

News release from The Société de l'Acadie du Nouveau-Brunswick (SANB)

Provincial Electoral Boundaries Commission Unveiled: Good news for New Brunswick's Acadian Population

Petit-Rocher, Friday, June 24, 2022 - Earlier today, the Government of New Brunswick announced the composition of the Provincial Electoral Boundaries Commission. According to the SANB, the appointments unveiled today represent excellent news for the province's Acadian and francophone community.

The most important part of this announcement is, ironically, what is not being announced. While the Commission is indeed established, no bill has been tabled on the number of ridings, as prescribed in the Electoral Boundaries and Representation Act. We must therefore conclude that the SANB's main demand has been heard: there will be no reduction in the number of electoral districts. This represents a victory for Acadians and Francophones in New Brunswick.

The SANB would also like to point out that the new commission must correct the historical and constitutional wrong of the last redistribution in 2012, which saw the communities of Néguaac and Memramcook placed in the ridings of Tracadie-Sheila and Dieppe respectively. On the other hand, the Commission must ensure that the effective representation of linguistic communities is a mandatory factor to be taken into consideration during the next redistribution.

The 2012 redistribution created ridings that were contrary to the principle of the effective representation of linguistic communities, notably in the ridings of "Miramichi Bay-Neguac" and "Memramcook-Tantramar".

The first case was a redistribution of two former districts, namely "Miramichi Bay-Neguac", which is more rural in nature and 58% Francophone (35% Anglophone), and "Miramichi Centre", which is more rural in nature and 89% Anglophone (8% Francophone). The newly created district at that time preserved its rural character, but changed its linguistic composition to 35% Francophone and 57% Anglophone.

In the Southeast, the boundary of the "Memramcook -Tantramar" district was the one that raised the most concern. This district was a redistribution of two former districts, "Memramcook-Lakeville-Dieppe", an urban/rural mix of 70% Francophone (28% Anglophone), and "Tantramar", which was more rural in nature and 91% Anglophone (5% Francophone). The new riding was more rural in nature and was 68% Anglophone and 29% Francophone.

In these two cases, we can clearly see that the redistribution process had the effect of unduly reducing the Francophone electoral weight in the two new provincial ridings at the time.

"The factor of effective representation of linguistic communities is not a factor like any other; it is a factor that must be taken into account, given the constitutional status of language rights as well as the obligations arising from the Act Recognizing the Equality of the Two Official Linguistic Communities in New Brunswick and section 16.1 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms," said SANB President Alexandre Cédric Doucet.

"In this new redistribution process, the Commission must ensure that an "exceptional circumstance" includes the effective representation of the linguistic communities of Neguac and Memramcook. The Commission must try to delimit any electoral district without jeopardizing the effective representation of the communities concerned," continued Doucet.

"The SANB remains open to working closely with the Commissioners to ensure effective representation for all of our Acadian and francophone communities," concluded the Chair.