



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

PROC • NUMBER 059 • 1st SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Tuesday, February 12, 2013

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Chair

Mr. Joe Preston

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•(1105)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC)): We'll call our meeting to order. We're in public today to discuss the redistribution of the province of Alberta. We have a couple of witnesses with us today, Mr. Payne and Mr. Hillyer, who have sent us letters ahead of time but are willing to give us some more information on the changes to the ridings they represent.

We also have technology, as requested. We've got maps. It's as if you could walk right into Alberta right now. It's fantastic. Benoit Montpetit and Johanne Boisvert are here working the maps for us. They're going to wow us with what we can see about changes to redistribution today.

Thank you all for being here. We'll start off with five minutes each from Mr. Payne and Mr. Hillyer on the topics they've sent us, and then we'll ask them questions.

Mr. Payne, do you want to go first?

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Sure, that's fine. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Committee members, I want to start by thanking you for the opportunity to be here to express the various concerns with the proposed boundary changes to the Medicine Hat constituency.

I'll get right to the point. I had the opportunity to meet with hundreds of constituents and local officials, and they're unanimous in opposing the boundaries as proposed by the commission. The mayors are especially in agreement that the proposed changes are the wrong way to go.

The proposed boundary will cause several problems. I mailed and faxed most of the details to the committee clerk in December 2012 and January 2013. I realize my time is limited so I'll do my best to keep things concise.

One of the major concerns from some of my constituents is that they are being put into a new riding in which their representation would change dramatically. I speak specifically of the communities of Brooks, Duchess, Bassano, and the County of Newell. I've heard from most of the mayors and councillors from these communities, and they're unanimous in opposing the changes. They greatly resent being lumped into the proposed Bow River riding as these communities do not meet the definition of "like communities" and "communities of interest". This means they'll have limited access to an MP who may live as far as three hours away.

This isn't the only reason for this frustration. They believe they have a number of common or shared issues and concerns with other communities in the current Medicine Hat riding. These common issues include an emphasis on agricultural protection. These communities rely on each other for economic growth and they feel they'll be losing the connection by being broken away from the current riding. These communities have traditional economic ties with the city of Medicine Hat as well as being part of the Palliser Health Region of southeast Alberta.

Other communities such as the County of Forty Mile are part of what's called the Palliser Economic Partnership. The communities currently in the riding have common economic drivers. These communities are also part of the southeast zone covered by Alberta Health Services or the Palliser Health Region.

You can clearly see why these folks are concerned about what will happen if they move to the Bow River constituency. One of the major concerns some of my constituents had was that the newest proposal makes way for religious considerations. This is alarming to say the least. It's not the redistribution commission's responsibility to take into account religious considerations. I urge members of this committee to scrutinize this particular item very carefully when you're writing your report.

What I had proposed to the commission is an alternative set of boundaries that I do not find extreme or unrealistic. Renaming the riding Badlands-Medicine Hat-Brooks is the first suggestion. Second, I propose that the riding consist of the County of Forty Mile, County of Newell, and Cypress County, including all the cities, towns, villages, and rural areas within the counties, special areas south of the Red Deer River and north of the two counties of Newell and Cypress, including Empress and Buffalo. The boundaries I propose are natural boundaries like the area south of the Red Deer River and the provincial boundaries to the east and south to the Montana border.

I'll quote from my original submission:

The communities of Brooks, Medicine Hat and the County of Newell, Cypress County and County of Forty Mile have an affinity to Medicine Hat from several points of view: economically as business and industry connections, culturally, health authority responsibilities and jurisdiction, hospitals, central medical and clinical destinations, school divisions and education.

The Medicine Hat College main campus is in Medicine Hat and they have a campus in Brooks, as you can see from the documents I have submitted to the committee.

Again I'll quote from my original submission:

There is no connection or affinity between Medicine Hat and the areas of Cardston, Warner, Waterton Park, Blood Reserve or other communities west and south of Taber and Lethbridge, either economically, professionally, medically or scholastically.

I also pointed out the fact that my original submission and the proposals I have made would ensure the population of the riding would total approximately 103,000, well within the population constraints of the electoral boundaries readjustment.

As I stated, my wish is to maintain the unity of the manufacturing, economic, cultural, education, health, and social relationships that is a vital entity to the Medicine Hat federal riding. We have the support of the majority of people. We have the support of most mayors or Reeves. Finally, I've had discussions with members of Parliament whose ridings border the Medicine Hat riding. They agree with what I have proposed, and I will be supporting my colleague Jim Hillyer's proposal as well.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Payne.

