

Mr. Chairman – Commissioners:

My name is Ronnie MacWilliams. Thank you for the opportunity to make this presentation on behalf of the West Point Bloomfield Liberal Association.

Our association is made up of people from all walks of life, farmers, fishers, labourers, retirees, and many other business representatives. These people were asked for their input, and many of them had concerns with the proposed changes.

The most serious concern is the loss of one riding and MLA in the area west of Summerside. In the last election under dual member riding in 1993, there were approximately 12,135 voters, electing 6 members to the legislature. The 2003 election had 14,480 voters and elected 5 MLA's, and under this proposal there will be only 4 MLA's and 14,231 voters.

Many people think this is demoting and degrading to the people west of Summerside. The economy of PEI is dependant upon Agriculture, Fisheries and Tourism, our area depends heavily on all of these industries.

There are serious issues in agriculture, BSE, potatoes, hogs, environment and land use, to name a few. In Fisheries there are conservation measures, reduced landings and closure for some species. These may be federal issues, but the MLA's should also be involved by relaying the concerns and thoughts of the constituents. In tourism, there is the demand for more and improved facilities to lure the tourists west of Summerside. Rural PEI cannot afford to lose representation.

In your interim report you have a section entitled Goals, Principles, and Facts. You state *that the objective is to ensure the right to effective representation.* (Page 2, Section 1) Most of this rural area does not have municipal government, if we have problems, we call our MLA. Please refer to page 3 section 5 (ii) in your report. There are three communities of interest which need to be respected when proposing revisions; the second one is (ii) the rural areas of the province outside the boundaries of the four large municipalities. On page 18, paragraph 4 states that people of rural PEI have social and economic interests firmly rooted in the primary industries of Agriculture, Fisheries and Tourism, and their interest in Government policies relating to Health Care, Education, Transportation, Agriculture, Fisheries and Environment is distinct from those living in the four municipalities. Taking these statements into consideration we feel rural PEI needs to maintain its present number of MLA's.

It is imperative that we do not lose a member of the legislature west of Summerside. To justify this happening we recommend using a larger variance and/or adding another district in Summerside to help keep the variance acceptable.

On page 19 you write about the Acadian and Francophone Community and a variance somewhat higher could be justified. Could the boundaries of this district be altered so as not to eliminate one district?

Section 17 of the Electoral Boundaries Act lists the factors which are to guide the commission in its review. Community of Interest is one of those factors.

We feel the proposed boundaries of the Bloomfield and Inverness districts goes against your goal, as stated on page 19 " *...accordingly in designing and proposing a revision to the electoral boundaries, we have attempted not to separate the community from the area with which it is most connected.* " We suggest the districts of Knutsford, Forest View, Haliburton, Mount Royal, Dunblane, Hebron, Milburn, West Point, Glenwood, West Cape, Springfield West, Cape Wolfe, Burton, Campbellton, and Glengarry are all very much connected to the community of O'Leary; and not very much with Alberton. We feel this has to be adjusted so as not to separate O'Leary from the area it serves.

What are the ramifications if this proposal is proclaimed?

The proposed District of Bloomfield is 45 km long and there is concern that the MLA may not be effective in the whole district. The area of west of Summerside will have one less MLA. Services to the people west of Summerside have been continuously downgraded over the last few years. Examples are the Alberton Courthouse closure, the Holland College changes, and the refusal of Government to sign the Infrastructure program. We need ⁵4 MLAs west of Summerside.

The Political process will also be affected. After 3 elections we have adjusted to the new boundaries and have become acquainted with the people in areas next to us. This proposal is by far more dramatic than the last, and people are telling us that they are done working for political parties, as there is too much change in districts too often.

In conclusion, we suggest the variance be used to the maximum if need be. Since Evangeline can have a variance somewhat higher, move some of the boundaries so that those people are in other districts west of Summerside.

Do not sever O'Leary from the area it serves.

Add an MLA to the urban area so as not to reduce rural representation.