

DRAFT REPORT



NARRATIVE
RESEARCH

2022 Halifax Regional Council
District Boundary Review, Phase Two
Study – What we Heard Report –
Councillor and Mayor Interviews

August 2022

HALIFAX



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RESEARCH

Qualitative Interviews with the Mayor and Councillors

Background & Objectives

The Halifax Regional Municipality District Boundary Review study is a provincially-mandated initiative that involves each municipality in Nova Scotia reviewing the number of councillors as well as the boundaries for municipal polling districts every 8 years. This second phase of the review will be used to inform an application to the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board (NSUARB) which will make a decision on the size of Council and the polling boundaries within HRM. The research for this second phase will include two parts – consultation with the Halifax Regional Council members (this report) and public consultation (to follow in September / October 2022).

The key objective of this first part of the research was to understand feedback on the existing district boundaries from Members of Regional Council who are currently serving.

Methodology



Approach:

Seventeen (17) in-depth interviews were conducted from August 24th – 30th.



Target Audience:

- Participants included:
- All 16 HRM Councillors
 - The Mayor



Length

Each interview lasted approximately 20-30 minutes.



The primary benefits of qualitative discussions are that they allow for in-depth probing with qualifying participants on their opinions, perceptions and attitudes on a specific subject matter. Qualitative research allows for more complete understanding of the segment in that the thoughts or feelings are expressed in the participants' "own language" and at their "own levels of passion." Qualitative techniques are used in marketing research as a means of developing insight and direction, rather than collecting quantitatively precise data or absolute measures. As such, results are directional only and cannot be projected to the overall population under study.



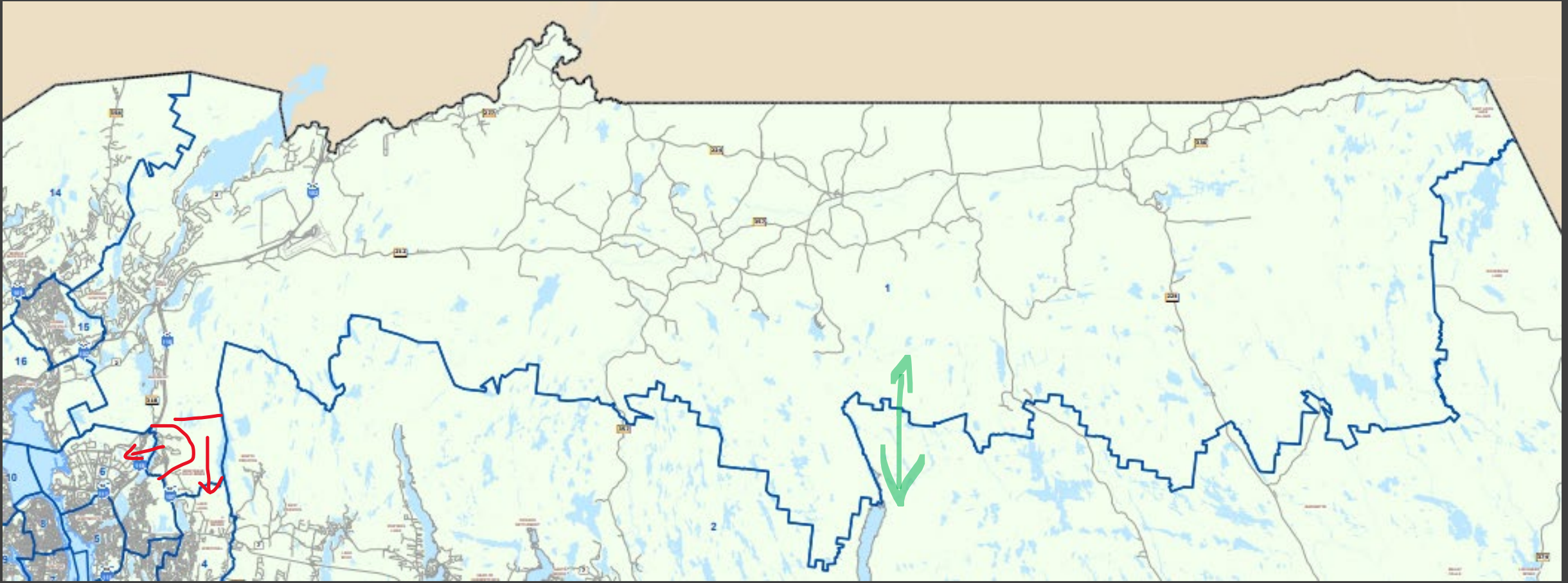
Councillors and the Mayor were asked for their thoughts on the current district boundaries within the municipality (most particularly within their own district), and asked to keep in mind the five mandatory criteria of **geography, number of electors, communities of interest, population density** and **relative parity of voting** as they provided feedback.

Results show that there is clear understanding of the need to review districts to ensure they are composed in a way that keeps communities of interest together wherever possible, while maintaining a relatively consistent number of electors in each district. Consistent with feedback from the first phase of the project, many councillors made the point that the number of *residents* should also be considered in determining district boundaries, as they spend time serving *all those living* in their district, not just those eligible to vote.