Mr. Hillyer, you have five minutes.

Mr. Jim Hillyer (Lethbridge, CPC): Thank you very much.

I'll start with giving you a history of how we arrived at this current map. In the first proposal, the current Lethbridge riding was changed to cut out all of the communities south of Lethbridge and south of the County of Lethbridge line. The people in that area recognize that when you add six ridings to a province, things need to change, so while they're disappointed to be left out of the Lethbridge riding, they realize that something like this had to happen.

But what really concerned the mayors and the general population was the division of that region into two separate ridings. There were almost 1,200 signatures requesting that this region stay together, because it is a community of interest.

There have been concerns expressed that this community of interest is just an attempt to create a riding based on religion. This region is sometimes referred to as the Mormon Trail. That's an historic designation. One of the towns in that area is a national historic site because it was founded by the Mormons in the early 1900s, but more Mormons would be staying in the Lethbridge riding than there would be in this new riding. That's an historical fact more than anything else.

Anyway, they were very happy to have been put into the same riding because it united that community of interest, but they were discouraged to be put into the Medicine Hat riding, not because anyone has anything against Medicine Hat, but because they just don't have much to do with Medicine Hat. They feel that as a region with a very small population, at the very tail end of a large geographical riding dominated by a large city that will have almost 60% of the population, they will be an afterthought.

The proposal is to accept Mr. Payne's proposal to put Brooks and the County of Newell back into the Medicine Hat riding and put the County of Warner and the County of Cardston into the Bow River riding. Now, even though this will still be a large geographical riding, it will not be dominated by a large city.

To quote the report from the public consultations, the reason they put Taber into the Bow River riding was for a similar concern. At the public hearings, the Municipal District of Taber indicated that they had some concerns and said that "their...wish was to remain in an electoral district with an agricultural and energy focus". The report stated, "The Commission is of the view that the M[unicipal] D[istrict] of Taber is a similarly good fit with Bow River, particularly as communities with similar interests and rural connections exist throughout that electoral district." Then it listed some of the communities in that area, saying "all of which are rural and agricultural in character".

That would be the same for those communities and areas within the County of Cardston and the County of Warner. They feel that even they would still be in a large... They know they can't avoid being in a large geographical area, but they feel that they'll be better represented and less of an afterthought by being in a large geographical area where they are not dominated by a large city and where they share these common interests and economic concerns.

I have submitted to the committee letters from all of the mayors supporting this, with the exception of Milk River and Coutts, which are on the south end. They don't mind being in the Medicine Hat riding because those communities do have more of a connection to Medicine Hat. The numbers would work out. They have no objection to splitting the county if they put the County of Warner into the Bow River riding.

• (1110)

Finally, I would just like to say that if we are able to make this change, I'd request a change to the name of the riding, since "Bow River" would no longer aptly describe the area. I'm not too concerned with what it is, as long as it reflects the area better—something like "Prairie lands" or "rural southern Alberta", or something like that.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you both for the submissions. You were both very detailed in the letters and submissions you sent to us.

Mr. Lukiwski, for five minutes.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, CPC): Thanks, Mr. Chair, and thanks, Jim and LaVar, for being here.

And thanks to the Elections Canada officials. This is much better than what we had before. We're actually able to pick up some of the suggestions you're making; the maps we had before were pretty tough.

Could I ask, just in general terms, both LaVar and Jim, in regard to the suggestions you're making to us here today, have you made those suggestions to the electoral boundaries commission in Alberta?

Mr. Jim Hillyer: Partly. The suggestion that I'm making today is that whatever changes happen, the communities south of Lethbridge that are no longer going to be in the Lethbridge riding want to stay in the same riding. So they told me to go and fight for whatever I could, but whatever I do, don't unfix what was fixed. That part was presented.

What wasn't presented was the proposal to be in the Bow River riding, because it never existed in that first map. This is a response to the map that was created. What we had suggested was to include those south communities into the Foothills riding. They didn't do that, so now, based on the second map, the riding that makes the most sense to be in is the Bow River riding.

• (1115)

Mr. LaVar Payne: In terms of the original submissions for the Medicine Hat constituency, everything is as was put in, other than the fact that there was also a portion of the MD of Taber, to include some other smaller communities—Vauxhaul, Scandia, Rainier, a number of those—partly to get to that 107,000 as the ideal number. We recognize that because of the size of the Medicine Hat riding, 121,000, you'd obviously lose some communities. Obviously, it would have been nicer to be able to keep all those, but I recognize that we'll need to have some adjustments.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Yes, one of the challenges is that you're in a province where we're adding seats because of the population increase. Trying to be as close as possible to the population's quotient, the variant, was probably one of the main priorities of the electoral boundaries commission when determining how to add the new seats—keep it within the population quotient, and also observe all of the other things, communities of interest and travel patterns and the like.

