

Shelburne Political Boundary Issue, Thursday Nov 15, 2012
Sandy Point, Shelb. Co., NS

by
Angus Etheren Goreham of Woods Harbour

**Law Amendments Committee
Province of Nova Scotia
Nov. 15, 2012
Sandy Point**

Chairperson and Members of the Law Amendments Committee for the Province of Nova Scotia, Thank you for coming to our electoral district of Shelburne, to hear from us, the residence of this great County. You have chosen to give us a hearing, which is more than the Electoral Boundaries Commission did, as they deemed we did not warrant a voice in the formulation of any changes in our political boundaries as other areas of the Province did.

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Historically Shelburne County existed prior to 1836 as a much greater political area, and at that time the Government sliced away a large section to create the County of Yarmouth. In 1854 when again boundaries were being created to form the present day counties of this province, the villages of Charlesville, Forbes Point, Upper Woods Harbour, Central Woods Harbour, Woods Harbour and Lower Woods Harbour as well as the village of Oak Park, having strong business ties as well as family ties with the newly formed District of Barrington from the former Township of Barrington, petitioned the Nova Scotia Government to become part of the District of Barrington. They won their petition and became part of not only the District of Barrington but joined the District of Shelburne to become the County of Shelburne of 1854. Later the two Districts became Municipalities in 1874 and there were three towns within these boundary lines which now ran from Charlsville/Pubnico boundary line to the end of Granite Village in the eastern section of this county.

We, now consisting of the District of Municipality of Barrington, the District of the Municipality of Shelburne along with the three towns of Lockeport, Shelburne and Clark's Harbour became a family of Municipal Governments within the County Boundaries of Shelburne represented, at one time by two MLAs and later reduced to one MLA.

We were given responsible representative membership in the House of Assembly in Halifax in order to have an MLA to speak and vote on issues of concern to the rural area of this province as well as the urban issues that faced the Provincial Governing Body. We realize we did not have, nor do we ask for, equal say in that House of Assembly but only ask to allow us to retain our rightful given representation for our rural issues. This is the heritage we have had for the past 160 + (one hundred sixty plus) years.

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We have existed as a family of sibling Municipal governments within Shelburne County, who have bonded together in many committees , boards , and other governmental offices to provide this county with services second to no other region in this Province. Now along comes the Provincial Electoral Boundaries Commission and with the stroke of a pen, without consultation with any of the siblings of this county and has split the family in two sections, fostering us out to foster electoral district of Argyle and Queens, which have little relationship in our governing bodies.

They have cruelly dealt with this without any consideration of how, we, the sibling bodies feel .

We siblings requested a hearing by the Commission , but was too late as it deemed it could no longer work under the changing of the Commissions mandate by the Government. In our request we asked to remain as a family within the present electoral boundary lines of Shelburne County with one MLA to represent us in the House of Legislature.

We have been honoured with this session of the Law Amendments Committee, and as I understand the first time it has gone outside of Halifax , to hear requests. For that we commend you and thank you. However, it is only after the bill has gone to second reading have we been given this opportunity, which makes it more difficult for us to see any amendment to the bill. Yet, I have courage, that presented with our love of our county as is, and the justice in our country, we still have an opportunity to see the bill amended to allow our county to remain intact.

We , who address this committee today and tomorrow, on this issue before us, do not come here alone. True, every citizen , who opposes any change could not come before you, due to time restrictions, the place chosen, and the time frame of this Committee. However , if you were to check over our Face Book Blogs you would find that each one of us comes with the blessings of many hundreds to speak on their behalf. I personally, have eighteen hundred friends on Face Book and many hundreds of them are responding in support of us remaining as our political boundaries of today. Also I have been contacted by many beyond my friends as I posted my stand publicly and that brought more people than I could reach before in support of our cause.

Therefore, I am here speaking on their behalf as well as my own . Even the political party lines have dissolved over this issue and we citizens of our separate political preferences have joined together to support no change in the political boundaries of Shelburne County. We implore you to listen to the “family cry” of this county to allow us the right to remain intact as a Political Identity , as a county represented by our own MLA.

