

Law Amendments Committee Meeting – Shelburne, November 2012  
Councilor Elect - Roy O'Donnell

Because of time constraints, let me get straight to the point of why we are here tonight. The members of the Provincial Boundary Commission were chosen by an all party select committee. The members of this commission knew the terms of reference and by accepting this appointment agreed to adhere to these principals. Also, let me be very clear: The final report of the Boundaries Commission was and is unacceptable to the people of Shelburne County.

Now, for a little more detail:

- Please note that at the beginning of all 23 public meetings held throughout Nova Scotia by the Electoral Boundaries Commission it was reiterated by the chairperson that two fundamental terms of reference were: 1) to consult with the communities affected, and, 2) could not deviate from the 25% variance clause.
- The Boundary Commission held public meetings in the riding of Argyle and Clare prior to the submission of its Interim Report, of May 31st, which recommended no change to the boundaries of Argyle and Clare. This Interim Report was rightly refused by The Attorney General because it did not meet the 25% variance clause. The Boundary Commission's error in this regard was acknowledged by Committee Chairperson Dr. Theresa Macneil in her opening remarks during the public consultation meeting in Annapolis Royal. It is critical to note that in this report, the clear recommendation of "No Change" for Shelburne County is mentioned on three separate occasions.
- In July, the Boundary Commission tabled its Revised Interim Report which now recommends Argyle be joined with Yarmouth and Clare be joined with the remainder of Yarmouth. Again, it is critical to note that in the Revised Interim Report, the clear recommendation of "No Change" for Shelburne County is again mentioned on three separate occasions.
- Then on Sept. 20<sup>th</sup>, without warning or consultation, the people of Shelburne County were BLINDSIDED by the recommendations of the Commission's final report which effectively eliminates the constituency of Shelburne County. Who could have foreseen this outcome? That half of Shelburne County would be given to Argyle, and the other half given to Queens? INCOMPREHENSIBLE!

- I can assure you the people of Shelburne County are outraged and are strongly opposed to this recommendation. Even Mayor Mooney of Yarmouth said that this is far from over and has predicted challenges to the final report. He goes on to say that Argyle's community of interest is Yarmouth not Shelburne. "They come to the hospital here, they shop here, they do their banking here" he said.
- Mr. Chairman, this is no longer a political issue for only one party. This issue transcends party lines, and has compelled lifelong political rivals to put aside their differences and work together to save our constituency and protect the identity of Shelburne County. Yes, Mr. Chairman, we also have an identity, a rich and distinct identity, one that is recognized the World over. We are the home of The United Empire Loyalists, The Black Loyalists, the National Historic Site of Birchtown, we are known for the World Famous Cape Sable Island fishing boat, and Barrington, the Lobster Capital of the World.
- I would like to impress upon you, Mr. Chairman, that to the people of Shelburne, their political riding also forms a fundamental part of their personal identity. In rural Nova Scotia, many people view politics almost like religion. I hope you can appreciate that the complete elimination of the Shelburne County electoral riding would have a profound, negative, impact on the citizens of Shelburne since all of our personal identities are so influenced by our political identities.
- In some ways, and please understand that I mean no disrespect in saying this, but the elimination of our electoral district is almost comparable to moving all of Shelburne's churches of all religious denominations outside of the county and into counties of Queens and Yarmouth. I use this comparison because I think it underlines the ideology here, and the psychological effect on the people of Shelburne who perceive that their political riding is being moved to the counties of Queens and Yarmouth, and along with it, their identity.
- Finally, we have heard the assurances that our School and Health districts, as well as municipal boundaries, would be unaffected by the proposed boundary change. Mr. Chairman, this may very well be true for the present; however we realize that somewhere in the future the boundaries for School and Health Districts and Municipalities will need to be reviewed. When that time comes, do you not think, Mr. Chairman, that those boundaries would not be altered to follow the new electoral boundaries that are being proposed?
- Premier Darrell Dexter said the Boundaries Commission was unfair to our MLA and to the people of Shelburne County. He also said the

citizens of Shelburne County have a legitimate complaint. This decision was made without any consultation.

- Premier Dexter is correct. The Boundaries Commission report is especially unfair to the people of Shelburne County. The Boundary Commission's term of reference 2(e) encourages the commission to consult the public, and the people of Shelburne were simply not consulted. Many other constituencies (at least 23) were consulted prior to the release of the Committee's final report, and on several instances Dr. Teresa MacNeil, Boundaries Commission Chairperson, and Dr. Colin Dodds, Boundaries Commission Vice Chairman, made it clear in their opening remarks that the committee was obligated to consult with the effected constituencies.
- It is important to note that both the Interim report and the Revised Interim Report were clear in their recommendation for the constituency of Shelburne County: **NO CHANGE**. In fact the term "No Change" for Shelburne County was clearly stated 6 times in these two reports, and I can only assume this is why the commission did not make efforts to schedule a Shelburne County meeting.
- But now, with the benefit of hindsight, we can see that we were lulled into a false sense of security with the "No Change" recommendations stated in the two initial Boundary reports. Meanwhile, at the second Bridgewater meeting, the Boundary Commission was intently listening to the political armchair experts in attendance. They were: Lunenburg Liberal Mark Furey, Liberal hopeful and councilor of Queens municipality, formerly of Cape Sable Island, Sheldon Brannen, former Liberal MLA Lee Nauss of Lunenburg Municipality, and former Tory MLA of Lunenburg West, Carolyn Boliver Getson, and they all had the same agenda, to cowardly plot the dismemberment of Shelburne County. What a terrible, mean-spirited and dastardly thing to do. Could their motivation be, Mr. Chairman, that this is one of the safest NDP ridings in the region? I personally applaud MLA Vicky Conrad for noting, at this same meeting, that more common interests exist between Queens and Lunenburg Counties, and also noting that the proposed changes for Shelburne would likely be problematic for the people of Shelburne County. Nevertheless, the Committee proceeded with crafting a Final Report which sacrifices the riding of Shelburne County and appeases the political armchair experts who attended the second Bridgewater meeting. Shame on them.
- To summarize: I submit that the Boundaries Commissions First Interim Report of May 31<sup>st</sup> failed to meet term of reference 2d which states that no riding can have a population variance of more or less than 25%, and therefore it was unacceptable. I further submit that