I'm wondering if much of what you are presenting to us today was presented to the commission originally, but they didn't listen to you. What arguments did they present to you for why they couldn't accommodate the suggestions you're making to us today?

Mr. LaVar Payne: Quite honestly, I can't think of a good argument. My colleague Jim, as well as Ted Menzies and Kevin Sorenson, are all on board with what I proposed. I don't know why they wouldn't be able to make that accommodation. It makes perfect sense to me in terms of the counties. When we looked at the whole issue, we tried to get the boundaries so that you would get some natural boundaries like the Saskatchewan border, the Montana border, the Red Deer River. We also included the actual various counties to ensure that the municipalities would be there and stay the same.

Mr. Jim Hillyer: I don't get the sense that the commission didn't listen to our concerns. I feel they have a pretty big job, and as they've solved some concerns, unknowingly they've created others. I don't think it was the case of their ignoring concerns and saying, "Oh, sorry, it just doesn't work out". They did mention in the report... As I said, we recommended they go into Foothills, but because of other shifts they had made, that wouldn't have worked. I could only talk to them about the map they had before us, and I couldn't really imagine what other changes they were going to make.

I agree with Mr. Payne that based on the second map that they've shown, it has created some other concerns that didn't exist under the

first map. I can't imagine the commission having any problems with what we're proposing. It falls within their mandate and falls within the philosophy that they seem to be holding to, according to both reports that came with the first two maps.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Lastly, you refer to consulting with a couple of other MPs whose ridings will be affected by your proposed changes. Would it be fair to say—I don't want to put words in your mouth, but I think this is very important—that not only the members of Parliament are in agreement with your proposals, but also the communities affected across the board would be supportive of the changes that you're recommending? Is everybody on the same page here?

Mr. LaVar Payne: Yes, I believe that's correct. I've got letters from the mayors from the various communities around the proposed riding, and as well there have been letters from the chambers of commerce. I have just one other comment. I never appeared before the commission. There were people in the riding who made presentations on behalf of the Medicine Hat constituency.

• (1120)

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Jim, everyone that you know of?

Mr. Jim Hillyer: Yes, everyone is on board except, as I mentioned, the County of Warner. I think the commission used county lines because that made sense to them. They didn't understand the nature of the communities in that area. The communities Cardston, Magrath, Raymond, and Stirling are much more a community of interest even though they're in different counties. In fact, they're within the same school board and many other administrative organizations, they're united in that way. Like I said, in Milk River and Coutts they have said, you know what they're not.... That's just the mayors. When I'm talking to the citizens I think that they're more interested in remaining in a purely rural riding because they're not close to the city they would be in. The mayors themselves have said, "You know what, we don't have any trouble being in the Medicine Hat riding". It's not a strong objection to a proposal, and quite frankly if we use the school board line as a dividing point we could easily include the towns of Warner, Milk River, and Coutts into the Medicine Hat riding and keep within the population balance. It would balance things out fine.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Cullen, seven minutes.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): I'm not sure if my colleagues have some questions as well, but I have a couple of things.

LaVar, you mentioned the religious considerations. You just mentioned it and then went on to your next point. Can you expand on that a little bit for us?

Mr. LaVar Payne: Certainly. I've had a number of people concerned that when the commission came out with their report it appeared that there were religious considerations in terms of this whole riding. For the committee's information I have relatives in Cardston, Lethbridge, and Magrath who are Mormon. So from my point of view there is no issue around that. I look at it more in terms of what the appropriate boundaries are. In terms of the County of Cardston it's quite appropriate, there are no issues with that, or the County of Warner. To me that was how it was. There was also a letter from the MLA from Cardston—Taber—Warner. I'm not sure if I got a copy to the committee here, but he did express certain concerns around religion as well.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I just want to be sensitive, but I don't know the communities well enough to be able to understand the implications of what you're saying. Is it your view that the commission tried to put communities of faith into certain boundaries, it was an attempt that was made?

