

South Shore Regional School Board Boundary Review

Report to the Board

The South Shore Regional School Board (SSRSB) contracted a consultant to develop and present options for school board electoral district configurations, numbers and boundaries.

In response to changes made by two of the six municipal units in the region, the Board must make a proposal to the province's Utilities and Review Board (UARB) to alter its existing boundaries. The Board last undertook a statutory review, pursuant to Section 43 of The Education Act, in 2008.

The Municipality of the District of Lunenburg undertook changes to the boundaries of its 12 electoral districts to keep pace with shifting demographics. The Region of Queens Municipality reduced the number of municipal councilors from nine to seven, and reduced and relocated its electoral districts to facilitate this change.

Current definitions of school board electoral districts are, in light of these changes, obsolete. When a school board reviews electoral boundaries, it must follow other review guidelines established by the UARB, including:

- Population and population change
- School population and school population change
- "Communities of Interest"; and
- Equity in elector distribution among districts.

An *ad hoc* committee of the Board studies boundaries, and proposed 8- and 9- district options. The Board chose to retain a ten district configuration.

When the school board did so, elector distribution varied in some districts by as much as 23% from the average number of voters per district (defined as *Total electors/Number of electoral districts*). The UARB reluctantly allowed those variances, but cautioned the Board to make every effort, in future reviews, to reduce the variance of elector distribution to within 10% of the average number of electors per district.

School Board elections are unique; voters elect regional representatives from specific electoral districts within the region, but the districts are not, in themselves, "constituencies" nor are the elected members "local representatives". This is relevant to the understanding of the phrase, "community of interest". Traditional configurations have tried to conform to school catchment areas and sub-system boundaries. Alternatively, the concept could be interpreted with a regional view, with school board electoral district boundaries crossing sub-system boundaries, as well as municipal boundaries. (Both approaches were presented for public comment.)

The Education Act

The Education Act specifies minimum and maximum board memberships, as follows:

- 42 (1) ... not less than eight nor greater than eighteen, as determined by... the Utility and Review Board.
- 42(4) the Minister may appoint a Mi'kmaq representative to each regional school board ... in addition to 42 (1)
- 42A (3) ...one African Nova Scotian representative, elected by African Nova Scotian electors throughout the school region

Board Configuration

Prior to the dissolution of the elected board, there were 12 seats on the South Shore Regional School Board. The African Nova Scotian representative is elected at-large by entitled voters. The First Nations representative is appointed by the Minister of Education. The remaining ten seats are elected by voters in ten designated electoral districts.

The following is a brief outline of each of the ten electoral districts, approved in 2008:

African Canadian Representation is provided by election of a Member to the South Shore Regional School Board by eligible voters in the Municipality of the District of Chester, the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg, the Town of Mahone Bay, the Town of Lunenburg, the Town of Bridgewater, the Region of Queens Municipality, and Maitland Bridge, Annapolis County.

First Nations' Representation is provided by the appointment of a Member by the Minister of Education to serve on the South Shore Regional School Board.

District 1 Boundaries: Polling Districts 1, 2, 3 and 4 in the Region of Queens Municipality.

District 2 Boundaries: Polling Districts 4, 6 and 7 in the Region of Queens Municipality.

District 3 Boundaries: Polling District 5, 8 and 9 in the Region of Queens Municipality and the Maitland Bridge Area of Annapolis County Polling District 8.

District 4 Boundaries: Town of Bridgewater

District 5 (*identified by UaRB as District 7*) Boundaries: Polling Districts 7, 8 and 9 in the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg.

District 6 Boundaries: Polling Districts 3, 5 and 6 in the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg and the Town of Mahone Bay.

District 7 (*identified by UaRB as District 5*) Boundaries: Polling Districts 1 and 2 in the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg and the Town of Lunenburg.

District 8 Boundaries: Polling Districts 10, 11 and 12 in the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg and the Town of Lunenburg.

District 9 Boundaries: Polling Districts 4, 5 and 6 in the Municipality of the District of Chester and Polling District 4 of the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg.

District 10 Boundaries: Polling Districts 1, 2, 3 and 7 in the Municipality of the District of Chester.

