

Reference: Antigonish County Boundary Review – District Boundary Adjustments

Given that these preferences were not contradicted by input through our public consultation session or our consultation with Council through collective and individual interviews, Stantec created district boundary scenarios for eight, ten, and nine members. In view of the strong preference for ten members, we developed three scenarios for a ten-member Council:

- One generated by computer to satisfy the NSUARB's "voter parity" criterion that the number of electors (i.e., eligible voters) in all districts should be within $\pm 10\%$ of the average number of electors in all districts.
- A second with adjustments to contain as much of the municipality's Acadian population in a single district as reasonable.
- A third that sought to satisfy the voter parity criterion with as little change as possible from the current district arrangement (i.e., by moving as few communities as possible between districts).

Proposed districts in all five proposed scenarios (i.e., one each for eight and nine Council members, and three for ten members) satisfied the parity criterion and none required the division of any community within the county defined for the Nova Scotia Civic Address File (NSCAF).

3 Council Decision

Following Stantec's November 28 presentation, Council discussed the boundary options presented. Several Councillors argued strongly that further assessment of scenarios should focus on choices involving ten members. In response to questioning, Stantec agreed that such an approach would be justified considering the strong support for ten members relative to other options. Councillors then discussed a variety of issues related to specific boundaries and the adjustments made to create each option. At the close of discussion, it was moved that Council consider the first electoral district scenario presented for ten council members, which was generated by the GIS utility called Build Balanced Zones without input from Stantec beyond incorporation of the voter parity criterion, and the third, which reflected the minimum number of changes to bring the current district arrangement within the parity standard.

The motion was put as follows and passed:

The Committee recommends that Municipal Council approves taking Scenario 1, 10 Districts with Minimum Variance and Scenario 3, 10 Districts with Minimum Change, forward to the second phase of public consultation for the Boundary Review, subject to further refinement to incorporate the suggestions of the Committee.

4 District Boundary Adjustments

Councillors' comments on boundary adjustments focused on Heatherton and Pomquet. Several Councillors argued that specific surrounding communities were connected to each of the two larger centres. In the case of Heatherton, Meadow Green, Black Avon, Frasers Grant, Summerside, Bayfield, and Paqtnkek were identified as related communities. Councillors did not specifically list communities considered to be

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connected with Pomquet but did note, as Stantec was aware, that Pomquet is the primary Acadian community within the county. The communities that appear to be most closely related to Pomquet are Monk's Head, Upper Pomquet, Dagger Woods, and Taylor Road. Both Scenario 1 and Scenario 3 put Heatherton and Pomquet together in proposed District 7 with several of the communities considered to be linked to Heatherton in District 10 to the south.

Antigonish County staff worked with Stantec to address these issues through rearrangement of Scenario 3 to put Pomquet and Heatherton into separate districts. In the revised arrangement suggested by County staff, Pomquet is in proposed District 5, which roughly corresponds to proposed District 7 in the previous version of Scenario 3 and Heatherton is now in proposed District 7, which covers most of the area of previous District 10.

While the change resolves the concerns with representing the communities of interest associated with Pomquet and Heatherton, moving the two relatively large communities interfered with voter parity. Further adjustments to other districts, several of which involved dividing NSCAF communities re-established balance among the proposed districts. Most notably, the addition of Heatherton and the related community of Pomquet Forks, which have 257 electors between them, to proposed District 7 required the removal of most of the community of St. Andrews (316 electors) to proposed District 6. The addition of St. Andrews to District 6 was then balanced by shifting roughly half of the Lower South River community (410) to proposed District 5, which is centred on Pomquet, and Greenwold (319) to proposed District 10, which borders the eastern limits of the Town of Antigonish.

The addition of Greenwold to District 10, furthermore, allowed us to move Lanark (150) and Harbour Centre (90) to proposed District 2. We then shifted Lakevale (131) and Big Marsh (35) from proposed District 2 to proposed District 1 and moved Clydesdale (200) from proposed District 1 to proposed District 4. Brierly Brook (223) was also added to proposed District 4 from proposed District 2. The additions to proposed District 4 were balanced by the removal of much of West River and all of Salt Springs (131). Although 431 of 712 electors in West River were retained in proposed District 4, 106 were shifted to proposed District 6 and 201 to proposed District 3.