Findings show that there are certain key areas identified in the current makeup of boundaries that are problematic, dividing historic communities such as Lake Loon and Cherry Brook from North Preston and East Preston, for example, or Lucasville from Upper Hammonds Plains currently existing in two separate districts. In addition, some small areas were separated from their communities in the last district boundary review, such as the northeastern part of Lake Charles that was included in district 1, where residents strongly feel that they should be in district 6 instead.

Some councillors also spoke to the difficulty in serving a district that may have very divergent interests (for example in representing residents who are on provincial roads that are sanded in winter, with RCMP services and septic / well, compared to residents to are on municipal roads that are salted in winter, with HRP services and city water / sewers). Generally, though not universally, there was a sentiment that having residents within a district with similar needs and infrastructure is desirable.

Detailed comments for each district can be found on each of the following 16 pages, with maps and informal drawings to illustrate commentary.



District 1

- District 1 currently includes two distinct areas – the more suburban Fall River / Waverley area and the more rural areas to the east. There is an understanding of the need for growth of population in what is a largely rural district.
- There are recognized **similar needs for infrastructure, roads and recreation between the rural areas of districts 1 and 2**, which are felt to have more in common with each other than the more suburban areas of Fall River, for example.
- The biggest concern from many residents of this rural district is that the denser areas can out-vote them, so there has been a communicated desire to feel represented.
- A key area of district 1 near Lake Charles should be moved into district 6 as these residents do not feel a part of district 1, but rather, identify as residents of Dartmouth.
- Montague Mines is not felt to be a community of common interest with the rest of district 1.



District 2

- Although geographically large, the communities are very spread out in district 2. Consistent with feedback about district 1, many feel that these **rural communities have more common interests with those in district 1** than they do with communities in more suburban areas such as district 4.
- There is recognition that there may be a need to increase the population within this district, and one possible option to increase population in the district would be to bring Lake Loon, Cherry Brook and potentially Westphal into the district, which have a recognized shared history and culture with the Prestons.

District 3

Several suggestions were brought forth with respect to the boundaries of district 3:

- At present, **the community of Woodlawn** is split, with suggestions to somehow bring the community together to avoid this community of interest being divided. Portland Street was noted as a potential natural division.
- Residents of **Bissett Road** have indicated they feel divided by the border between districts 3 and 4, and would like the boundary moved to encompass the entire road.
- There is a desire to **keep the islands** off the west coast within the district.
- **Much growth is expected in Cow Bay**, along with the **expansion of Morris Lake**, as well as **Russell Lake**. Russell Lake is felt to be part of Portland Hills.





District 4

- The northern boundary is felt to be ok as is.
- **Lake Loon and Cherry Brook** are intertwined communities that should be kept together. Some felt that they are very much part of Westphal as a community of interest, while many others felt strongly that Lake Loon and Cherry Brook should be joined with North and East Preston as a community with common history and culture.
- **A small part of Westphal** is felt to be divided now (around Salmon River Drive, Richardson Drive), that should be kept together with the rest of Westphal.
- **Portland Hills and Colby Village** are felt to be part of Cole Harbour.
- Historically Cole Harbour went down to Rainbow Haven, so the current division part way through Bissett Road feels arbitrary (consistent with feedback in District 3).

District 5

- The **Circumferential Highway** is felt to be a natural boundary.
- Concerning the northern border of the district, if the downtown area was too large now, it was felt that **the boundary could be pulled south to Woodland**.
- On the eastern edge of the district, there is a small area accessible only from district 5 (Lakemist Ct), which might make sense to include in district 5, though it was also felt that having the entire lake (Mic Mac) in district 6 could make sense as well.
- **The southern boundary is felt to make sense where it is now**, though if the district is too large, the southern part could be moved into district 3.



District 6

- The Barry's Run, Craighburn area off Lake Charles, as well as the Spider Lake subdivision, feel part of Dartmouth, and it was felt to be highly important to integrate these areas into district 6.
- Consideration should be paid to the large development of Port Wallace and how that will affect number of electors going forward. In addition, the development of Shannon Park should be considered going forward.
- Dartmouth North is an integral part of district 6. The southern boundary of the district is good as is but could be moved slightly south if necessary (e.g. to Woodlawn).
- The communities of Woodlawn and Portland Hills have commonalities and may make sense to consider this area as a community of interest, and Colby Village.



District 7

- Within district 7, there are two areas that are felt could be moved to other districts if the population is too great at present:
 - On the northern side of the district, the boundary should be Cogswell or Rainnie, as this fits with the historic north end community, and residents and businesses in this area feel part of the north end (district 8).
 - On the wester side of the district, the area around Conrose Park was felt to be linked in some ways to the West End because of school boundaries (e.g. Tupper School District).
- Quinpool is felt to be a natural boundary, and one that should not change. The area south of Quinpool is felt to be a cohesive neighbourhood that is different in nature from the community north of Quinpool.