I thank you for this opportunity to speak. Now we shall wait upon your compassion and right mindedness in seeing the right thing done for our “political family units” within the Provincial Political District of Shelburne.

Thank you.

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I would like to open this address on behalf of my ancestors – going back to 1850's , when my great grand parents , John and Jane Goreham , residents of Woods Harbour , were two of the signees on the petition, to the Provincial Government of that day, where they requested to be joined with the District of Barrington and become part of the new political boundaries of Shelburne , making it what it is today.

Further I would like to speak on behalf of my Grand Father, Captain Frank Goreham , born in 1885 and served in the First and Second World War as captain of Canadian Federal Transportation Ships. As well he was the Commodore for all allied shipping through the Canadian waters from the Gulf of Maine to the port of Halifax.

Lastly I come here on behalf of my father Angus Goreham who did five years service in the Canadian Navy during the 2nd World War, making more than fifty (50) passages along what was known as the “Triangle Crossing “ From England to Iceland and to Canada and then back to Britain”.

They , my grand-father and father , served their country , their province, their community of Woods Harbour and their County of Shelburne. This leads me to tonight's purpose .

For the present I am here for the students I now teach and all those I have taught for the past 44 (forty four) years. I am presently a substitute teacher , having taught the structuring of the counties of Nova Scotia and its previous history so the students would know and have pride in our County of Shelburne and what it stands for as well as how we are represented in the House of Legislature in our fair Capital. This is our heritage .

Political split would cause problems

With politicians and community leaders up in arms about the recent Electoral Boundaries Commission recommendations, we've been asked many questions from people about why they should care.

The recommendation to split the provincial riding of Shelburne in two does not change municipal boundaries. Shelburne County will still exist ...so some are asking what the big deal is.

Lets start with what we have.

Shelburne County has been represented by one MLA in the provincial legislature for decades. The county line has been a simple boundary for a constituency that in living memory has served the area well.

Now here's what the commission has recommended.

Splitting the Shelburne riding in two with Barrington, Clark's Harbour and the rest of the western part of the county added to the formerly protected Acadian riding of Argyle to form a new Argyle-Barrington Constituency.

The rest of Shelburne County east of the Clyde River would amalgamate with Queens County to form a new Queens-Shelburne constituency.

So, instead of one MLA representing the interests of the county in the provincial legislature, we would have a shared MLA in eastern Shelburne County and a shared MLA in western Shelburne County.

The Shelburne-Queens MLA would represent an area encompassing parts or all of four counties. The constituency would include four high schools, two community hospitals a regional municipal unit, two towns and a municipality.

An Argyle-Barrington constituency would be an equally complex territory for any MLA to adequately represent.

So why care?

First, we believe this recommendation could seriously dilute the county's political representation in the provincial legislature.

How that would play out in real life, we can't say for sure; but we can almost guarantee it would not bode well for us in the future.

We would also argue that splitting the constituency would add another level of political complexity to a county that already has five individual municipal units. We're also concerned about what another political split, this one



across the Clyde River, might mean for the future of municipal cooperation.

Our county constituency is an important binding factor for our communities.

The constituency is part of our identity, is an important part of our path to the provincial halls of power in Halifax ...and should not be changed lightly without at least giving the people of this county an opportunity to have its say.

That's why.

Divided we fall

There are lots of events happening on the political landscape at the moment including an upcoming municipal election which will shape us for the next four years.

But I feel our attention needs to be drawn to matters that could affect us indefinitely. There are political boundary reviews underway, destined to chop up the county we call home. I for one am proud to call Shelburne County home. There is so much to be proud of - the people, lifestyle, harbours, beaches, primary resources both from the sea and land, and neighbours willing to offer a helping hand.

We have a great history and legacy in every part of this county, something to be taken seriously and not to let slip away.

What would it take to keep Shelburne County whole?

