

FEDERAL ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION

FOR NOVA SCOTIA

2003

DISPOSITION BY THE COMMISSION
PURSUANT TO SUBSECTION 23(1) OF
THE *ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES READJUSTMENT ACT*
OF
OBJECTIONS FILED BY MEMBERS OF THE
HOUSE OF COMMONS WITH RESPECT TO THE COMMISSION'S
REPORT DATED JANUARY 20, 2003

Introduction

The *Report of the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Nova Scotia* was tabled in the House of Commons on February 27, 2003. Pursuant to subsection 22(1) of the *Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act* (R.S.C. 1985, c. E-3), two objections to the Commission's report were filed with the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. One objection was filed by Mr. Gerald Keddy, Member of Parliament for South Shore. The other objection, which was filed by Mr. Bill Casey, Member of Parliament for Cumberland—Colchester, was eventually withdrawn.

Objection to the Report

In its Thirty-second Report, the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs set out the substance of Mr. Keddy's objection and indicated support for the objection. The Committee questioned the Commission's decision to include provincial electoral boundaries as criteria for drawing boundaries for federal electoral districts. The Committee's report provides, *inter alia*:

9. Gerald Keddy, Member of Parliament for the current electoral district of South Shore, filed an objection to:
 - a) the extension of the eastern boundary of South Shore into Halifax County to match the provincial electoral district of Chester-St. Margaret's, and
 - b) the consequent name change of the South-Shore to South Shore-St. Margaret's to reflect the proposed boundary change.
10. Mr. Keddy's objection was based on the criteria of geographic manageability and community of interest. Mr. Keddy informed the Subcommittee that South Shore riding comprises the longest sea coast of any riding in Canada. It is a relatively populous riding, long and narrow, with fishing communities every five miles or so along the coastline connected by a winding coastal road. Also, there are many smaller, self-contained communities of interest within the riding, each with their own community events, cultural fairs, independent histories and traditions, some dating back to the 1600s. The riding therefore requires considerable personal travel and contact with individuals and small communities.
11. By comparison, Mr. Keddy indicated, the area of St. Margaret's proposed for his riding comprises an urban population used to a permanent walk-in riding office and services compatible with, and knowledgeable about, Halifax. Therefore, this proposal would have significant resource implications for the representative of the riding.
12. When questioned on the issue of aligning the riding boundaries with the provincial riding boundaries, Mr. Keddy informed the Committee that in this case it made little sense. In discussion with the Subcommittee, Mr. Keddy indicated other, potential options for drawing the boundary lines that made more sense "on the ground" with regard to aligning communities of interest and populations.
13. Mr. Keddy told the Subcommittee that he believed larger rural ridings such as his could tolerate a population smaller than the provincial quotient, as rural ridings were more time-consuming to service than urban ridings. The Subcommittee noted that in the Boundaries Commission report, the Commission had also stated in its own discussion of its starting principles and criteria that:

...the urban electoral districts in and around Halifax should have populations somewhat higher than the electoral quota because of the greater ease of representation due to population concentration.

14. With regard to the numbers, the current proposal would place South Shore-St. Margaret's at +1.39% variance from the provincial quotient and Halifax West at -3.17% creating an urban riding smaller than the provincial quotient and an adjacent rural riding above the provincial quotient. The Commission's initial proposal of July 13, 2002, as indicated in Schedule "D" of the Commission's report, had South Shore at -8.48% variance and Halifax West at +6.22%, which the Committee considers tolerable.
15. Therefore, the Committee supports Mr. Keddy's objection and recommends that the Commission to return to its initial proposal of July 13, 2002. Furthermore, given evidence provided by Mr. Casey and Mr. Keddy in hearings, the Committee questions the decision to include provincial riding boundaries as a criteria for drawing boundaries for federal electoral districts, particularly given that this criterion is not a formal requirement of the *Electoral Boundaries Adjustment Act*.