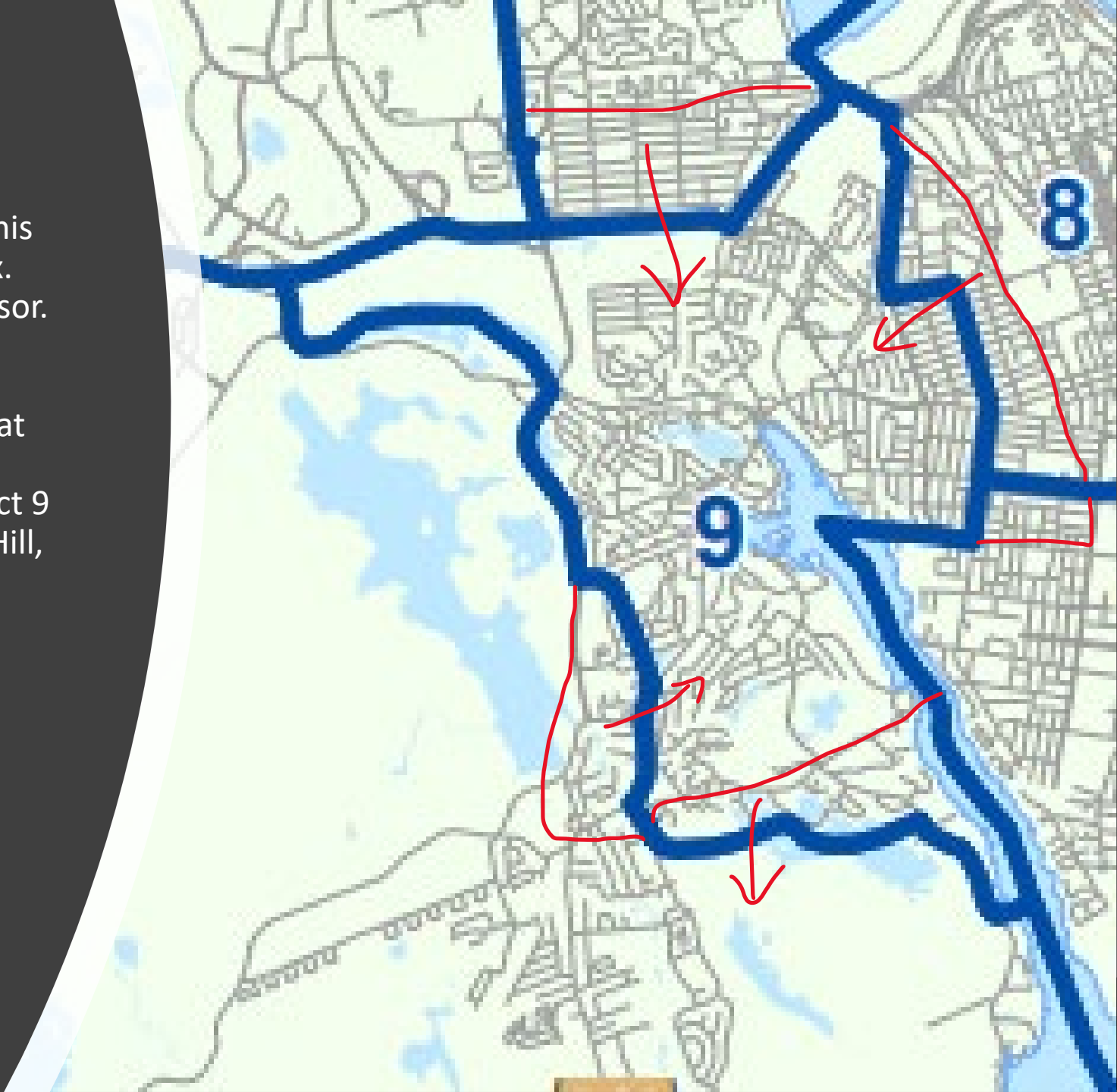
District 8

- On the western side of district 8, residents around Connaught Avenue are more aligned with district 9 than district 8. The natural border could be Oxford, Windsor or even Robie to the east. The Forum is felt to fit with district 8, however.
- The Windsor Street Exchange to the north is felt to fit in district 8 for historic reasons of including Africville as well as the Port.
- On the southwestern side, the boundary could move north to Chebucto, and have more of the Quinpool area (north side) in district 9. However, the south side of Quinpool (to Jubilee) is felt to be very much a different community that belongs firmly in district 7.
- On the southeastern side, the boundary should be moved to Cogswell, as the community to the north is a cohesive business and residential community that fits not with downtown but with the northern part of the peninsula.



District 9

- Oxford is now the eastern boundary, but this divides the community of west-end Halifax. The border should be moved east to Windsor.
- Jubilee could be the boundary on the southeast side up to Robie, though the community in this area is common with that south of Jubilee so it could feel unnatural.
- Long Lake Village should be a part of district 9 as it is a common community with Cowie Hill, and Ravenscraig is an area with more in common with Fleming Heights.
- Williams Lake has larger lots and common interests with some of district 11.
- Now Fairview is divided and could be included in district 9.



