

Honourable Chairperson, Committee Members, Ladies and Gentlemen my name is Roger Taylor. I am the Warden of the Municipality of Shelburne. On behalf of the residents of the Municipality of Shelburne, I would like to thank you for hosting these hearings so that we may provide input on the electoral boundary change issue.

I will start by saying that the Municipality of Shelburne concurs with the comments and recommendations made by the former Warden, Sherm Embree. His remarks were reflected in a letter to the Premier of Nova Scotia dated October 18, 2012 from the Municipality of Shelburne. This letter was also sent to the Honourable Stephen McNeil and the Honourable Jamie Baille.

I would like to add a couple additional observations.

First, like other minorities in the Province, Shelburne County is a minority voice struggling to get some attention. Two of our most important services, namely education and health care are administered from Yarmouth by Yarmouth residents. Until recently, we were a minority voice in the Southwest Shore Development Agency (SWSDA). Because of our minority position, that arrangement cost the citizens of Shelburne County hundreds of thousands of dollars.

If Shelburne County is split and aligned with two new electoral districts, we will become an even greater minority voice in the Province. The individual voice of Shelburne County would

cease to exist. It would also be less likely to have a candidate elected from Shelburne County due to the minority position of the residents of Shelburne County in the greater electoral district.

My second point pertains to the recent Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities conference held in Sept 2012. The theme of this conference focused on greater co-operation among municipalities, including greater regional and shared services and generally creating more efficient municipal structures. Keeping with this theme, John Leefe, former Mayor of the Region of Queens, presented a very compelling story of a successful amalgamation. Further, the Towns Task Force Recommendations envisions a need for greater co-operation among municipalities. It seems clear that the Provincial Gov't recognizes this need for greater co-operation; however, I believe if Shelburne County is split into two districts, it will go against this provincial agenda for greater co-operation.

It has been said before at the Barrington meeting, but it is worth repeating, "Shelburne County is a marriage!" There is an opportunity for this marriage to become closer in the best interests of the citizens and the Province. This will be very difficult if the county is split into two districts; therefore, I also request the status quo. Please, do not split Shelburne County! Thank you.



# The Municipality of the District of Shelburne

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October 18, 2012

The Honourable Darrell Dexter  
Premier of Nova Scotia  
P.O. Box 726  
Halifax, NS  
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Dear Premier Dexter:

As you are no doubt aware, the Nova Scotia Electoral Boundaries Commission issued its third and final report on September 24, 2012. The recommendations contained in this report will be introduced as legislation in the Legislature in late October, and the Report recommends proclamation by January 1, 2013.

The Municipality of the District of Shelburne unequivocally rejects the recommendations with respect to the new boundaries for southwestern Nova Scotia. These recommendations were not presented by the Commission in its previous two reports and we see no evidence of any substantive reasons outlined in the 113 page report to warrant such a drastic and surprising change to the boundaries of the current riding of Shelburne.

It must be stated that the recommendation with respect to the boundaries of Shelburne is a complete surprise and was not recommended by the Commission. It remains to be seen if this was unintended or intentional; however it is highly unusual for a Commission to issue an interim report with sweeping boundary changes, apparently based on the terms of reference, and then issue a final report with completely different substantive changes from the previous reports. Usually, if a commission decides to deviate from an interim report, they revert back to the status quo or something similar.

By recommending substantive changes to our boundaries, with absolutely no relative recommendation in previous reports, the Commission has deprived us of our right to consultation on the very recommendations that eliminate our riding. All communities of interest in previous reports like Yarmouth, Clare, and Argyle had full opportunity to respond to the impact of those recommendations on their communities in first and second rounds of community meetings held by the Commission. Instead of including the splitting of Shelburne, or any change to Shelburne for that matter, in the two interim reports, and giving our communities an opportunity to give the Commission insight on those changes, there is only mention in the final report.

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The Commission itself said in their final report how valuable and important the information obtained from public meetings was to their decision making process for the final report. "...the second round of public hearings also had the positive effect of providing the Commission with new and useful information." The Municipality of Shelburne would argue that while the information may have been useful to the Commission, it would not have been balanced or even relevant to the recommendation of splitting Shelburne, given that our riding was not even mentioned in previous recommendations.

In fact, the final report alludes to the potential bias or lack of balance in the information that they may have received. When referring to low turnouts at meetings the final report says, "We were not surprised by the scant response; we couldn't expect to find high interest in the process of redistributing electoral boundaries if people were unaware of a problem. That is what brought people out in a few communities in the first round, and in *all* locations for the second round." We would agree with the Commission on these points and we would also conclude from these remarks that we have been placed in an unfair position and the Commission has not considered substantive information regarding the recommendation to split Shelburne.

It is unclear to the Municipality of Shelburne whether there were any substantive reasons given in any of the consultations in the context of the Commission's terms of reference that would justify a completely new recommendation to eliminate the riding of Shelburne. In fact, the Final Report dedicates a full section titled "Subsequent Interpretation" to explain in general terms why the Commission changed its mind from the Interim Report to the Final Report. There is no mention of Shelburne. The only reason given by the Commission to date, is that the decision was made based on what was the most popular. "We were impressed by the high level of participation in those meetings and the significant volume of correspondence we received. The Final Report takes into account, to the extent possible, this very substantial amount of public response," There is no other evidence in the Report that substantiates the recommendation to eliminate Shelburne. We believe the Commission should not be making decisions based on popularity seen in a couple of public meetings.

Further, there is no evidence that any of the interventions from the public recommended the elimination of the riding of Shelburne. The report makes no mention of this and only says that Argyle, Clare and Yarmouth did not want previous recommendations and wanted status quo, not the elimination of Shelburne. "The Revised Interim Report left open the manner in which the boundaries would change in three of the region's electoral districts: Clare, Yarmouth, and Argyle. The Revised Interim Report....proposed two of those ways... These were soundly rejected through the Commission's public consultation process. The remaining alternatives were essentially disregarded in public submissions. In short, all three electoral districts strongly opted to maintain the status

quo." The report makes no mention of Shelburne, and provides no substantive reason for the final recommendation.

The Municipality of Shelburne believes the Commission should have considered the current riding's history and community's interest, two conditions contained in its terms of reference (Section 2c). If that consideration was given, the Commission would have found:

- I. Shelburne and Queens do not share municipalities.
- II. Shelburne and Queens do not share district health authorities.
- III. Shelburne and Queens do not share school boards.
- IV. Shelburne and Queens do not share economic development bodies.
- V. Shelburne and Queens do not share NS Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal facilities.
- VI. Shelburne and Queens do not share libraries.
- VII. Shelburne and Queens are not considered in the same region according to the Commission.
- VIII. Shelburne's economy focuses on fishery and Queens is focused on forestry.

If the Commission were to evaluate the southwestern region according to these terms of reference they would clearly conclude that the second report's recommendations were more sound.

Further, the Commission should also consider "relative parity of voting power" according to its terms of reference. We do not believe that the Commission has done this. The Final Report guarantees that there will not be a Member of the Legislative Assembly from Shelburne County. This is a disadvantage that virtually no other County faces in Nova Scotia. We would consider this a "relative disparity of voting power."

Nova Scotians and residents of Shelburne County will be looking to you to develop a fair and reasoned position with respect to the final report. We urge you and your Party to vote against the recommendations related to southwestern Nova Scotia and consider recommendations offered in previous reports.

Yours very truly,

**The Municipality of the  
District of Shelburne**



Sherman Embree  
Warden

c: Nova Scotia MLAs