Mr. LaVar Payne: I think what happened is certainly the Mormon Trail.... And from what I read in there, and from people I talked to around the whole issue, I think there was a concern that some decision was made on religion versus other aspects.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Just to be clear, communities of interest can include the aspect of communities of faith. It's a strange moment because usually in politics we keep those two conversations as separate as we can. This is one of those moments where there is a lens put upon a community to say, "Is there some connection due to faith-based background?" I was just curious more than anything else. I don't critique either your opinion or the one that maybe Elections Canada did.

Mr. LaVar Payne: That's why I said putting the County of Cardston in there includes most of these communities; to me that makes perfect sense.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I see.

It's something, Jim, you talked about. Maybe you want to add to that.

Mr. Jim Hillyer: I understand why some people would think it was made purely on reasons of faith. I agree with your statement that this is one of those situations where faith can be included. This area called the Mormon Trail is so called because in the early 1900s the Mormon Church was hired by the Canadian government to come and settle this area and build the irrigation canals and so on.

To this day, the population of this town is probably 65% Mormon. But as I said, there are more Mormons who are staying in the Lethbridge riding than would be in this riding. In both ridings they'd be fewer than 10% of the population.

The Mormon Church itself did not become involved in this question. It was the case that they said their religion or faith happens to be part of what unites them as a community of interest, but it doesn't exclude those who aren't members of that church. They still feel part of that community of interest as well.

• (1125)

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Okay. That's helpful in terms of understanding the history.

To stay with Jim for a second, you talked about the implications of the new maps and the rural culture. One of the things you said was that there were concerns that people in those rural communities would be dominated by a city that made up 60% of the riding. Could you expand on that for me?

Mr. Jim Hillyer: Yes. It's not just that they'd be dominated by a city. Right now these communities are in a riding that's dominated—about half the riding is the city. In fact, as you'll see on many of the letters from the mayors, if they had their way they'd stay in the Lethbridge riding, which is dominated by a city. But they feel connected to that city; they feel a part of that city. Most of the people in those communities call Lethbridge their city. When it receives funding to fix scenic drives, that helps them.

But Medicine Hat is a city with which they have little or nothing to do. They're saying that if they can't be in a riding that includes their city, they don't want to be in a riding that includes a big city with which they have little to do. They feel they'd be much better represented if they were in a purely rural riding.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: So there are gradations from okay to worst scenarios. The worst scenario is to be.... The best scenario would.... I don't want to put words in your mouth. Tell me the best scenario.

Mr. Jim Hillyer: I think you're right. If I'm going to put words in your mouth, I'll say the best scenario for them would be to change nothing. They love their riding. It makes sense to them. It's a rural-city mix, but it's a rural mix with their city.

That's their preference, but they understand that when you add six ridings something's got to give. As it is, the Lethbridge riding is a rural-city mix. The rural towns in the County of Lethbridge are delighted with it. The city has no trouble with its rural counterparts. They certainly are happy that they didn't split the city in two.

The worst case would be to be in a huge geographical riding that is dominated by a city with which they have nothing to do. Instead of trying to buy something they can't have, they want to buy something they can have. They feel that being included in the Bow River riding is the best option.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Thank you.

The Chair: There's about one minute left.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Perhaps my colleague has some questions.

An hon. member: No, but thank you.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: In that case, that is all. Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Dion, you have seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

How many ridings are affected by your change? Is it only your two?

Mr. Jim Hillyer: Go ahead.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Well, there was a change with the Crowfoot riding, under what the commission did. As well, it affected our riding here and it had some impact on Mr. Hillyer's riding as well. What we're proposing—

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Your changes will affect the borders of three ridings.

Mr. LaVar Payne: The changes right now would affect—the proposal Jim and I have wouldn't be an issue. The only other piece that would be affected would be taking a short, small area below the Red Deer River, which currently sits in my riding and was put into Mr. Sorenson's riding of Crowfoot. I've talked to him about it, and he has no issue about allowing that to come back into the proposed new riding that I've put forward.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: So three ridings are affected, and the three MPs agree.

Mr. Jim Hillyer: Three ridings according to this map, yes.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: If the commission accepted your proposal, it would have to change three ridings, and the numbers would be within the range of 4% or 5% of the quota.

• (1130)

Mr. LaVar Payne: Absolutely.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: This is what is unclear to me: your proposal seems to make so much sense, and is supported so widely, that it's a little bit mysterious that the commission came with its own proposal.

Do you suspect that the commission may object to something you did not mention yet, or that there's an argument the commission will raise that will make its proposal more credible than yours?

Mr. LaVar Payne: I have difficulty understanding how it could be more credible in terms of what I've already put forward and what my colleague Mr. Hillyer has put forward.