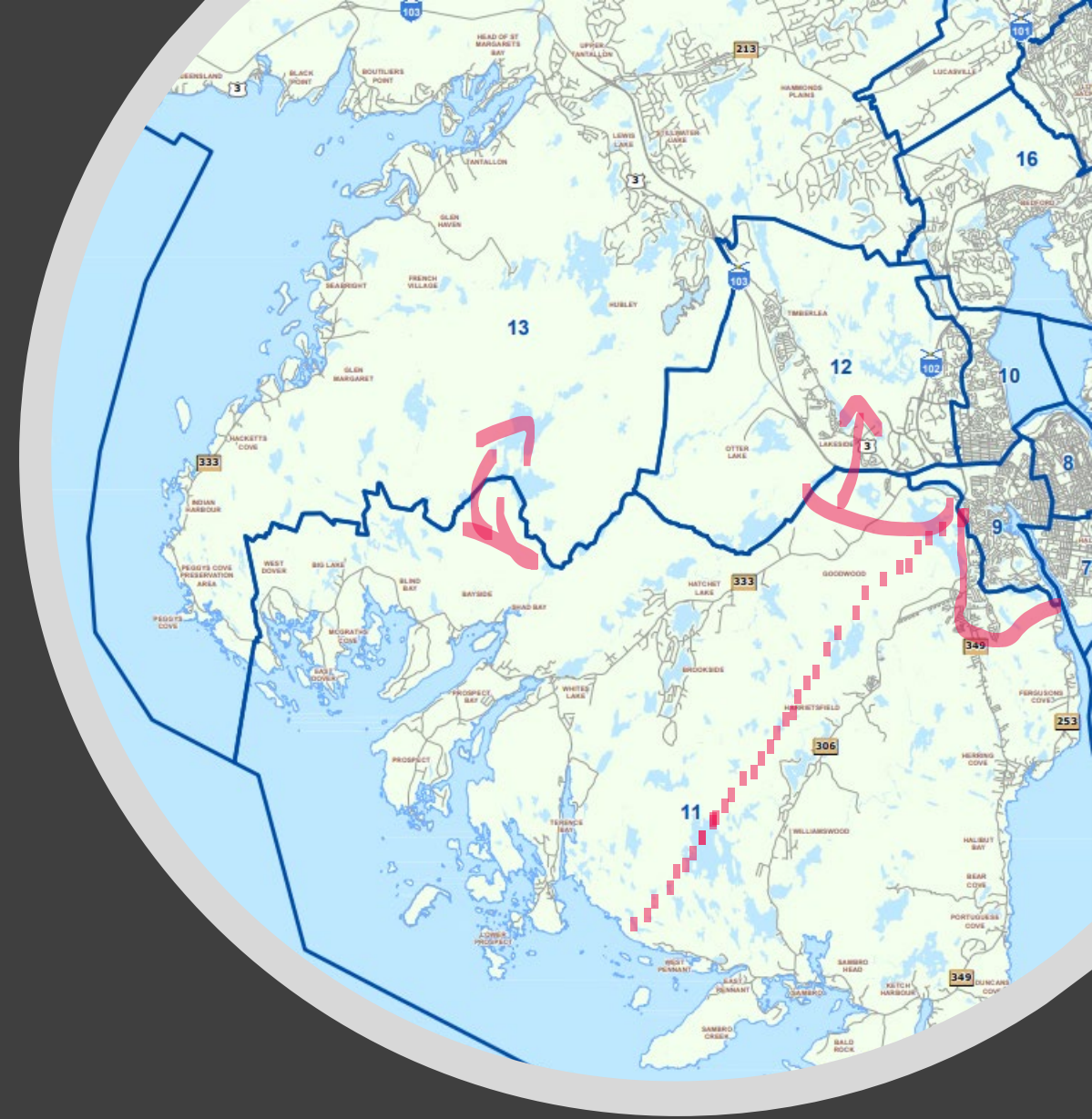
District 10

- District 10 was felt to include only part of Clayton Park, and there were suggestions to **move the western boundary to the 102 highway, to include Clayton Park West in the same district.**
- The community of **Fairview is distinct** in its needs and community makeup from Clayton Park.
- **Joseph Howe Drive** is felt to be a good, natural boundary at present.
- On the northern side of the district, **Kearney Lake is divided between two districts, and the Larry Uteck community nearby** is felt to be a distinct community from Clayton Park, and more similar to nearby areas currently in district 16.
- **Growth in Seton Ridge** should be considered for the future.
- The **Windsor Street Exchange** is a special area of concern with development, traffic, and having three districts converge, which is felt to potentially be a positive.