To the east of Pomquet and Heatherton, a small portion of Heatherton north to the Trans-Canada Highway (44 electors) was moved to proposed District 8 along with the Paqtnkek Reserve (246) and the community of Summerside (78). This allowed us to move the communities of Mattie Settlement (45) and Grosvenor (17) from proposed District 8 to proposed District 9, where they are combined with communities to which County staff suggested they are better connected.

The initial separation of Pomquet and Heatherton clearly led to a domino effect on other proposed districts, which we normally find when larger adjustments are made to boundary scenarios. The rearrangement, which was largely devised by County staff rather than Stantec, nevertheless, has several positive features. Most notably, proposed Districts 4, 6, and 10 abutting the Town of Antigonish are more clearly suburban in character. Concentrating the suburban population in those districts has the further effect of reinforcing the rural character of Districts 1, 2, and 3, which form the balance of the western part of the municipality.

Although variances are larger than with the previous Scenario 3 arrangement, with both proposed Districts 6 and 7 are 9.1% short of the average, all ten proposed districts are within $\pm 10\%$ of the average number of electors for all districts. The revised scenario adheres to the voter parity criterion and should raise no issues for the NSUARB. The communities of St. Andrews, Lower South River, and West River were all divided to

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create the revised scenario. Careful consideration was given to making divisions within the communities to ensure comprehensible boundaries.

5 Recommendation

We are submitting Scenario 1 as previously presented and a revised Scenario 3 labelled, respectively, as Options A and B in **Appendix 1**. Both scenarios provide for ten electoral districts meeting the $\pm 10\%$ parity criterion emphasized by the NSUARB. Proposed electoral districts are generally constructed of NSCAF communities although several communities were divided to create the boundaries now proposed for Option B. The latter scenario can no longer be described as involving minimum changes to the Municipality's current boundary framework. It reflects, instead, adjustments to current districts aligned with Council and staff perceptions of related communities within the county.

It is our recommendation that:

Municipal Council approve taking Options A and B as presented in **Appendix 1** forward to the second phase of public consultation for the Electoral Boundary Review process.

The scenarios are not final. They will be presented to the public as a choice but with the opportunity to comment on their features and suggest changes. With the approval of Council, Stantec will post a second online survey that will present the options and ask respondents to indicate their preference. Additional questions will provide the opportunity for survey respondents to raise issues that they perceive with boundaries, first dealing with the district in which they reside and then with other districts. Respondents will also be encouraged to offer alternatives.

We will also be conducting three public meetings across the county area at which we will present the scenarios and solicit similar input. Stantec will take this consultation into account in considering potential revisions to the boundaries before returning to Council for a decision. Satisfaction of the voter parity criterion will be a leading consideration at all points; however, absolute adherence is not essential so long as any substantial variation from the standard can be explained and justified to the NSUARB.

Respectfully,

STANTEC CONSULTING LTD.