Probably all the might and force we have within the county. With the people of this county taking a stand for our future, Shelburne County could have a strong voice and become a power to be reckoned with. Might and force is needed from politicians at every level, municipal, provincial and fed-

eral, all elected to represent the people within this county. This would involve politicians stepping forward to defend us against a needless butchering and not allow what voice we do have to bleed out of our severed parts, which is the effect a political cleaving of our county would have. We would become a dismembered powerless county without a voice of its own if our riding is split.

The citizens within the county can make their voices heard by contacting the municipal units that serve them, as well as MLA Sterling Beliveau mlshelburne@eastlink.ca 902-637-3200 or 902-875-9090 and MP Gerald Keddy geraldkeddymp@eastlink.ca 902-637-3945.

The provincial boundary report is presently being discussed in the media, and many people are aware of it. I include both our provincial and federal members of government as a federal boundary review proposes to divide our county too - potentially making us a severed county provincially and federally.

Federally, Shelburne County is the rump of the South Shore-St. Margaret's Bay Riding. A rump cut in two does not leave half a rump, it leaves no effective seat at all. Let's take a look at how a provincial dissecting of the county might play out. Would our county hospital fare well if Shelburne were to become part of a Queen's county riding or would

Liverpool hospital become priority? In an Argyle-Barrington riding do you think that the needs of Barrington's arena or anything else here would be placed before the needs of Yarmouth County? With a split county would doctor recruitment likely happen within the county, or would emphasis be on Queens in the East and Yarmouth County in the West. The reality is Argyle and Queens would hold the population advantage over a split county.

We have to ask ourselves what services do we stand to lose?

Would Shelburne lose the Registry of Motor Vehicles since it no longer serves a whole county? What about the registry of Deeds, keep in mind Barrington has already lost theirs.

There appears more chance of lose than there would be of any gain in a divided county. I hope our federal and provincial members do not sit idly by and hold the pen that could potentially inscribe the eulogy for this County as we know it, but fight for a truly united Shelburne County. Our municipal leaders are essential to give us a strong voice as well. History is going to be made here, either we fall divided or we rise up and unite. Citizens of Shelburne County your voices are needed more than ever.

*Wanda Atkinson
Shelburne County*

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Questioning political boundaries

I have been watching the outcome of an independent Commission's report to the Nova Scotia Government with unbelievable results.

First: It seems these recommendations are cast in stone and are not classed as recommendations at all. In my understandings a commission recommends and the government considers what they should do with them. All I hear is that it is a "done deal". Where is the word "democracy" in this present governing body in our Legislative Assembly? Where is "responsible and representative" government?

Second: It seems to that everyone is of the opinion it is useless to speak in opposition to these proposed changes in Shelburne County. Why?

Third: No one is saying how ridiculous they really are?

A bit of History: prior to 1850's Shelburne County did not exist. Neither did Yarmouth, Lunenburg, as we were all under one large geographical region known as Queens. The people of royal Nova Scotia demanded more representation in the House of Assembly and petitioned the Government, resulting in the present day counties to be drafted.

Now Charlesville, Wood Harbours and Oak Park petitioned to become removed from Argyle Township and be made part of the newly formed District of Barrington Municipality also becoming part of the

newly formed Shelburne County and this has remained so for the past 160 plus years.

Under this system this gave us one member elected to the Legislative Assembly (MLA).

Now for some idiotic reasoning, an independent commission has recommended not only to split the county in two politically, but create the question rather our county will exist in the future. Also will the District of Barrington Municipality and the District of the Municipality of Shelburne continue to exist or will they be annexed into surrounding municipal bodies?

Was and is this an intentional action of the present day provincial government?

Has the Nova Scotia government already stamped its approval on these recommendations?

What input do the residences, of these areas affected by such recommendations, have?

Is this the "democratic" way things will be done by our Province?

If so, then I for one, am glad our old provincial patriarchs, J. Howe, T.H. Halliburton and others are not present to witness the "New" Democracy in action.

Saddened and disappointed resident of the District of Barrington Municipality.