To me, what I've put forward makes total sense. I have a difficult time understanding where the commission came from on their proposal, in particular the last proposal.

Mr. Jim Hillyer: I don't have a difficult time understanding how they came to that. They don't live where we live. They're dealing with numbers and county lines. They based their decisions on what they heard in the public consultations, which didn't come up with these concerns because they didn't exist under map number one.

I can't guess what their objections might be, but I suspect you're right about how they'll see this: everyone's happy, it doesn't contradict our mandate, it follows our own logic. My belief is that they didn't see that they were dividing these natural tendencies.

If they can solve the problem without a domino effect, or upsetting anyone, I can't see why they would object to it.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: We are shifting Cardston and Warner, and your justification, Mr. Hillyer, in one paragraph is very, very compelling. You say that this town is not our town, this city is not

our city; we have no link with it. The MP would focus so much on the city that they may neglect the rural aspect of the riding.

I think it makes sense, and I have no additional questions to ask.

Good luck.

The Chair: Mr. Lukiwski, you wanted back in?

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: I have just a couple of quick questions.

What's the population of Medicine Hat, and what's the current population of Lethbridge?

Mr. LaVar Payne: Medicine Hat is about 62,000.

Mr. Jim Hillyer: Lethbridge is around 80,000.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: If you know the answer on this, I'd like to hear it. What does the census data indicate for the population growth trends? In ten years from now, for example, the time the next census comes out, have they anticipated what the population of each of those two centres might be?

Mr. LaVar Payne: Honestly, Tom, I don't know that answer. However, I can tell you that the population of Medicine Hat increased by 87 over the last three years. That's not very much, 87 people.

The Chair: Do you know them all?

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Jim Hillyer: Lethbridge has been growing quite a bit. The commission, in their report, said that one of the reasons they made these changes was to allow for foreseeable growth.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: So they would be considered cities—obviously, compared with Calgary and Edmonton, small cities, but cities nonetheless. You talked about this hybrid situation where it's a mix between the city and some rural residents, and that everyone, both city residents and rural residents, is satisfied with that.

Is that correct? They don't see any different issues that would...?

Mr. Jim Hillyer: Not if it's—as I've been putting it—their city.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Right.

Mr. Jim Hillyer: It has worked very well over the years. The current Lethbridge riding is that mix. No one wanted that to change; they just recognized it as a necessity.

The current proposal, that has the City of Lethbridge and the County of Lethbridge, everyone in those small towns is happy with. The people in the city have no concerns with having the small towns around it.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: That's it for me, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

I've no one left on our speaking list, so all our questions have been answered. Fantastic.

Mr. Jim Hillyer: They know everything now.

The Chair: Perfect.

I'll agree with the smart member there.

Thank you very much. You've supplied us with great documentation to start off with, and I think being able to read through it as we went helped us.

I will dismiss our guests.

We'll suspend just for a moment while our guests leave and we wait for our new guests.

• (1130) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1135)

The Chair: We will unsuspend while we look at the maps.

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): On the right there in the grey, is that the Medicine Hat riding as it is in the second map in the report?

Mr. Benoit Montpetit (Team Leader, Technical Expert, Electoral Geography, Elections Canada): It's going to track on the report, and on the left screen the different colours show a different riding, and it's according to what was presented.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Okay. So that's the difference there.

Mr. Benoit Montpetit: Up north here you have the south portion of Red Deer River, and here the transfer of Newell County, and south here Warner County and Cardston.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): So the right is the second report of the boundaries commission, and the left is the status quo—what it is right now?

Mr. Benoit Montpetit: No, it's what was proposed this morning.

Mr. Scott Reid: Each colour signifies a riding. Is that right?

Mr. Benoit Montpetit: That's right.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: The suggestions was that it would curl right around Lethbridge.

An hon. member: That's a new one, though. Is that right?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: No, that's the suggestion from the MPs, right?

An hon. member: That's for Bow River.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Yes. So it's going to curl right around Lethbridge.

Mr. Scott Reid: There is somewhat of a change. The boundary for Battle River—Crowfoot changes.

So maybe you can answer another question I have here. I got the impression from their comments that they were just exchanging territory between the two and that there were no other ridings affected. Am I wrong on that?

The Chair: Yes. They did suggest that Crowfoot picked up a piece south of the Red River, I think—

A voice: Yes.

The Chair: —or the Bow.

Mr. Benoit Montpetit: They have the agreement of the MP.