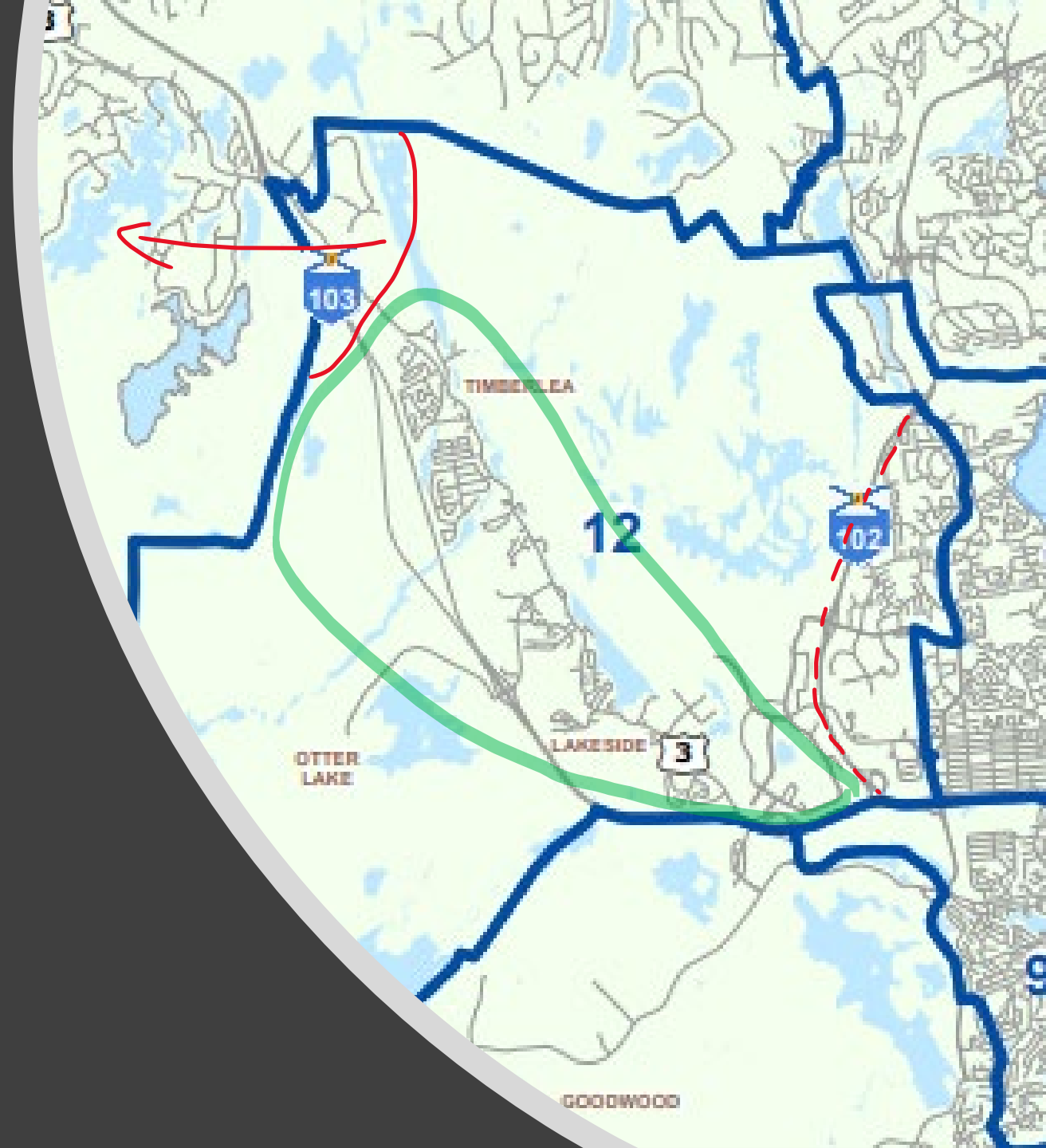
District 11

- The Sambro loop and Prospect communities are very different from each other. Prospect and the areas around Peggy's Cove are more similar to the communities along the 333 in terms of needs (provincial roads, RCMP, septic etc.)
- It would be beneficial to have all of Spryfield in one district. Now it is divided between districts 9 and 11.
- Williams Lake Road is a main connector road, and should either entirely be in district 11 or 9.
- Newer development in Beechville should be included in district 12, not 11.
- The more urban areas (such as Long Lake Village subdivision) should be part of district 9.



