

Cecil Swimm

LAW AMENDMENTS COMMITTEE - SHELBURNE – November 2012

I wish to make two points with the committee.

1. That the final report of the Boundaries Commission was tainted.
2. That the government took away a Special Status with no public consultation.

The final report as it stands, report number 3, is not a valid report and should be disregarded. In the beginning a Boundaries Commission was chosen by each party in proportion to the number of seats each held. The Terms of Reference was developed and presented to this Commission. The Commission went about the province and held public meetings to understand what the people of Nova Scotia wanted. They were charged with the duty of fulfilling the Terms of Reference and reporting what the wishes of the People of Nova Scotia wanted to the Law Amendments Committee. In light of this conflict and fully aware of the Terms of Reference the Commission believed that the people of Nova Scotia, and their contribution to this process overruled the Terms of Reference. Report number 1 is the only unbiased opinion from the Commission. It would appear that the Commission, who were faced with a conflict made the decision to listen to what Nova Scotians told them, which took a lot of courage. At this point the Commission should have been excused and the Law Amendments Committee had the option of accepting or rejecting the report. Instead the Commission was told to go back and get it right...so we had Report Number 2 and 3. We are now looking at Report Number 3, one wonders what report 4, 5, 6 would contain. All is not lost, the LAC has the power to correct the problem, and either accept or reject Report Number 1. If Report Number 1 is not acceptable, keeping in mind that this is what the people want, should a new fresh Boundaries Commission be appointed with a new Terms of Reference.

My second point is that the LAC has directed the commission to disregard previously established Special Status Ridings. These Ridings were given Special Status because of language and cultural differences. It was deemed at that time the differences were sufficient to warrant this status. It is setting a dangerous precedent to make changes to this status. The government of the day should give careful consideration before making changes to previously established policy. I find it difficult to accept that something of this nature can be changed without any debate. A matter like this which affects any special status should be at least debated by all parties in a provincial election. I believe that any government needs a mandate to strip away any Special Status enjoyed by any group.

I have read minutes from the hearings that were held and it seems others feel that Community of Interest is an important consideration. I have lived in Shelburne County all my life. I have never felt that there was any community of interest with either the Municipality of Argyle or Queens County. These people are apparently confused as some people go to the Mun of Argyle to play Golf. No one asked the people of Shelburne County if they had a community of interest other than the status quo. I believe the main objective of these people was to deflect interest away from their area. Dont mess with my area, the problem is somewhere else. In this week's Coast Guard John Lief, a long time Politian in Queens

County says that there is no community of interest between Queens County and Shelburne County, their only community of interest is with Lunenburg County.

In conclusion I believe that democracy has taken a serious blow here. Is the government trying to force the people of Nova Scotia to accept changes they clearly do not want? I only ask that each member of the LAC give careful consideration to the evidence, vote their conscience, and with the conviction that each has done the right thing for Nova Scotia

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