the Final Report of September 24<sup>th</sup> failed to meet term of reference 2e which required public consultation, and therefore it is also unacceptable. Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee, it is my opinion that the Revised Interim Report of July 20<sup>th</sup> is the only report which satisfies all the terms of reference as set out by the All Party Select Committee. In my opinion, this is the **only legitimate report** presented by the Boundaries Commission, and therefore is the **only report** that should be considered. Please note that the Revised Interim Report clearly states "No Change" for Shelburne County.

- It is not my nature to make boundary recommendations that are detrimental to my neighboring ridings. However, this is exactly what the Liberal's and Tory's were doing in the second Bridgewater Boundaries Commission meeting. While the people of Shelburne were feeling secure with the recommendations of "No Change" in the first two Boundary Commission reports, others with political agendas were plotting boundary alternatives in our absence which would result in our very destruction. This simply cannot be allowed to stand.
- **So there you have it.** Mr. Chairman, I have clearly stated the reasons and the facts supporting my argument that the Revised Interim Report of July 20<sup>th</sup>, joining Argyle with Yarmouth and Clare with the remainder of Yarmouth, is the only one which meets all the Boundary Commissions terms of reference and is **therefore the only one that should be accepted by the Law Amendments Committee.** Premier Dexter was quoted as saying that past governments have made minor changes to the findings of the electoral boundaries commission but he wasn't certain that more significant changes are possible. I'd like to refer the Law Amendments Committee to the Prince Edward Island Electoral Boundaries Commission of 2003/2004, and the final result in 2006, which sets a precedent that **significant change to**, or **rejection of**, a boundary commission report is indeed possible. \_
- Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen of the Law Amendments Committee, thank you for coming to Shelburne.

→ COMMISSIONS → ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES →

## The Electoral Boundaries Commission (2003-04)

### Mandate:

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The \_\_\_\_\_ was established by Order-in-Council No. EC2003-756 on December 23, 2003. The membership was established on January 5, 2004 when the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly made appointments to the Commission. The Commission was instructed to report to the Legislative Assembly within six months however, on May 18, 2004, Executive Council granted the Commission a three-month extension.

The Commission's mandate, as outlined in the Order-in-Council, was to "review the provisions of the Election Act and the existing provincial electoral boundaries and the distribution of representation."

### Commissioners

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The three members appointed to the Commission were:

- Honourable Justice John A. McQuaid, Stratford, Chair
- Roberta Hubley, Montague, Commissioner
- John K. Mitchell, Q.C., Charlottetown, Commissioner

### Commission's Report

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June 30, 2004 - The Electoral Boundaries Commission released its \_\_\_\_\_ to the public followed by four public hearings to receive input on the proposals contained in the report.

October 5, 2004 - The Electoral Boundaries Commission submitted its \_\_\_\_\_ to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly.

#### COMMISSIONS

##### Electoral Boundaries

 2004
 

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### Related Electoral Boundary Events:

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December 8, 2005 - Special Committee of the Legislative Assembly on Electoral Boundaries was appointed Committee consisted of 4 Government Members - Members of the PC party

May 4, 2006 - Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries reported to the Legislative Assembly that the Electoral Boundaries Commission report should be rejected. The Assembly voted to reject the Electoral Boundaries Commission's Final Report.

May 4, 2006 - Special Committee of the Legislative Assembly on Electoral Boundaries instructs Elections P.E.I. to design a new electoral map and the

#### REFERENCE MATERIAL

boundaries be re-distributed so as to balance, as far as practicable, community concerns as expressed during the public consultations of y our committee with voter parity. The proposed map would be presented to the Legislative Assembly in the form of a Bill.

June 9, 2006 - The Elections P.E.I. Report, proposing revised electoral boundaries was delivered to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly.

June 28, 2006 - Legislature Assembly opens and debates the Elections P.E.I. proposed map and the Assembly rejects the Elections P.E.I. proposed map.

June 28, 2006 - An amendment is tabled by Mr. Cletus Dunn, MLA recommending changes to the Electoral Boundaries Act including new electoral districts. Legislative Assembly approves amendments to the Electoral Boundaries Act with the Dunn map becomes the new electoral boundaries for Prince Edward Island.

**DEVELOPERS**