*Etheren Goreham,
Woods Harbour*

Argyle MLA reaching out to western Shelburne County

In the wake of a recommendation that would split the provincial riding of Shelburne in two, Argyle MLA Chris D'Entremont was wasting little time.

Last week the Progressive Conservative MLA met with representatives of both municipal units in western Shelburne County to talk about the situation.

D'Entremont, who has been an outspoken critic of the way government has handled the electoral boundaries issues, believes the commissions' final recommendations will be "mucked around with" before being sent to the legislature.

"For me it's frustrating," said D'Entremont. "I don't know what I should start doing ...but if the recommendations are kept, there's a lot of work to be done."

D'Entremont believes the government should have accepted the commissions' first report, which left the formally protected Acadian ridings in southwestern Nova Scotia alone.

He says the commission, faced with large protests in Yarmouth, and a government that refused to allow it go outside its terms of reference, had little other choice but to reach into Shelburne County's polit-

ical boundaries to equalize voter numbers. The Argyle MLA admits the process hasn't been fair to Shelburne County residents, who have had no opportunity to oppose the recommendations.

While some have suggested that an alternative scenario could see a new Acadian riding formed between Clare and Argyle, D'Entremont says he and many other community leaders are opposed to that.

If the status quo is not an option "I'd want to see us joined with western Shelburne County," said D'Entremont, who noted cultural, geographic, family and historic links.

Council, residents speak out against boundary proposal

By Amy Woolvett
THE COAST GUARD
NovaNewsNow.com

The Town of Shelburne wants the premier or an appointee to host a meeting in Shelburne to hear the voices of opposition over a recommendation that would cut the provincial electoral boundaries of Shelburne County in half.

Shelburne Mayor Alan Delaney said it is important the town be able to voice its great displeasure over the recommendation stating that the Nova Scotia Electoral Boundaries Commission did not give people in Shelburne County a chance to voice

their concerns when they released their report that came as a complete surprise to all.

"This is extremely unsettling and bothersome," said Mayor Delaney. "My council is very displeased."

He said that they would be speaking to both the province and the opposition parties to voice outrage at recommending the huge change with no consultation.

The Electoral Boundaries Commission released its final report on Sept. 25 armed with an agenda to ensure that legislative representation is adjusted to population growth and move-

ment in the province.

"The objective is relative voting parity," read the report. "Recognizing that there is a wide range of views and interests to consider in achieving effective representation."

Their report said that Shelburne County should be split in two with Barrington, Clark's Harbour and the rest of the western part of the county added to the Acadian riding of Argyle while the rest of Shelburne County east of the Clyde River would amalgamate with Queens County to form the new Queens-Shelburne constituency.

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"From the high level of negative public response, we might conclude that many of those who objected simply didn't understand the principle of relative voter parity—that one voter should have approximately the same power as another," read the report. "On the other hand, they may have understood the principle but simply did not consider it valid...Many strong, well-reasoned presentations made to the commission argued against holding strictly to one clause or another, expressing strong sentiments of loss of identity or declaring unwillingness to merge with neighbouring

districts. Nonetheless, this final report proposes electoral distribution that meets all of the terms of reference as required by the Attorney General."

Since its release, councils across the county were voicing concerns over the proposed changes.

Residents in Shelburne County are also speaking out against the electoral changes and Shelburne resident Josh Brown is one of the organizers of a rally in Halifax for Oct. 25, the first day the government sits for its fall session.

Brown is inviting people from all the affected ridings to take part, including ridings in southwestern Nova Scotia, Central Nova and Cape Breton area.

The rally is tentatively scheduled to begin at 1 p.m.

He is hoping that residents living in Shelburne County or from Shelburne County and residing in Halifax will come out to the rally and if so he hopes, "our rally will be effective in voicing our displeasure over the proposed changes."

There is also several petitions being circulated throughout the community including an online petition with Frank Poole and a petition circulating throughout local businesses by Rick Davis.

The Town of Shelburne council was supportive of the rally.

"Shelburne County deserves an electoral boundary that is not divided," said Mayor Delaney.