Populations and Population Change

Populations of municipal units within the South Shore Regional School Board in 2008 (at the last review) were as follows:

Region of Queens Municipality <i>in toto</i> :	11,739
Municipality of the District of Lunenburg <i>in toto</i> :	25,164
Municipality of the District of Chester <i>in toto</i> :	10,741
Town of Bridgewater:	7,944
Town of Lunenburg:	2,317
Town of Mahone Bay:	904
Total Population, SSRSB:	58,809
Total Number of Electors:	43,369

The total population has declined within the region since 2008. Elector numbers, however, have increased. Census information depicts the general population decline. Latest known elector numbers were provided by area municipalities:

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>2011 pop.</u>	<u>Electors</u>	<u>2006 pop.</u>	<u>% change</u>
Town of Bridgewater (TOB)	8,241	5,942	7,944	+3.7
Town of Mahone Bay	943	652	904	+4.3
Town of Lunenburg	2,313	1,777	2,317	- 0.2
Mun. of Dist. Of Lunenburg	25,118	19,891	25,104	- 0.2
Mun. of Dist. Of Chester	10,599	8,286	10,741	- 1.3
Region of Queens	10,917	8,271	11,177	- 2.3
Total Population, SSRSB:	58,131	44,819	58,809	- 0.1
Total Number of Electors:		44,819		

The total number of electors has increased, based on municipal figures, from 43,369 in 2008 to 44,819 in 2012.

In the same period, the school population has declined by over 10%, from 7882 in 2008 to 7071 in 2012. The slope of decline in school population is steeper than the decline of the general population.

Options for Public Comment

Options for various configurations were developed and considered, primarily for variance in elector distribution, and secondly, for continuity of communities of interest, as evidenced by previous configurations.

Specifically, options include configurations with varying numbers of district seats as well as differing boundaries. Six options were presented for public consideration, each with a different number of electoral districts, from ten to five, inclusive. These six options were drawn from over twenty potential configurations developed and reviewed by the consultant with concern for voter parity and community of interest.

Options were presented for public comment and consideration in Bridgewater on February 20, 2012, in Chester on February 22, 2012 and in Liverpool on February 23, 2012. Options were also presented on the Board's website, with comments accepted until March 2, 2012.

Options identify potential school board electoral districts by their municipal components, using the abbreviation for the municipality followed by the numbers of its electoral district/s included in the school board district. The table shows elector numbers for each district, and their variance from the average in elector numbers and percentages. Maps accompany these tables.

Municipalities are abbreviated as follows:

TOB =Town of Bridgewater

TOMB=Town of Mahone Bay

TOL =Town of Lunenburg

MODC=Municipality of the District of Chester

MODL= Municipality of the District of Lunenburg

ROQ =Region of Queens Municipality

10-Seat Option

<u>District</u>	<u>Composition</u>	<u># of Electors</u>	<u>% Electors</u>	<u></> Amt</u>	<u></> %</u>	<u>>10%</u>
1	ROQ 1,2,3	3523	8%	-959	-21%	*
2	ROQ 4,5,6	3469	8%	-1013	-23%	*
3	MBAC,ROQ7,MODL8	3100	7%	-1382	-31%	*
4	TOB	5942	13%	1460	33%	*
5	MODL 6,7,9	4789	11%	307	7%	
6	MODL 10,11,12	5059	11%	577	13%	*
7	TOL, MODL 1,2	5129	11%	647	14%	*
8	MODL 3,4,5	4870	11%	388	9%	
9	TOMB, MODC 4,5,6	4328	10%	-154	-3%	
10	MODC 1,2,3,7	4610	10%	128	3%	
	TOTAL 10-seat option	44819	100%			4482 ave

This option essentially translates the existing configuration to the new municipal boundaries and accounts for the reduction in municipal districts in the Region of Queens.

9-Seat Option

<u>District</u>	<u>Composition</u>	<u># of Electors</u>	<u>% Electors</u>	<u></> Amt</u>	<u></> %</u>	<u>>10%</u>
1	ROQ 1,2,3,4	4659	10%	-321	-6%	
2	ROQ 5,6,7 MODL 12	5270	12%	290	6%	
3	MODL 1,2, TOL	5129	11%	149	3%	
4	MODL 3,5, TOMB	3839	8%	-1141	-23%	*
5	TOB	5942	13%	962	19%	*
6	MODL 6,7,9	4789	11%	-191	-4%	
7	MODL 8,10,11	5222	11%	242	5%	
8	MODC 1,2,3,7	4610	10%	-370	-7%	
9	MODC 4,5,6 MODL 4	5359	12%	379	8%	
	TOTAL 9-seat option	44819	99%			4980 ave