John Heseltine LPP MCIP

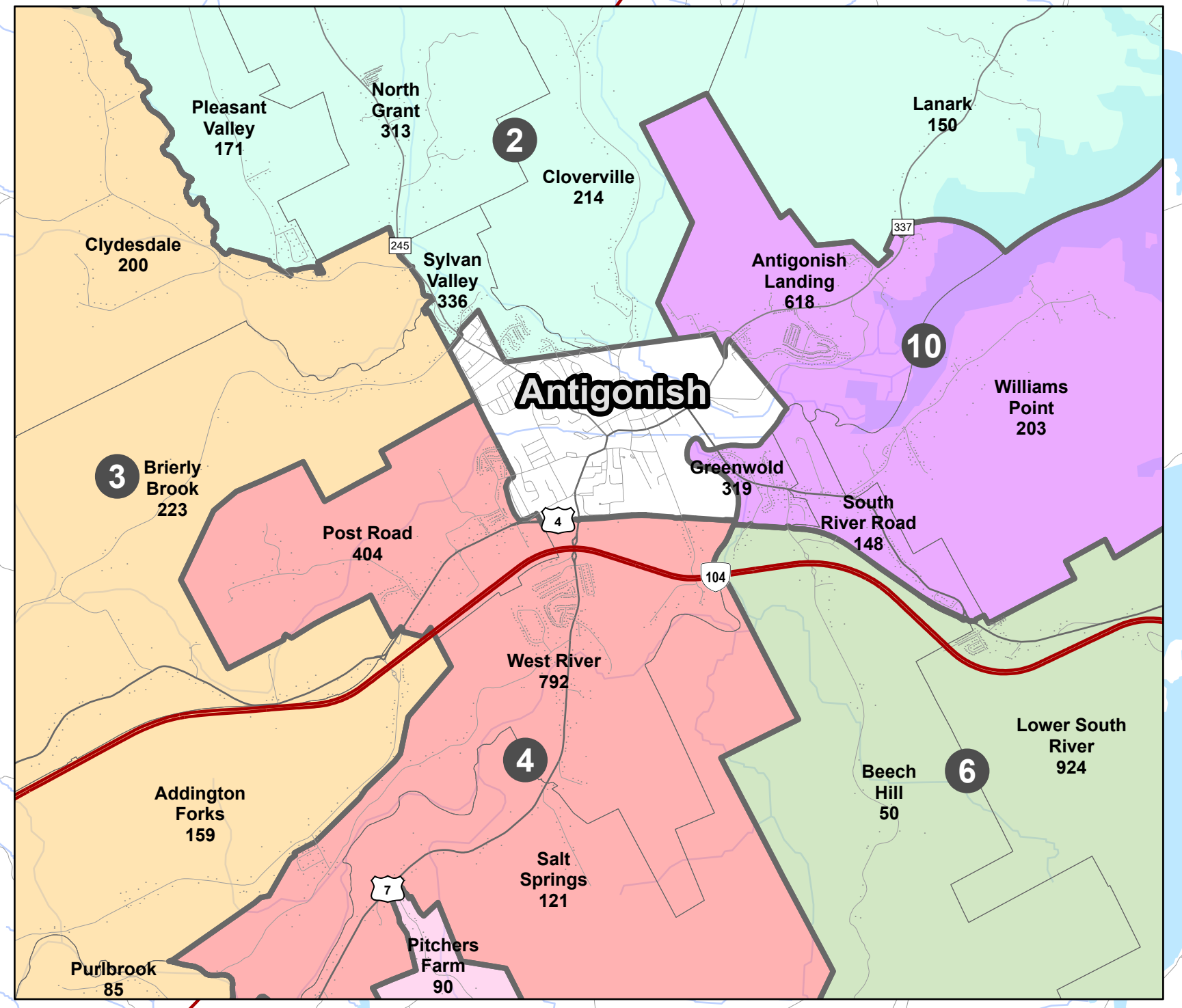
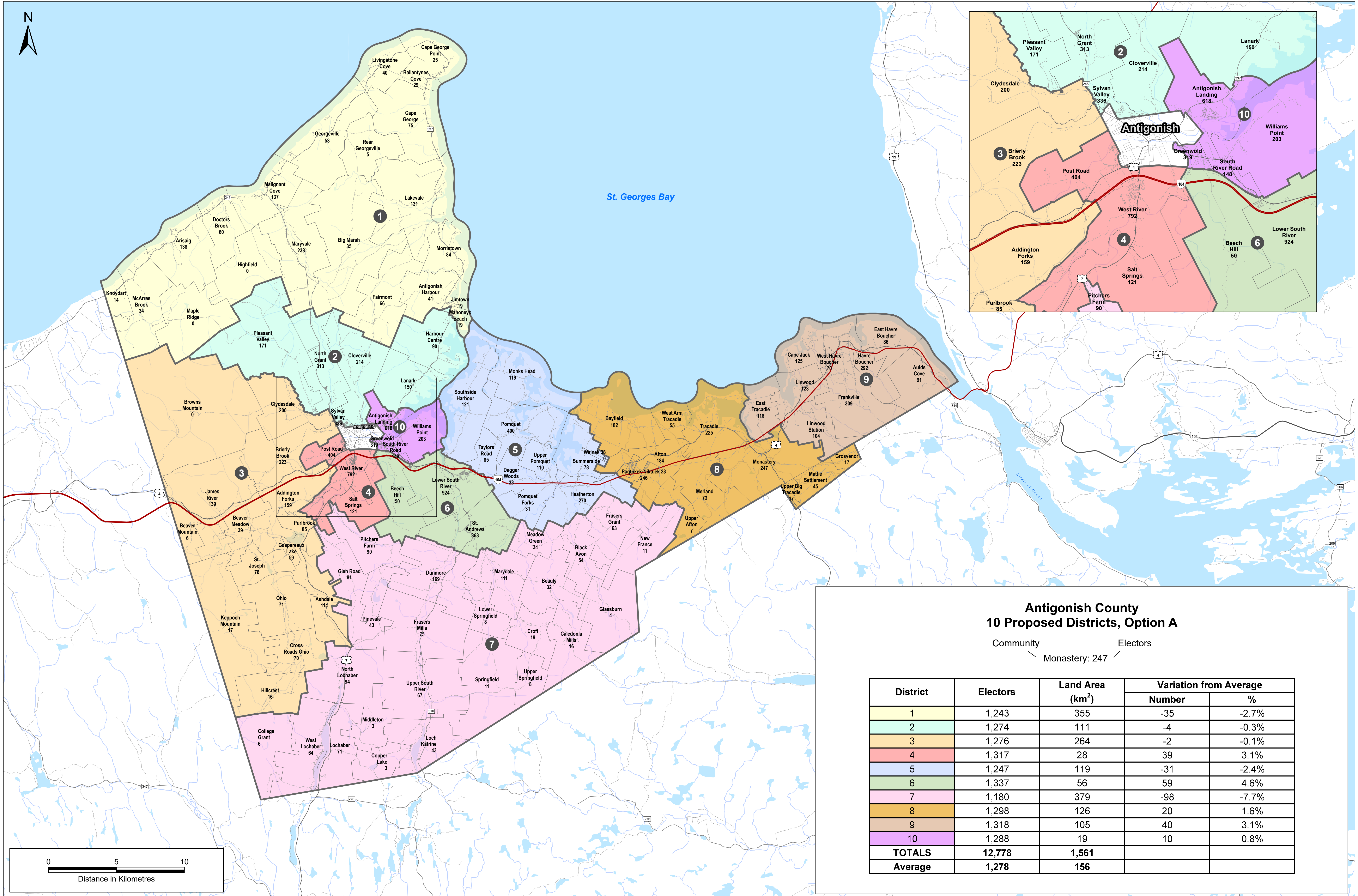
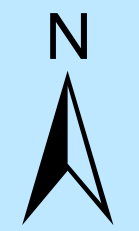
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Attachment: **Appendix 1 Proposed Boundary Options for Phase 2 Public Consultation**

