

PRESENTATION TO  
ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION  
OF PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND  
8<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2004  
BY DIANA HALLIDAY, PINETTE

I WANT TO FIRST SAY THAT I APPRECIATE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO ADDRESS THE COMMITTEE. THESE ISSUES ARE VERY IMPORTANT TO ME AS A RESIDENT OF PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND, AND I SUSPECT MANY ISLANDERS HAVE BEEN TOO BUSY WITH SUMMER ACTIVITIES TO TRULY APPRECIATE THE "FORCES" AT WORK HERE.

I AM SURE THAT WE ALL ACKNOWLEDGE THE IMPORTANCE THAT POLITICAL POWER PLAYS IN DETERMINING EVENTS THAT IMPACT UPON OUR DAILY LIVING. FOR THIS REASON, ELECTORAL REFORM CUTS TO THE VERY ESSENCE OF OUR EXISTENCE HERE ON THIS BEAUTIFUL ISLAND THAT WE ALL CALL HOME. ELECTORAL REFORM MUST BE FOR ALL, AND NOT JUST FOR THOSE WHO ARE ABLE TO MANIPULATE THE LEVERS OF POWER.

BEFORE I ADDRESS THE SPECIFIC CONCERNS THAT I HAVE WITH YOUR REPORT, I ASK FOR YOUR INDULGENCE IN ALLOWING ME TO SPEAK TO YOU ABOUT THE ROLE OF AN MLA.

I DRAW YOUR ATTENTION TO THE 1995 REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY - PRESENTED TO THE HOUSE ON MARCH 16, 1995.

I QUOTE FROM THAT REPORT:

"IN PRACTISE, THE MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY HAS TWO PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES, THE FIRST AS A LEGISLATOR AND THE SECOND AS A CONSTITUENCY REPRESENTATIVE AND ADVOCATE."

AS A LEGISLATOR, THE MEMBER IS EXPECTED TO DEVELOP AND ENACT LAWS; PARTICIPATE IN THE PARLIAMENTARY PROCESS AND DEBATE; VOTE FUNDS; AND BE THE GUARDIAN OF THE PUBLIC PURSE.

IN ORDER TO CARRY OUT THIS FUNCTION PROPERLY, ALL MEMBERS ARE REQUIRED TO:

- A) ATTEND THE SITTINGS OF THE ASSEMBLY;
- B) PARTICIPATE IN THE WORK OF COMMITTEES; AND
- C) SERVE ON VARIOUS BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS AS DETERMINED BY GOVERNMENT.

AS A CONSTITUENCY REPRESENTATIVE, THE MEMBER IS EXPECTED TO BE AN ADVOCATE FOR THE CONCERNS AND INTEREST OF THE INDIVIDUAL, AS WELL AS THE COMMUNITY HE OR SHE REPRESENTS. IN ADDITION, THE MEMBER IS ALSO CALLED UPON TO REPRESENT THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE **BROADER ISLAND COMMUNITY**.

AN EFFECTIVE CONSTITUENCY REPRESENTATIVE IS A GOOD LISTENER, IS WELL INFORMED ABOUT THE POLICIES, PROGRAMS AND SERVICES OF GOVERNMENT, POSSESSES CLEAR LEADERSHIP SKILLS, AND IS AVAILABLE TO CONSTITUENTS.

MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND MUST RECOGNIZE THAT THEIR ACTIONS HAVE A PROFOUND IMPACT ON THE LIVES OF ALL ISLANDERS. MLA'S HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO PROMOTE A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF RESPONSIBILITIES AS MEMBERS, AND OF THE ROLE AND OPERATION OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

DISCHARGING THEIR DUTIES AND FULFILLING THEIR OBLIGATIONS, DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES REQUIRES A COMMITMENT TO THE HIGHEST ETHICAL STANDARDS."

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MEMBERS OF THIS COMMITTEE, I BELIEVE YOU WILL AGREE THAT THE MLA CARRIES A SIGNIFICANT RESPONSIBILITY TO MAKE THIS PROVINCE SUCCEED IN THE GLOBAL VILLAGE. THE MLA IS THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE. HE OR SHE HAS

AN ENDLESS DEMAND ON THEIR TIME, JUST ASK RON MCKINLEY.

