

I am Sherm Embree, a private citizen of East Sable River in rural Shelburne County. Until 30 October 2012 I was the Warden of the Municipality of the District of Shelburne but chose not to reoffer in the recent municipal elections. I feel I still have a strong sense of the needs and desires of the community and represent the views of The Municipality of the District of Shelburne. It has a population of 4500 people.

The community rejects the most recent recommendations of the Electoral Boundary Commission to split Shelburne County.

The Electoral Commission examined the status quo and three faulty options. Those three options were:

1. To protect minority constituencies with small populations;
2. To split Yarmouth Town to augment minority constituencies; and
3. To split Shelburne County to augment minority constituencies.

All of these options have significant deficiencies. These three recommendations were presented in order of priority by an independent commission with the Shelburne split being the last and thus least recommended of the three. Significantly, Shelburne County was not even consulted on the latest recommendation. We are faced with three rejected recommendations and the status quo.

The major deficiency is the need to keep together "communities of interest" within a 25% variance. A minority population is one of many communities of interest. We need to identify those communities of interest that need electoral recognition and the extent to which we will give them electoral recognition.

We need a fifth option which eliminates the break-up of communities of interest and does not distort electoral recognition excessively, unlike the earlier recommendations. That fault free popular fifth option is unlikely to be found. However, a fifth option of combining Argyle and Clare should be examined to determine if it would minimize the faults evident in the previous options.

Failing to find another better option we need to either:

- Stick with the status quo, or,
- Find a way ahead to pick the least bad among bad recommendations.

Perhaps that way ahead among the current bad options means:

- A free vote in the legislature or,
- A free preferential vote in the legislature.

Both these methods of choosing may be procedurally difficult, and still leave us with choosing among bad options. Thus a useful way ahead may be - to amend the legislation to stay with the status

quo OR defer the legislation until examination of further options (perhaps by means of a new electoral boundary commission report).

Decisions on electoral boundaries are decisions that must be based on reason, not popularity during public meetings, nor on gerrymandering of constituency boundaries to favour one political party. The Electoral Commission avoided the trap of gerrymandering. It did not avoid the popularity trap and it had difficulty with its reasoning to arrive at the recommendations. These are more good reasons to stick with the status quo for the next few years and ask for other options or a new Electoral Commission report.

Because of the difficulties with the recommendations of the Electoral Boundary Commission and the unlikelihood of finding a further suitable option we should remain with the status quo in SW Nova constituencies. Sticking with the status quo would also be the most popular of any option presented.

A further reason to remain with the status quo in SW Nova constituencies is that the suffering that would result from dividing communities is not worth the gain of reducing the legislature from 52 to 51 MLAs.

Finally and specifically about Shelburne County, we do not share a community of interest with Queen's. Among many differences:

- Shelburne's economy focuses on the fishery while Queens focuses on the forestry;
- Shelburne and Queens do not share the same regional library board;
- Shelburne and Queens do not share the same Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal facilities;
- Shelburne and Queens do not share the same Economic Development bodies;
- Shelburne and Queens do not share the same Regional School Boards; and
- Shelburne and Queens do not share the same District Health Authorities.

The final report of the Electoral Boundary Commission did not recognize these communities of interest that all these other organizations already recognize. In their haste to submit a final report the Commission failed to consult with the residents of Shelburne County. It also failed to augment minority constituencies without dividing other important communities of interest and minority groups. For all these organizational reasons Shelburne County should not be split and the legislation amended to reflect the status quo.

In conclusion, we thank you for giving us a chance to have our say. We trust that you will listen to us just as the Electoral Commission listened to others. We trust that you will amend the legislation.

Our community of interest is Shelburne County. I present to you the public view that the best electoral boundary option for Shelburne County and SW Nova is the status quo. We reject the most recent recommendations of the NS Electoral Boundaries Commission put forward in this legislation. We strongly suggest that your way ahead is to examine other options, defer any legislative changes and remain with the status quo.