

Stick to mandate

Letter to Editor

Halifax *Chronicle Herald*, 5 September 2010

Mark Mercer

Department of Philosophy

Saint Mary's University

Halifax, NS B3H 3C3

(902) 420-5825

mark.mercer@smu.ca

The Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission investigated a complaint that a contract forbidding a satellite TV dish, a contract into which the complainant entered voluntarily, was discriminatory. It investigated a complaint about a political cartoon. It got involved in a squabble between a town hall and people wanting their flag flown. And it wants to have its say regarding school funding (“Human rights hearing set in French case,” *Herald*, Wednesday 1 September).

The NSHRC has long sought to operate beyond its mandate and outside its competence. Our provincial government needs to remind the NSHRC that it has powers only in narrowly defined areas of housing and employment. Better, it needs to rewrite the legislation to make clear that the NSHRC has only a narrow mandate. Maybe it should simply close the NSHRC.

It's not just that the NSHRC costs people plenty in time, emotion, and money. It is also that its disdain for contract, for politics, and for civil liberties, especially freedom of expression, deforms social relations and denies us our freedoms.