8-Seat Option

<u>District</u>	<u>Composition</u>	<u># of Electors</u>	<u>% Electors</u>	<u></> Amt</u>	<u></> %</u>	<u>>10%</u>
1	ROQ 1,2,3,4	4659	10%	-943	-17%	*
2	ROQ 5,6,7 MODL 12	5270	12%	-332	-6%	
3	MODL 1,2,3 TOL	6661	15%	1059	19%	*
4	MODL 5, 10, 11	5056	11%	-546	-10%	*
5	TOB	5942	13%	340	6%	
6	MODL 6,7,8,9	6610	15%	1008	18%	*
7	MODC 1,2,3,7 TOMB	5262	12%	-340	-6%	
8	MODC4,5,6 MODL 4	5359	12%	-243	-4%	
	TOTAL 8-seat option	44819	100%			5602 ave

7-Seat Option

<u>District</u>	<u>Composition</u>	<u># of Electors</u>	<u>% Electors</u>	<u></> Amt</u>	<u></> %</u>	<u>>10%</u>
1	ROQ 1,2,3,4,5	5809	13%	-594	-9%	
2	ROQ 6,7 MODL 8, 12	5941	13%	-462	-7%	
3	MODL 6,7,9,10,11	8190	18%	1787	28%	*
4	TOB	5942	13%	-461	-7%	
5	MODL 2,3,5 TOL	6496	14%	93	1%	
6	MODC 1,2,3,7 MODL 1	6430	14%	27	0%	
7	MODC 4,5,6 MODL 4, TOMB	6011	13%	-392	-6%	
	TOTAL 7-seat option	44819	100%			6403 ave

7-Seat Option "Option 7B"

<u>District</u>	<u>Composition</u>	<u># of Electors</u>	<u>% Electors</u>	<u></> Amt</u>	<u></> %</u>	<u>>10%</u>
1	ROQ 1,2,3,4,5	5809	13%	-594	-9%	
2	ROQ 6,7 MODL 8, 10, 12	7721	17%	+1318	+21%	*
3	MODL 6,7,9,11	6410	14%	7	0%	
4	TOB	5942	13%	-461	-7%	
5	MODL 2,3,5 TOL	6496	14%	93	1%	
6	MODC 1,2,3,7 MODL 1	6430	14%	27	0%	
7	MODC 4,5,6 MODL 4, TOMB	6011	13%	-392	-6%	
	TOTAL 7-seat option	44819	100%			6403 ave

6-Seat Option

<u>District</u>	<u>Composition</u>	<u># of Electors</u>	<u>% Electors</u>	<u></> Amt</u>	<u></> %</u>	<u>>10%</u>
1	ROQ 1,2,3,4,5, MODL 12	7467	17%	-3	0%	
2	ROQ 6,7, MODL 7,8, 10	7599	17%	129	2%	
3	TOB	5942	13%	-1528	-20%	*
4	MODL 2,3,5,9,11	7894	18%	424	6%	
5	MODC 1,2,3,7, MODL 1, TOL	8207	18%	737	10%	
6	MODC 4,5,6 MODL 4, 6 TOMB	7710	17%	240	3%	
	TOTAL 6-seat option	44819	100%			7470 ave

5-Seat Option

<u>District</u>	<u>Composition</u>	<u># of Electors</u>	<u>% Electors</u>	<u></> Amt</u>	<u></> %</u>	<u>>10%</u>
1	ROQ,MBAC	8271	18%	-693	-8%	
2	MODL 6,7,8,9,10,11	10011	22%	1047	12%	*
3	TOB, MODL 3,5	9129	20%	165	2%	
4	MODL 1,2,4,12, TOL, TOMB	9122	20%	158	2%	
5	MODC	8286	18%	-678	-8%	
	TOTAL 5-seat option	44819	100%			8964 ave

Public Comment and Consideration

Public participation was high, with over fifty people, in total, attending public sessions. This exceeds the number who participated in 2008. Public comment was also received electronically.

Public consultation revealed a number of general and specific concerns with the options presented.

Concerns in the current configuration include the distribution of districts relative to area municipalities and the wide range of disparity in voter numbers from district to district. Currently six of ten districts have elector numbers in excess of 10% variance from the average number of voters per district. Some disparities exceed 30%.

In the western third of the region, communities of interest have traditionally centred on the two high schools in Queens County. Options proposed adding Lunenburg's District 12, a portion of which is in the provincial constituency of Queens, to the northern Queens-based district to bolster voter numbers. Public comment was consistent in suggesting a more suitable community of interest is found by combining Lunenburg's District 7 with the North Queens area.

Similarly, there was not strong support for proposed configurations which mixed Municipality of the District of Lunenburg districts with those of the Municipality of the District of Chester, not least because the municipal boundary is a meaningful school boundary separating high school catchment areas.

There was general consensus that, while voter parity is important, it should not be so rigidly applied as to ignore established communities of interest. There was considerable support for board configurations which honour, to the best degree possible, existing subsystem and high school catchment boundaries.