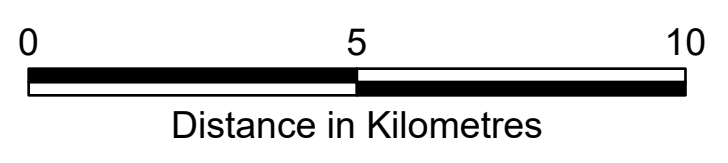
APPENDIX 1 - PROPOSED BOUNDARY OPTIONS FOR PHASE 2 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

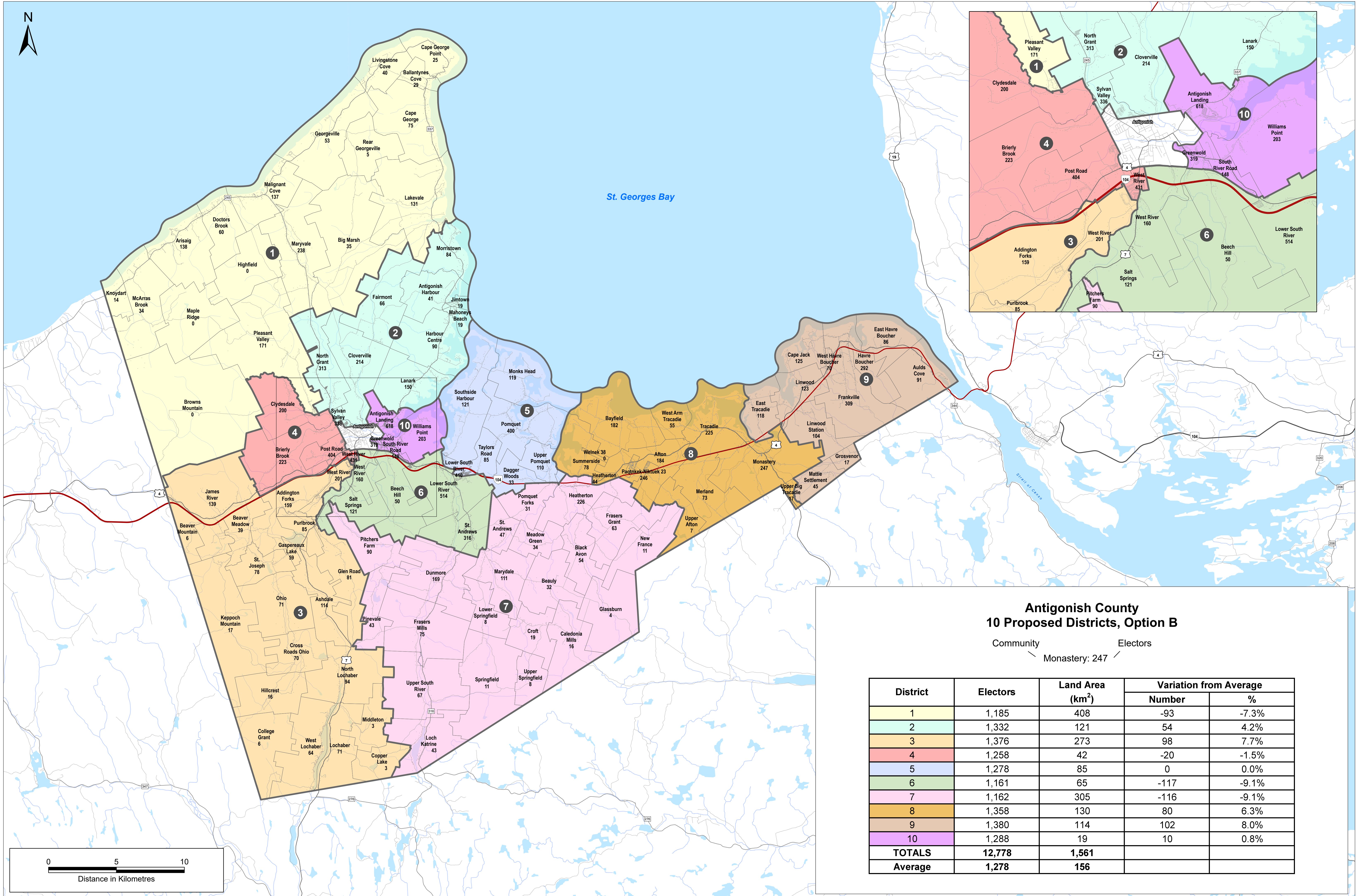


Antigonish County 10 Proposed Districts, Option A

Community
 ↘ Monastery: 247 ↙
 Electors

District	Electors	Land Area (km ²)	Variation from Average	
			Number	%
1	1,243	355	-35	-2.7%
2	1,274	111	-4	-0.3%
3	1,276	264	-2	-0.1%
4	1,317	28	39	3.1%
5	1,247	119	-31	-2.4%
6	1,337	56	59	4.6%
7	1,180	379	-98	-7.7%
8	1,298	126	20	1.6%
9	1,318	105	40	3.1%
10	1,288	19	10	0.8%
TOTALS	12,778	1,561		
Average	1,278	156		





Antigonish County 10 Proposed Districts, Option B

Community Electors
 ↘ ↙
 Monastery: 247

District	Electors	Land Area (km ²)	Variation from Average	
			Number	%
1	1,185	408	-93	-7.3%
2	1,332	121	54	4.2%
3	1,376	273	98	7.7%
4	1,258	42	-20	-1.5%
5	1,278	85	0	0.0%
6	1,161	65	-117	-9.1%
7	1,162	305	-116	-9.1%
8	1,358	130	80	6.3%
9	1,380	114	102	8.0%
10	1,288	19	10	0.8%
TOTALS	12,778	1,561		
Average	1,278	156		