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I SUGGEST TO YOU, THAT THE CHALLENGES FACED BY THE RURAL BASED MLA,  
ARE MUCH BROADER THAN THOSE FACED BY AN MLA WITH AN URBAN RIDING.  
THE RURAL MEMBER WITH A LARGE GEOGRAPHICAL AREA TO COVER,  
PROBABLY HAS CONSTITUENTS THAT FARM, FISH, WORK IN THE FOREST,  
DEPEND ON TOURISM, OR PERHAPS COMMUTES TO AN URBAN CENTRE FOR  
EMPLOYMENT.

THE "RURAL" MLA HAS TO BE FAMILIAR AND KNOWLEDGEABLE OF MANY,  
MANY, DIFFERENT TYPES OF WORK. HE IS A MAINSTAY WHEN IT COMES TO  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND OFTEN CAN MAKE THE DIFFERENCE IN A  
PERSON'S ABILITY TO GET THROUGH THE LONG COLD WINTER. THIS IS A  
REALITY OF LIVING IN A RURAL AREA, WHERE COMMUNITY RESOURCES ARE  
STRETCHED TO THE LIMIT, OR PERHAPS NON EXISTENT. FACTOR IN THE  
ABSENCE OF TRANSPORTATION, AND YOU MIGHT BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND WHAT  
LIVING IN THE COUNTRY IS ALL ABOUT. WE DON'T HAVE TIM HORTONS ON THE  
NEXT CORNER.....

YOUR REPORT SPEAKS OFTEN ABOUT "COMMUNITY OF INTEREST." I HAVE COME HERE THIS EVENING TO TELL YOU ABOUT MY COMMUNITY, ABOUT ITS PEOPLE, ABOUT IT'S HISTORY, ABOUT IT'S RAISON D'ETRE.

BEFORE I SPEAK ABOUT MY COMMUNITY, I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE ONE COMMENT ABOUT YOUR "COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST". YOUR REPORT STATES "THERE ARE THREE COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST WHICH NEED TO BE RESPECTED IN PROPOSING REVISIONS. THEY ARE (i) THE ACADIEN AND FRANCOPHONE COMMUNITY; (ii) THE RURAL AREA OF THE PROVINCE OR THAT AREA OUTSIDE THE BOUNDARIES OF THE FOUR LARGEST MUNICIPALITIES; AND (iii) THE MUNICIPALITIES OF CHARLOTTETOWN, SUMMERSIDE, CORNWALL AND STRATFORD."

I WOULD SUGGEST WITH DUE RESPECT, THAT MY COMMUNITY OF INTEREST SHOULD NOT BE TREATED ANY DIFFERENTLY THAN ANY OTHER COMMUNITY OF INTEREST. MY FATHER DID NOT FIGHT IN WORLD WAR II, SO THAT HIS CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN WOULD HAVE ANY LESS "RESPECT" THAN OTHERS MIGHT HAVE IN THIS PROVINCE. TO TREAT ONE GROUP DIFFERENTLY THAN ANOTHER IS SIMPLY WRONG, "NOTWITHSTANDING" THE POSITION OF THE COURTS. WE SPEAK OF EACH VOTE BEING EQUAL, BUT DO WE REALLY MEAN WHAT WE SAY?

UNDER "OTHER RELEVANT FACTORS" YOUR REPORT LISTS A NUMBER OF TOWNS AS WELL AS COMMUNITIES THAT "HAVE A STRONG COMMUNITY CONNECTION WITH THE ADJACENT RURAL AREAS". YOUR REPORT FURTHER STATES THAT "WE HAVE MADE EVERY EFFORT TO CONSTRUCT DISTRICTS WHICH RESPECTED THIS CONNECTION". I RESPECTFULLY SUGGEST THAT "BELFAST- POWNAL BAY" HAS SOMEHOW BEEN LEFT OUT OF YOUR DELIBERATIONS.

THE BELFAST CONNECTION WITH THE POWNAL BAY AREA IS STRONG, AND HAS BEEN FOR MANY, MANY YEARS.