With one municipal council reducing its size, the question of board size was posed for public comment. There was no clear consensus. Most voiced support for reduction in board size, fewer for retention of the existing 10- (district) seat option. At one meeting, five participants – including a former board member - voiced support for enlarging the board to give better school-community-specific representation.

Certain configurations generated particular interest. The five-seat option, participants noted, divided districts by boundaries consistent with municipal boundaries and the perceived communities of interest; however, it provided for very few members. The board was urged to explore the possibility of multiple members per district, for example, two members elected from within the Region of Queens Municipality, using this five-district configuration.

Following the first public meeting, an option was suggested by a member of the public which depicted six districts, each essentially encompassing the catchment area of the region's six high schools. This option was presented at subsequent public meetings and earned some support. It was also made clear such a configuration is below the currently-legislated minimum complement of board members.

Another member of the public suggested a nine-seat option which preserves the logic of the current configuration, but resolves many of the voter parity issues. With some adjustment for voter parity, this proposal is worthy of further consideration.

Options for Board Consideration

Public participation and comment have been instrumental in informing and improving the options brought forward for Board consideration.

Four options are being presented for final consideration by the Board. These include:

- A five-district option with multiple members per district, resulting in ten district representatives for a total complement, with at-large seats, of 12 members;
- A nine-district option which resolves the voter disparity that mars the current configuration;
- A 7-seat option presented for public consultation as Option 7B
- A six-district option (for a total complement of eight) which reflects the catchments areas of the region's six high schools.

Option A: 5 Districts electing 10 members + 2 at-large members = 12 board members

This configuration identifies 5 districts, with multiple members elected from most districts, as follows:

District	# of Members	Composition	#of electors	Community of Interest
1	2	Region of Queens	8271	LRHS, NQCS systems
2	2	MODL 5,6,7,8,9	8265	New Germany system
3	1	Town of Bridgewater	5942	Bridgewater system
4	3	MODL 1,2,3,4,10, 11,12, TOL, TOMB	14055	Park View system
5	2	MODC	8286	Forest Heights system

Option B: 9 Districts electing 9 members + 2 at-large members = 11 board members

This configuration is configured in a one member-per-district array.

District	# of Members	Composition	#of electors	Community of Interest
1	1	ROQ 1,2,3,4	4659	LRHS system
2	1	ROQ 5,6,7 MODL 7	5148	NQCS system + NG
3	1	MODL 6, 8, 9	5074	New Germany system
4	1	Town of Bridgewater	5942	Bridgewater system
5	1	MODL 10,11, 12	5059	Park View system
6	1	MODL 1,2, TOL	5129	Park View system
7	1	MODL 3,4,5 TOMB	5022	Park View system
8	1	MODC 1,2,3,7	4610	FHCS system via CAMS
9	1	MODC 4,5,6	3676	FHCS system via NRCS

Option C: 7 districts electing 7 members

This configuration was presented to the public as Option 7B. It was endorsed as the option-of-choice of the Town of Bridgewater. Current legislation does not permit a board this small.

<u>District</u>	<u># of Members</u>	<u>Composition</u>	<u>#of electors</u>	<u>Community of Interest</u>
1	1	ROQ 1-5	5809	So. Queens
2	1	ROQ6,7MODL8,10,12	7721	Queens, portion of PVEC
3	1	MODL 6,7,9 ,11	6410	NG-PVEC west
4	1	TOB	5942	Bridgewater subsystem
5	1	MODL 2,3,5, TOL	6496	PVEC east
6	1	MODC1-3,7 MODL1	6430	FHCS via CAMS
7	1	MODC 4,5,6 MODL 4, TOMB	6011	FHCS via NRCS, PVEC

Option D: 6 Districts electing 6 members + 2 at-large members = 8 board members

This option is worthy of consideration because it reflects, for the most part, the geography of the region's six high school catchment areas. It is below the threshold of the current legislated minimum board complement. Areas with >+10% variance are shrinking in population; areas with >-10% variance are growing.

<u>District</u>	<u># of Members</u>	<u>Composition</u>	<u>#of electors</u>	<u>Community of Interest</u>
1	1	Region of Queens	8271	Liverpool & North Queens
2	1	MODL 5,6,7,9	6444	New Germany system
3	1	Town of Bridgewater	5942	Bridgewater system
4	1	MODL 2,8,10,11,12	8412	Park View system (West)
5	1	MODL 1,3, 4, TOL, TOMB	7464	Park View system (East)
6	1	MODC	8286	Forest Heights system

Further Information

The consultant is available to the board to respond to any additional questions.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Shields, Consultant