

Law Amendments

No Boundary Change!

Harold Andrew Huskison

Mr Chairman, members of the Law amendments committee, and all those against the boundary changes. Good evening. I would first like to thank the members of the committee for coming to Shelburne County. If you ever get the chance to come down and visit us here you should. We are a nice tight knit community that shares many beliefs and values not found in all parts of Nova Scotia, each community down here you find unique in their own way. I decided to have some words to say to try and save a position once held by my Grandfather for 24 years, the same position my father held for 7 years after him. This issue gets me pretty upset, and down right angry but those feelings won't help when you make your ultimate decision concerning our boundaries. So you will hear many presentations tonight and tomorrow that will provide not only legal, but social, moral, and ethical evidence of why we should not have our boundaries split, and why we deserve our own seat in the legislature.

First and foremost the boundaries commission clearly did not stand to and abide by the terms of reference. Section 2 e most notably wherein they did not consult us as a community prior to having chosen to split us up. You will hear it many times there was no consultation.

Another good argument can also be made for section 2ci which states deviations from parity of voting power may be justified in consideration of; geography, in particular the difficulty in effectively representing a large physical region. Have you seen the new land mass created when adding Shelburne east of Clyde River along with Queens County. We currently have a large land mass where someone can leave Charlesville to see their MLA; if he is in his office in Barrington it's only a 25-30 minute drive, however if it is the wrong day of the week that person may have to drive just under an hour to the office in Shelburne. In comparison, when someone in Halifax goes to see their MLA they can walk through the whole constituency in 15 minutes. Why does the commission insist on allocating more seats to Halifax when an MLA can cover their entire riding in such a short period of time? Also when the

house is in session isn't this where all our MLA's from Nova Scotia are anyways? Seems like a hot spot to see an MLA to me. Not to mention most government agencies that someone would see their MLA about are also in Halifax.

Did the Commission realize that putting more seats in Halifax would mean for less voter percentages? I can tell you it does. Historically Shelburne County has had as low as 60% and as high as 75% voter turn outs since 1993. Halifax only gets 48-52% that's not effective voting.

From the four years I spent studying political science at Acadia University I can tell you that there was not one ounce of democracy present when a group takes seats from rural areas and protected ridings that need them only to put them in places where half the population does not even vote. It's no secret that the NDP wins seats in the Halifax area and will need those seats to make another government. If Mr. Dexter wants to win any seats next election he should stop picking on Rural Nova Scotia, stop picking on special

minority ridings and start listening to the people he is supposed to be representing.

Since September 25th, each day I ask myself questions on how this came to be, why us? What did we do wrong? Did we not have the population required by the commission? No both first and second recommendations made by the commission stated no change for Shelburne County. Even after they were told to enforce the 25% Variance. Has our riding equally served all its constituents and been democratic? Absolutely, in the past 6 elections we have elected members of the governing party to the Legislature all from the three Major parties. Did our MLA's contribute to the rest of Nova Scotia? Yes they did. Of the past four elected members three were made cabinet ministers. These men did and one still does plenty around Nova Scotia as Minister of Social Services, Minister of Information, Provincial Secretary, Minister of Transportation and Public Works, and the current Minister of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Environment. That's a good line

up these people must have caught the interests from the Leaders of the times to get these portfolios. Sounds to me like the premiers know where to look when appointing cabinet ministers. If we get split we will be out numbered by voters on each side almost double. How will we continue to get these good representatives (that have played such important roles), elected to help out with the rest of Nova Scotia in the future?

And finally why weren't we present at the meeting in Bridgewater when we became the target for being split. I'll tell you why, because we had already survived two recommendations that said no change for Shelburne county. I can also tell you that if the commission had of been considering Shelburne they drove right past after their meeting in Yarmouth. It's obvious the commission tried to do their job, and in their minds had done it twice, only to be redirected by changes in the terms of reference. This is where the Gerrymandering by the premier and his party occurred. This report is so tainted its only use should be to light a

fire. The commission then decided they couldn't please Mr. Dexter and his government and listened to the finger pointers in Bridgewater, all political parties involved, and decided – Shelburne isn't in the room, lets save our boundaries and turn the commission onto them. So here we fight against the commission with no consultation as their third choice of who to split. Is it not clear that the commission just gave up? Now the NDP has the chance to right the commissions wrong. Keep the protected ridings and keep the Status Quo.

I'll leave you with a lesson my grandfather once taught me of how politics was back in his day. He spent many years in government as the opposition and he was still able to do plenty for his constituency. He told me that they left what happened each day in the legislature on the field. When they left they shook hands no matter what party and sat down to see what they could do collectively for their constituents. Today's politicians are too good at the political game of smearing others. When this happens you take away from the real issue and

distort the arguments we are trying to make. You create situations like these where no-body wins. All the political games—we don't care about those right now. For the first time in twenty years or more we have worked hand and hand Liberals and Conservatives, against this issue. This alone is a milestone for Shelburne County. The NDP of Shelburne County have also voiced their opinion against the split. We have worked together as team Shelburne County. We have put our differences aside despite party politics. I already know what the outcome of this would be if the NDP members of the legislature would all do the same in Halifax. Take this lesson of putting Nova Scotians' first and leaving party politics on the field; back to Mr. Dexter. All we want is our own representative that we have had since 1867. And we deserve it. We are all on team Shelburne County. What team are you on?