



November 7, 2002

The Honourable Pierre Boudreault, Q.C.
Chairman
Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Quebec
2525 Daniel-Johnson Blvd.
Laval, Quebec
H7T 1S9

Mr. Chairman :

The Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal wishes to inform you of its reactions to the proposal to revise the federal electoral boundaries for Quebec, made public by you on August 31.

The Board of Trade wishes to commend the fact that, in its proposal, the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Quebec maintains a maximum variance of 5% of the provincial electoral quota in 71 of the 75 federal electoral districts in Quebec. We thus believe that the Commission's proposal upholds an essential democratic principle – that the vote of each constituent should have equal weight.

The Board of Trade is also pleased to note that your proposal respects the demographic weight of the City of Montreal and the Montreal metropolitan area, ensuring them just and equitable representation in the House of Commons. Indeed, although the electoral districts of the island and region of Montreal – of which, according to our calculations, the territory corresponding to the Montreal Metropolitan Community is divided into 39 proposed districts – have populations that are slightly higher than the provincial average – or 2.68% and 1.43% respectively – these variances are acceptable to us since they are well within the 5% limit.

In this respect, we wish to share with the Commission our deep reservations about the maximum variance of 25% between the population of each electoral district and the electoral quota for the province allowed by the *Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act*. The Board of Trade believes that beyond the limit of 5% - the statistical variance generally accepted in the social sciences – the current *Act* provides that the relative weight of any given vote could depend on the district in which it is cast. To avoid such distortions, an amendment to the *Act* appears to us both desirable and necessary. We hope that, when tabling its report, the Commission will bring these concerns to the attention of the House of Commons. In this regard, it is interesting to note that other democracies already do much better than Canada. Australia, for example, which, like Canada, has a population spread unevenly over a very large territory, tolerates a maximum variance of just 10%. Closer to home, in the United States, deviations are less than 5%.

In conclusion, the Board of Trade is pleased overall with the revision of federal electoral boundaries proposed by the Commission and hopes that, throughout this process, it will be able to preserve electoral boundaries that fully respect the vote of every Quebec citizen.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Labonté', written in a cursive style.

Benoit Labonté
President

Copy: The Honourable Donald Boudria, Government house leader