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Good evening members of the Law Amendments Committee

Thank you for traveling to Shelburne today to allow the residents here an opportunity to speak to our concerns regarding Bill 94

As all are aware, on December 30, 2011 the independent Nova Scotia Electoral Boundaries Commission was appointed by the Select Committee. The intent of this process is to ensure that legislative representation keeps pace with population growth and movement. At its core, this process has the objective of ensuring voter parity while attempting to achieve fair representation. They were also tasked with being respectful of geography, community history and interests, and Nova Scotia's linguistic and cultural diversity.

They were not limited to county or municipal boundaries in the redistribution process.

Clause 2 (d) of the report indicated that notwithstanding concerns about geography, community history and interests, and Nova Scotia's linguistic and cultural diversity, constituencies may not deviate by a variance greater or less than 25 per cent from the average number of electors per constituency;

Those seat entitlements falling between .75 and 1.25 would meet the variance test.

In each of the two (2) interim reports, Shelburne clearly passed the variance test.

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Considering that a literal interpretation of Clause 2 (d) would require the Commission to substantially alter the boundaries of the four constituencies that have been protected for the past twenty years, the Commission decided to set aside the 4 previously protected areas, leaving 48. The first interim report was released May 2012, in which the Commission's recommendation for Shelburne was NO CHANGE.

That recommendation would still see the South Shore with 5 seats with some parts of Digby and Annapolis becoming the losers. It was recommended that Queens be further expanded into Lunenburg West to create the new constituency of Queens-Lunenburg West. The remainder of Lunenburg West to be renamed Lunenburg Centre; Queens also would be expanded into Digby-Annapolis to take in communities that are adjacent to interior communities of Queens;

The report also recommended that Halifax increase by 2 seats.

This report was rejected by the government suggesting they did not follow the terms of reference.

On July 20, 2012 a revised interim report was released where the recommendations included a reduction of ridings from the current 52 to 51 while still adding two new constituencies to Halifax area.

Still this report was recommending NO CHANGE for Shelburne. This time Yarmouth, Argyle and Clare became the losers.

These ridings were displeased and dissatisfied with the recommendations. As a result, the Commission was sent out to Yarmouth where they were met by 2500 people who strongly indicated their displeasure and disagreement with this scenario.

The Commission considered this information and for the third time released a final report on September 24, 2012

Here our problem begins.

Section 2 (e) of this final report indicates that the Commission shall seek the advice, support and hear such presentations and consider such other information in such ways, at such times and in such places as it deems advisable, respecting existing electoral districts and the establishment of new electoral districts, as well as the area, name, representation and implementation of those electoral districts;

Apparently it was not deemed advisable by the Commission to come to Shelburne. At no time were we afforded the opportunity to voice our concerns regarding a proposed boundary change that would see our county split in half merging the west end of our county with Argyle and the east end of our county with Queens County.

Shelburne County has had representation in the Provincial Legislature since 1772, 97 years before Confederation and the residents here are not prepared to see that change now.

It is our opinion that this process has been seriously flawed from the very beginning.

1) Shelburne County shares a unique history, culture and economy which unites east and west but is completely distinct from Queens or Argyle. Within our county, we share fishing zones, health services, economic development plans, etc. and these new boundaries would not reflect this. As well, it is felt that this change would lead to an even further reduction in services in Shelburne County in the coming years.

2) The Commission failed to consult the people of Shelburne County as it did all other areas that would be affected by the recommendation and with all due respect, this LAC meeting is no substitute. ~~In addition and to add insult to injury, there was little advance notice of the meeting as well as choosing an extremely inadequate venue.~~

3) In this latest scenario, Shelburne County would end up collectively with approximately 2/3 of an MLA, 1/3 for each end, each with no connection or similar interest to the other. As well, Shelburne County would never again see an MLA elected from within the county as each end would have a smaller population than the area we would be merged with. To effectively represent a constituency, we believe that person must not only be from the area but as well must have a personal knowledge and connection to the area and its residents.

Voter parity

Suggesting that voter parity is achieved simply by giving Halifax more MLA's because they have an increased population

is relative to saying that a person's wage should be the same in an area where the cost of living is double an area with half that cost of living.

The numbers of people who live in any given riding in Halifax proper as compared to the same number in our whole county are likely to be within a 15 minute radius of each other where in Shelburne they would be no less than 2 hours of each other.

The residents as well as the whole of Halifax proper by and large have identical issues within a small geographic region where they could see representation on any issue by 18 or 20 MLA's compared to Shelburne where the population may be less however given the vast geography, the MLA's workload is far greater. Just as an example, in rural NS an MLA will have several volunteer fire departments and service clubs to deal with in their riding, whereas; in Halifax one MLA may have one or none in their riding. Additionally, Fire Departments in Halifax would be paid vs. volunteer in our county where they are often quite dependent on provincial support and often are looking to the MLA for this assistance.

So, in closing, I again suggest that it is very clear that the process was flawed from the start. It is also clear that from the start the current government not only did not wish to protect minority or rural ridings but as well would not be satisfied with any recommendation that did not give Halifax more representation. It appears that it does not matter who loses or at whose expense this goal is achieved however achieved it will be.

Therefore; it is our opinion that this report be recognized now by you, the Law Amendments Committee as flawed and

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unacceptable and that you recommend that the province start again from the beginning.

Thank you
Respectfully Submitted,
Karen Mattatall

Mayor for the Town of Shelburne