



Tuesday, September 18, 2018

Attention:  
Callee Robinson  
Administrator  
Electoral Boundaries Commission 2018-19  
902-719-5819

***Below are the remarks from Patrick Sullivan, President & CEO of the Halifax Chamber of Commerce to the Nova Scotia Electoral Boundaries Commission on September 5th, 2018.***

Good Evening Commission,

My name is Patrick Sullivan. I am the President and CEO of the Halifax Chamber of Commerce. I would first like to thank the Electoral Boundaries Commission for the chance to speak tonight. The Halifax Chamber of Commerce is a membership based organization of over 1,600 companies that employ over 65,000 employees in the greater Halifax area. Halifax is growing and is expected to continue to grow its economic base in Nova Scotia. Halifax increased its employment numbers by 10,100 people over twelve months ending July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2018, while the balance of Nova Scotia decreased its employed by 900 people<sup>1</sup>. If we look at other insightful statistics, Halifax has one of the youngest populations in the province and this population is growing<sup>2</sup>.

We have been following the potential changes to Nova Scotia's Electoral Boundaries as our members want to ensure that their voice will continue to be heard once the final electoral map has been created. We want to ensure that HRM residents receive the effective representation they have a right to. A system which dilutes one citizen's vote unduly as compared with another citizen's vote runs the risk of providing inadequate representation to the citizen whose vote is diluted. The result will be uneven and unfair representation.

The Chamber is in favour of a smaller rather than larger government, meaning that we propose electoral boundary numbers remain at 51 or, if possible, decrease. I do speak to many MLA's and know they are hard working, dedicated to their constituencies and their constituents. However, I could say the same about MLA's and MPP's in other provinces. If I were to look at other provinces and use the most extreme example, Ontario has a population of over 13 million people and recently increased the number of MPP's to 124 electoral districts. That gives each Ontario MPP about 100, 000 people per district versus Nova Scotia's average of 18,000 people per MLA. We at the chamber of commerce believe that if communication tools are used effectively it is possible then to have a community represented with a smaller number of MLA's.

We are in full support of cultural and linguistic representation for Acadian and African Nova Scotians across our Province. We believe the representation of these groups can be incorporated without adding additional MLA's but rather through the redistribution of current representation and/or through general representation.

In viewing the proposed districts suggested by the Commission we see that some have well less than 10, 000 constituents while others have over 16, 000. This can impede on fair representation for Nova Scotians, and as we

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/bsolc/olc-cel/olc-cel?catno=71-001-X&lang=eng>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CMACA&Code1=205&Geo2=PR&Code2=12&Data=Count&SearchText=Halifax&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&TABID=1>

are advocates for voter parity we do not want to see our members across Halifax (and Nova Scotia) feel that they are underrepresented because of their district size and/or voter ratio.

As Halifax is 47% of Nova Scotia's population we want to ensure Halifax (HRM) is numerically and appropriately represented. With the 22 MLA's we have now, we are 92% represented while the rest of Nova Scotia is over 100% represented. Having one more MLA, carved out from the current 51 (or less), would give Halifax proportional representation. Increasing the Halifax representation by 2 while increasing the total seats to 55 will simply maintain the current percentage of approximately 92% and continue to have Halifax underrepresented and result in continuing inadequate representation.

In addition to our concern about effective representation for Halifax residents we are concerned that the additional representation in the draft plan and the increase from 51 to 55 MLA's will mean significant additional costs for Nova Scotians.

Nova Scotia's overall population is not significantly increasing which would mean the additional MLA's salary and costs, ranging from \$140,000 to \$200,000 dollars per MLA and an increase in total of between \$560,000 and \$800,000, would put further strain on our already growing debt per capita ratio and debt servicing costs. Debt service costs which are currently the 4<sup>th</sup> largest item in the provincial budget at over \$800,000,000<sup>3</sup> annually.

The costs that are being considered do not simply go away when MLA's retire. The Auditor General reported in October 2017 that the obligation to 186 retired people was \$109,000,000<sup>4</sup>. The MLA pension plan, it was also reported, has no assets and is unfunded. In addition, the province, through taxpayers, pay \$5 for every \$1 of contribution by the MLA<sup>5</sup>.

I would like to encourage the Commission as an independent group to speak truth to power or our political leadership and recognize that Nova Scotian's cannot afford to increase debt or costs borne by future generations of Nova Scotian's. We should feel represented but also that their province is utilizing taxpayers' dollars in the most effective and efficient way.

In summary, the Halifax Chamber of Commerce believes that Halifax which represents 47% of the population is underrepresented by MLA's currently. We are in favour of cultural and linguistic representation for Acadians and African Nova Scotians but believe this can be accomplished through a redistribution of seats in Nova Scotia. We further believe these additional seats must be accomplished within the 51 seats or less given the additional cost that increasing the MLA's will bring to all Nova Scotians.

Thank you again and I hope you will take time to reflect on our words.

Regards,



Patrick Sullivan  
President and CEO  
Halifax Chamber of Commerce

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nbc.ca/content/dam/bnc/en/rates-and-analysis/economic-analysis/nova-scotia.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://oag-ns.ca/sites/default/files/publications/FullOct2017.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> IBID