Consideration of the Objection

The Commission is sympathetic to the concerns raised by Mr. Keddy, and appreciates that SOUTH SHORE—ST. MARGARET'S is, geographically speaking, a large electoral district with a widely dispersed population. The Commission notes, however, that SOUTH SHORE—ST. MARGARET'S is the fourth largest of eleven electoral districts in Nova Scotia. NORTH NOVA, WEST NOVA and CAPE BRETON—CANSO all contain more area, and CENTRAL NOVA is only slightly smaller in area than SOUTH SHORE—ST. MARGARET'S.

The Commission notes that with the addition of St. Margaret's to South Shore, both affected electoral districts move closer to the electoral quota of 82,546. In the original Proposals of July 13, 2002, South Shore had a population of 75,545, which was 8.48 percent below the electoral quota. With the addition of St. Margaret's, it has a population of 83,694, which is just 1.39 percent above the electoral quota. Similarly, in the July 2002 Proposals, Halifax West had a population of 87,683, which is 6.22 percent above the electoral quota. Without St. Margaret's, it has a population of 79,933, which is just 3.17 percent below the electoral quota. The Commission does agree that urban electoral districts should normally have a higher population because of the greater ease of representation, but it also took into consideration the rapid growth rate of Halifax West. Halifax West has been and is the fastest growing electoral district in the province. The electoral district of Halifax West, based on the Representation Order of 1996, had already grown, by the year 2001, to 106,372 people, which is 28.86 percent above the electoral quota. The new electoral boundaries are based on the 2001 census information, but the Commission is aware that this historic growth is continuing and it is thus desirable to move St. Margaret's to South Shore so that both electoral districts will be closer to the electoral quota both now and in the years to come.

The Commission feels that the provincial electoral boundaries are simply factors in "community of interest" and "community of identity". The Commission agrees that provincial electoral boundaries are not, in themselves, "criteria" for forming federal electoral boundaries, but the Commission acknowledges that because they, too, are drawn on the basis of "community of interest", they are often useful in drawing federal electoral boundaries.

Disposition of the Objection

Pursuant to subsection 23(1) of the *Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act*, the Commission has duly considered the objection filed and, for the foregoing reasons, has decided that the appropriate disposition is to dismiss it and confirm its report dated January 20, 2003.

Note

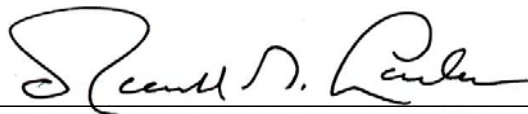
Statistics Canada, which certifies the federal electoral district population counts, notes that the population counts for the electoral districts of Kings—Hants and West Nova as presented in the Commission's 2003 Report require amending. Accordingly, the population of Kings—Hants, which in the 2003 Report is stated at 79,287, is amended to read 79,286; the population of West Nova, which in the 2003 Report is stated at 88,256, is amended to read 88,257.

Natural Resources Canada, which verifies the federal electoral district descriptions, notes that a correction is necessary along a portion of the common boundary line between the electoral districts of Sydney—Victoria and Cape Breton—Canso as presented in the Commission's 2003 Report. Accordingly, the Commission is moving the portion of Sydney—Victoria bounded as follows: commencing at the most northeasterly extremity of East Bay, thence due north to Portage Brook, thence generally southeasterly along said brook to the current easterly limit of the electoral district of Sydney—Victoria, thence southerly along said easterly limit to the most northeasterly extremity of East Bay out of Sydney—Victoria into Cape Breton—Canso. The revised population counts have been certified by Statistics Canada. The population of Cape Breton—Canso, which in the 2003 Report is stated at 75,195, is amended to read 75,221; the population of Sydney—Victoria, which in the 2003 Report is stated at 79,320, is amended to read 79,294.

Dated at Halifax, Nova Scotia, this 19th day of June, 2003.



Honourable William Kelly
Chairman

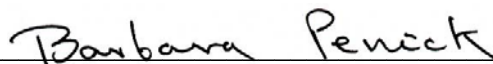


Dr. Ronald G. Landes
Deputy Chairman



Dr. James Bickerton
Member

CERTIFIED copy of the disposition of objections to the Report of the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Nova Scotia.



Barbara Penick
Commission Secretary