THE BELFAST DISTRICT HAS A DISTINGUISHED HISTORY, AND IS A NAME RECOGNIZED BY MOST ISLANDERS. THE BELFAST DISTRICT HAS PLAYED A PIVOTAL ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND, AND WE TAKE OUR POLITICS SERIOUSLY, AS EVIDENCED PERHAPS BY THE BELFAST RIOT OF LONG AGO.

I WOULD LIKE YOU TO APPRECIATE THE IMPORTANCE OF PRESERVING THE IDENTITY OF THE BELFAST DISTRICT. CONSIDER THE SCHOOL CONSOLIDATION THAT TOOK PLACE A NUMBER OF YEARS AGO. RESIDENTS FOUGHT FOR THE NAMING OF THE BELFAST CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL, AS THEY WANTED TO KEEP A SENSE OF HISTORY AND PLACE FOR THE CHILDREN OF THIS AREA.

OUR BELFAST MINOR HOCKEY ASSOCIATION HAS TOILED TO KEEP MINOR HOCKEY IN OUR COMMUNITY, TO KEEP THE BELFAST NAME ON THE TEAM SWEATER.

OUR BELFAST FIRE DEPARTMENT IS A COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION, THAT SERVES THE COMMUNITY AND SURROUNDING TERRITORIES.

THE MEMBERS OF THE BELFAST PIPE BAND HAVE WORKED HARD TO KEEP MUSICAL TRADITIONS ALIVE, AND THEY ARE SUPPORTED BY THE BELFAST HISTORICAL SOCIETY. YOU MAY HAVE READ THE BOOK "BELFAST PEOPLE"...AND IF YOU HAVEN'T, YOU MIGHT FIND IT ENLIGHTENING TO DO SO.

WE HAVE A SENSE OF WHO WE ARE IN THE BELFAST AREA, AND IT IS OUR INTENTION TO KEEP THE BELFAST NAME STRONG AND VIBRANT. WHILE "HOPE" MAY SPRING ETERNAL, IT IS FAR A "FIELD" OF WHERE WE INTEND TO GO.

IN THE PROVINCIAL ELECTION OF 2000, BELFAST-POWNAL BAY, DISTRICT 6, HAD ENUMERATED 2,995 ELECTORS, WITH 2,699 CASTING BALLOTS. THIS MEANT THAT 90.38 PERCENT OF THE VOTERS, VOTED. QUITE AN ACCOMPLISHMENT! IF YOU COMPARE THAT TO SOME OF THE URBAN DISTRICTS, SUCH AS DISTRICTS 10 THRU 16, YOU WILL SEE THAT THEY AVERAGED 82.10 PERCENT. THE POINT BEING THAT BELFAST-POWNAL BAY WORKS FOR US, AND IT WORKS FOR THE PROVINCE. WE ARE VERY HAPPY TO KEEP WHAT WE HAVE.

THE POLITICAL PROCESS FUNCTIONS WELL IN BELFAST-POWNAL BAY. IF YOU WANT EVIDENCE OF THAT, JUST LOOK AT HOW THE CONSERVATIVES AND LIBERALS HAVE COME TOGETHER TO FIGHT YOUR PLAN TO EMASCULATE OUR DISTRICT. I THINK DEMOCRACY IS ALIVE AND WELL WHEN WE CAN RALLY TOGETHER TO FIGHT A COMMON ENEMY.

IN CLOSING, I WOULD LIKE TO SUGGEST THAT YOU CONSIDER A RECOMMENDATION OF THE 1995 REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY. THAT REPORT RECOMMENDED THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY CONSIST OF 30 MEMBERS.

IF THAT WERE THE CASE, CHARLOTTETOWN AND SUMMERSIDE COULD HAVE INCREASED REPRESENTATION IN THE LEGISLATURE. THIS WOULD NOT BE AT THE EXPENSE OF THE RURAL AREAS.

I WISH TO THANK YOU FOR YOUR EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF ALL ISLANDERS. THIS IS INDEED A SPECIAL PLACE TO LIVE AND RAISE FAMILY. I "HOPE" THAT I HAVE PROVIDED YOU WITH A SENSE OF WHAT IT IS TO BE A RESIDENT OF BELFAST-POWNAL BAY.