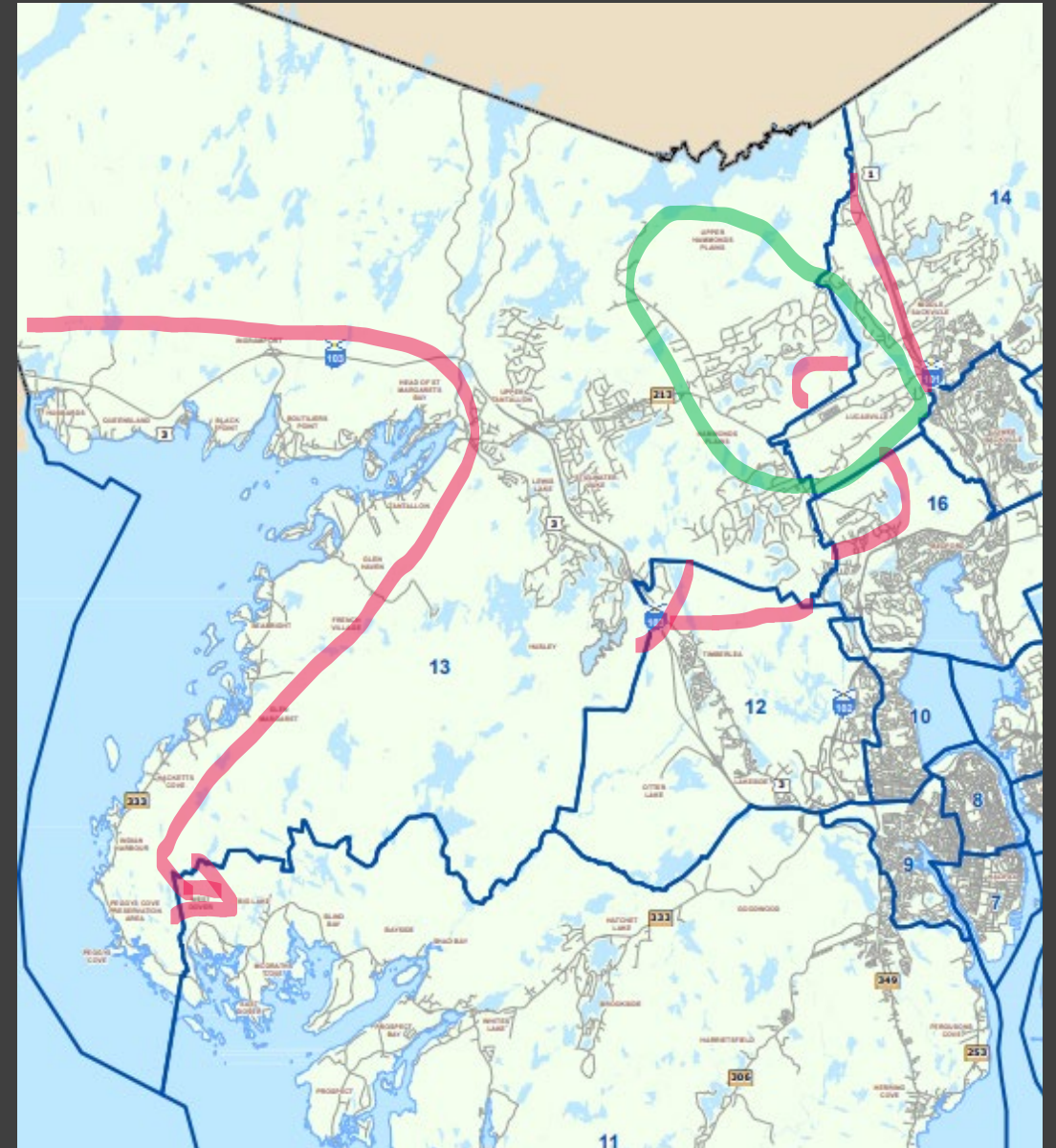
District 12

- North of Goldeneye Drive, there are some houses that are on septic / well that are more rural and have more in common with Hubley.
- The Timberlea, Lakeside Beechville area is a common community, and different than Clayton Park. BLT has RCMP, sanded roads, single family homes, whereas Clayton Park is more condos, salted roads, and services by HRP. Needs are different.



District 13

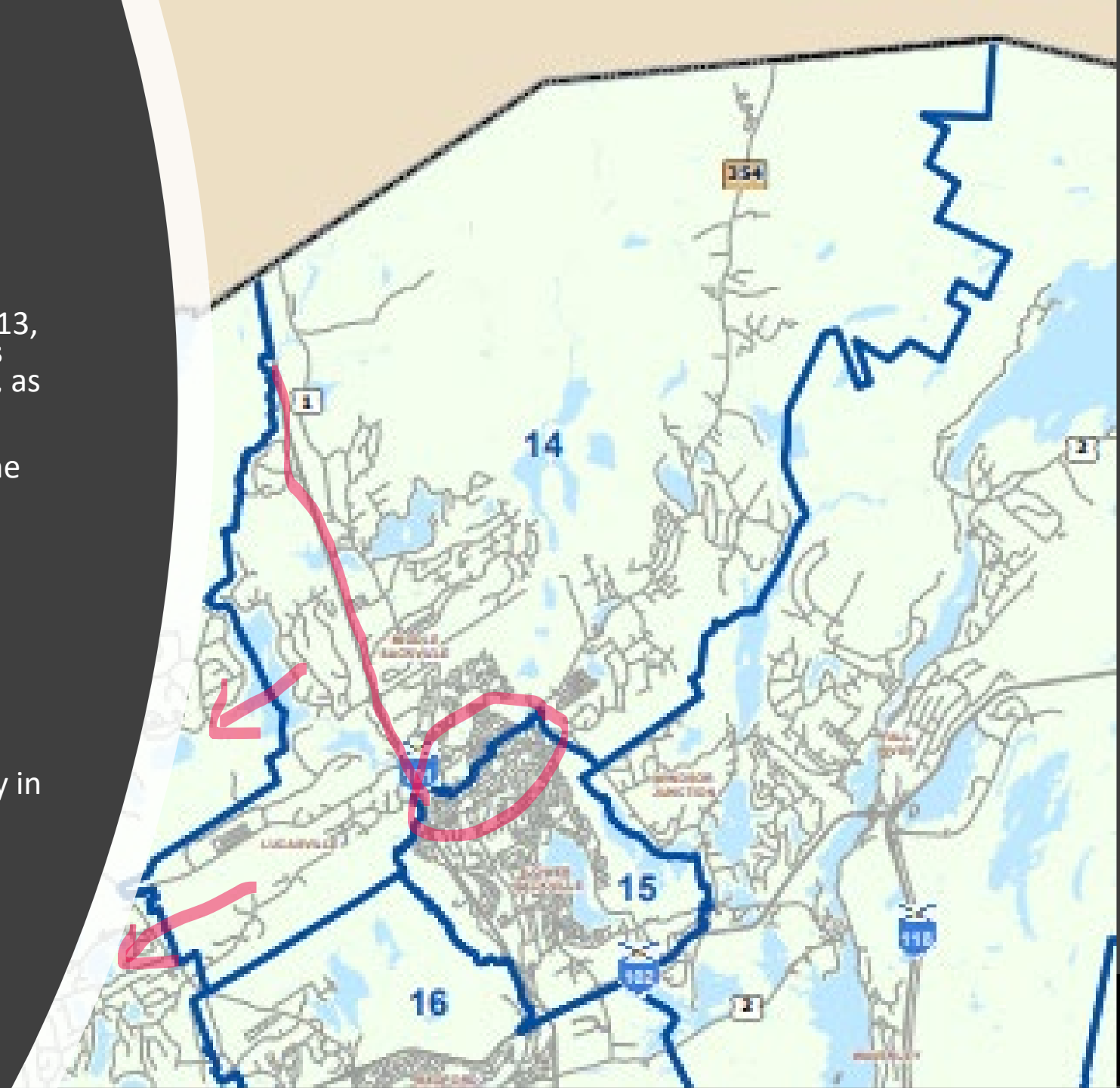
- The district includes very rural areas as well as fast-growing, dense suburban areas, and some key changes are felt to be warranted.
- **The historic Black Heritage communities of Upper Hammonds Plains and Lucasville** should not be divided (as they are now), given their historic, economic and community connections.
- **White Hills Run and Indigo Shores** should be included in the same district.
- Growth is expected in Kingswood North, and Kingswood South should be part of the same district.
- **Brookline and Broad Street** – lots of dense housing and population increase. That should stay with the more urban district on that side of Larry Uteck.
- **Hubley East** should be part of the more rural part of the district – it's an area on septic and similar needs as more rural areas (not Timberlea).
- **Peggy's Cove and Prospect** have historically been one district, sharing a shoreline, fishing etc. All of the 33 and out towards Hubbards could be considered one district – provincial roads, similar community needs.
- **Growth is happening between Glen Arbour and Lucasville** that should be considered (not included on the current district map).



