revision.

At a time of declining interest in the political process, we must do everything possible to involve people at the grass roots level and encourage them to exercise their right to vote.

There are a couple of areas in this report that discourage the establishment of grass roots political organizations and will contribute to declining interest and poor voter turnout. One of these is mentioned above in the use of a West to East numbering system.

The second area of concern is the premise that existing poll or district boundaries should not be adhered to. We believe the commission should, as much as possible, respect these boundaries to allow and foster strong grassroots participation in the political process.

We believe the 25% variance should be used to favour and not punish rural ridings.

With this submission in mind, we believe the commission should adjust district 5 as little as possible and if necessary should try to do so in a more traditional manner.

This could involve absorbing one or two polls for the south side of District 4 following school boundaries.

This would give our area of the province a larger riding with the least possible disruption.

Thank you very much for your time.

Lowell Kemp