District 14

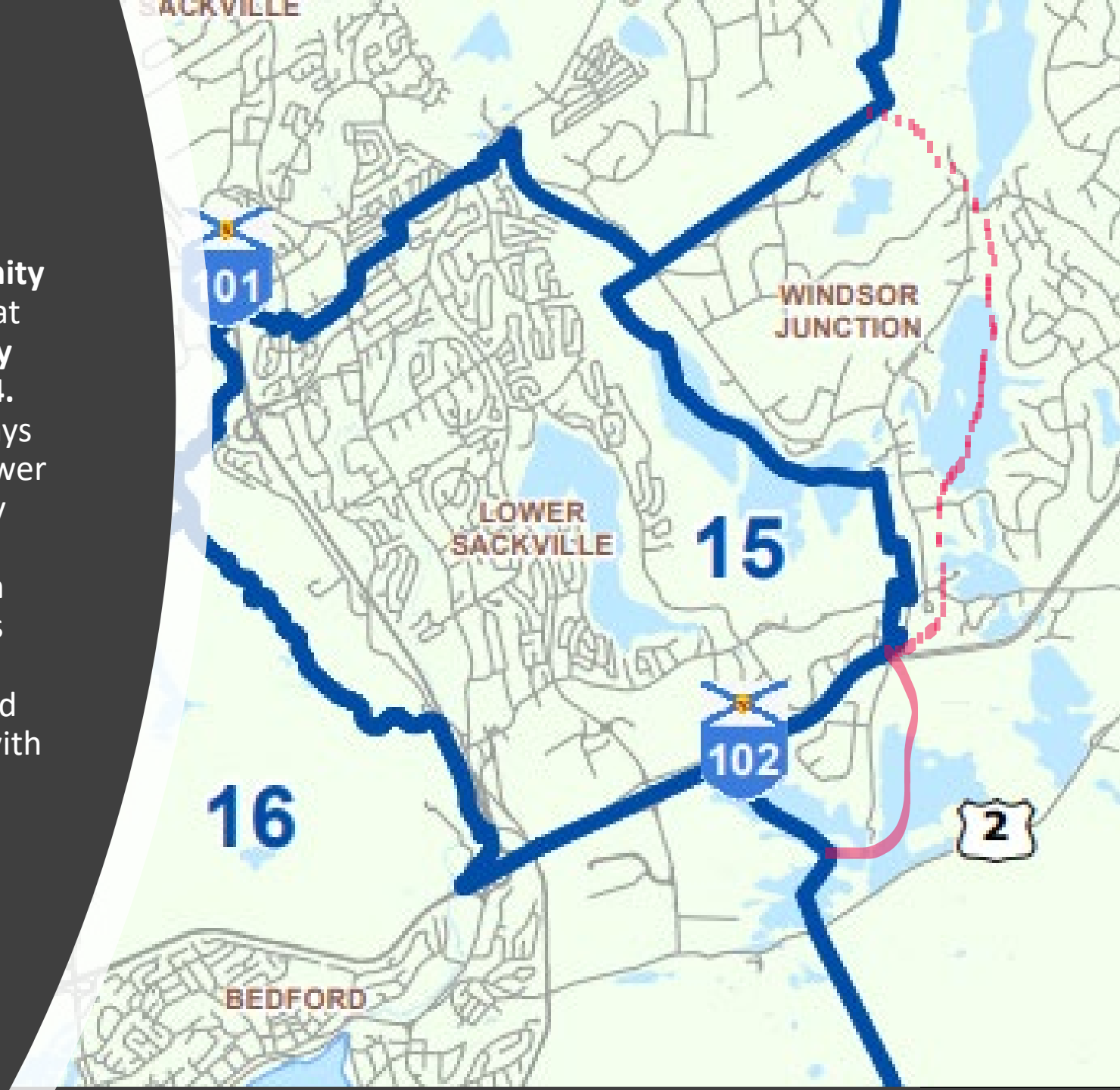
Feedback on district 14 included the following suggestions:

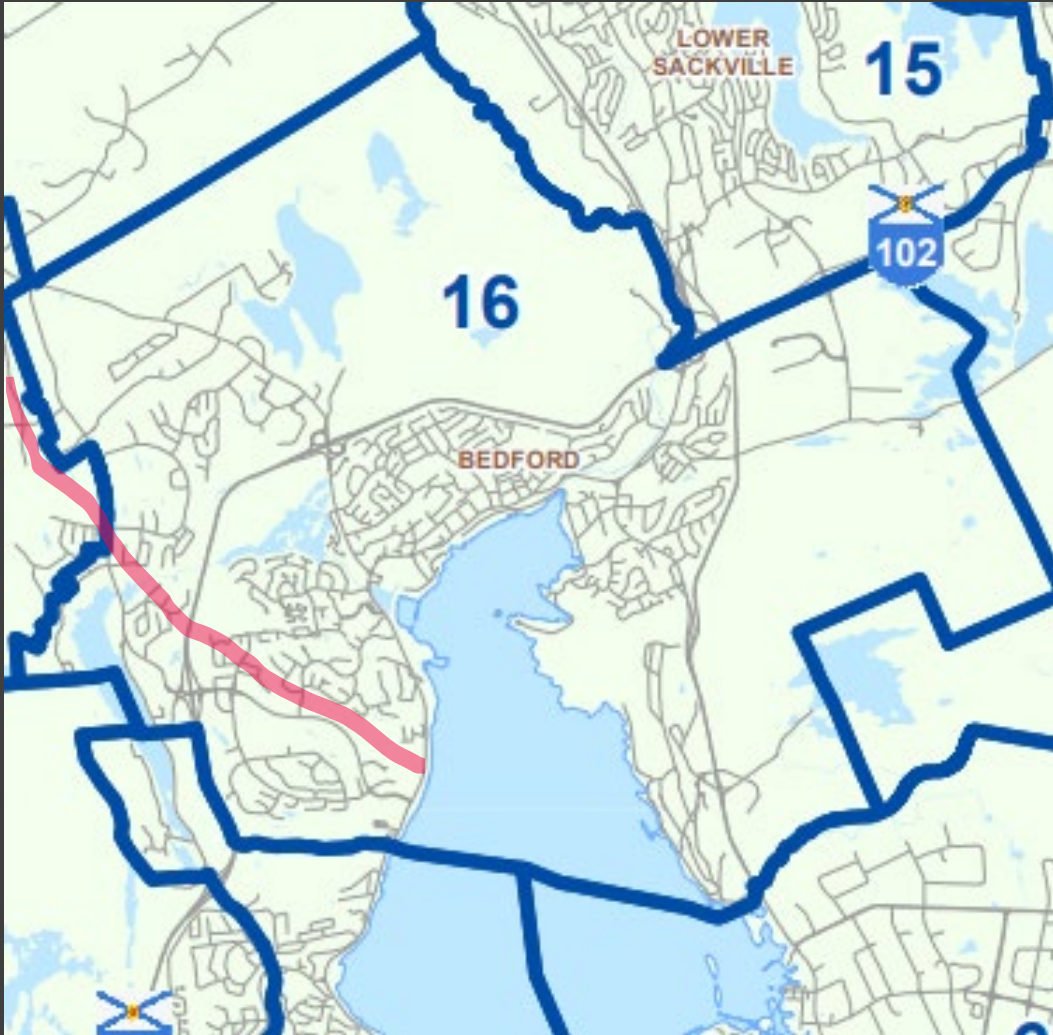
- In agreement with feedback heard in district 13, the communities of **Upper Hammonds Plains and Lucasville should be in the same district**, as historic communities of colour with common interests.
- Consistent with feedback about district 13, the **101 highway is felt to be a natural division**.
- **Beaverbank is seeing real development and growth** that should be considered for the future.
- **Beaverbank and Middle Sackville** are similar communities that could be grouped.
- The area around **McCabe Lake and Indigo Shores** is more a part of **Hammonds Plains (Voyageur Way)** than Sackville.
- On the south side of the district, there is a section of Beaverbank Road that is technically in district 15, but residents are actually in Beaverbank.
- There were felt to be some commonalities between district 15 and 14.



District 15

- District 15 is felt to be a cohesive community as it currently stands, though some felt that there are commonalities in the community with those areas to the north in district 14.
- The boundaries of the 101 and 102 highways are felt to be natural dividing lines, and Lower Sackville is felt to be a separate community from Bedford.
- The southeast corner of the district has an area (Lakeview) that should be included as part of the district.
- Windsor Junction, while geographically tied to the area, is not a cohesive community with Lower Sackville.





District 16

- The district is felt to work well as it now stands.
- Bedford West is a rapidly growing area so recognition that change may be needed. That said, Bedford and Bedford West are communities that share infrastructure and amenities now.
- Brookline is in practice a continuous community with Bedford, while Starboard and Larry Uteck are distinct communities from Bedford and could be separated.



NARRATIVE RESEARCH

Every insight tells a story.