Mr. Scott Reid: All right. Okay.

An hon. member: We can see what he's saying about—

An hon. member: You can see that, and the boundary doesn't support it.

The Chair: Can I have one member at a time?

Go ahead, Mr. Armstrong.

• (1140)

Mr. Scott Armstrong: In the boundary commission's report, if you look at the Medicine Hat riding, for example, if you were living in the southwestern corner, you would have much more affiliation with the City of Lethbridge—

The Chair: Yes, you're right beside it.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: —than you would with the City of Medicine Hat. We can see it now with the maps.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: So you can see what the rationale would be to move—

The Chair:—Bow River.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: —Warner County and Cardston County into that riding, because they would have no affiliation with Medicine Hat at all.

The Chair: It's a long way.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: So it'd be the rural riding surrounding Lethbridge, but the service centre would still be Lethbridge.

An hon. member: Right.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: It makes sense when you see it on the map.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: The distance between the north and south is great, and they wouldn't have any affinity one to the other—

The Chair: Right.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: —but their common interest might be Lethbridge.

The Chair: Right.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: That's the idea.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: We heard from the previous witnesses that most of the roads go north-south, right?

The Chair: Right.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: So instead of having the ridings extending east-west, these ridings sort of follow the roadways.

The Chair: Well, certainly, and you can see Calgary north of it. You would think that the roads would be heading towards Calgary, from Lethbridge to Calgary and from Medicine Hat.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: As far as transportation goes, it seems this would make more sense.

The Chair: Right.

Are there any further questions on this?

Mr. Scott.

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): I'm just wondering if our guests from Elections Canada have software that allows us to superimpose on one screen so that we can see what's proposed in the second report, and then just layer the change on top? I think I've kind of now got it, but going from screen to screen....

The Chair: You will see the differences.

Can you do that?

Mr. Benoit Montpetit: I can figure something out, yes.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Just to get that final argument—because I don't think our witnesses necessarily made this—you look at that map and now you look at the Bow River riding and say that's a huge big chunk of Alberta there, but it makes sense because all those folks have that one thing in common, which is that—

The Chair: They circle Lethbridge.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: For the logistics of any serving MP for that area, you would have to go from Cardston County, at the border, all the way up to Kneehill County or these places quite far north. I'm looking at the highway system, which we talked a lot about, in northern Alberta. I've driven those roads, but never driven those roads thinking about how you would do constituency outreach.

The communities of interest factor is that they all connect to Lethbridge. Lethbridge remains a whole city in and of itself.

The Chair: Right, but this riding circles it.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: So their community of interest remains the fact that they all service out of Lethbridge.

Is it fair to say that Bow River is an entirely rural riding? Taber, Milk River, these are very small towns.

The Chair: Yes. I don't think there's anything very big in it.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I guess you would notice a population growth of 67 in these places.

Interesting. It's a big riding.

The Chair: According to the documents given to us by Elections Canada, after doing it Bow River would be 105,000. It has a fairly good population. But you're right, it has a fairly good number of kilometres too.

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): One hundred and five is still a little bit under—

The Chair: Yes.

What is that? It's 1.46, so it's pretty good for numbers, considering the drive.

It's a new riding.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: There's nobody saying—

The Chair: Someone who gets it would be very happy to be the MP.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: —I don't want to drive around that.

What's that riding right now?

The Chair: It's a mixture of Crowfoot and Lethbridge and Macleod. It's to the west of Lethbridge.

• (1145)

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I think this is for our committee's work, particularly in places with new ridings. You don't have anybody who is offering up support for what it's going to look like and defending the work that's going to be done in this new....that's a challenge.

The Chair: Are there any further questions?

Okay. We'll leave it and we'll wait for our next guests.

• (1145)

_____ (Pause) _____

• (1150)

The Chair: We'll come back in so that we can talk about this. I marvel at the technology around this. So you're going to overlay what they're requesting over the top of what the last boundary map looked like from the commission. And the red lines show what the boundaries commission has said?

A voice: Yes.

The Chair: In the northeast, the piece of Crowfoot now goes over into what was the new riding of Bow River. Bow River used to end right at the southern border of Lethbridge, and now picks up those two counties below it. Lethbridge has pretty much stayed the same in both maps. Medicine Hat loses a little piece up there to Crowfoot.

• (1155)

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse: Isn't it the other way around? It's part of Battle River—Crowfoot that goes to Medicine Hat.

The Chair: Right. Up to what I assume is a natural boundary, which is the South Saskatchewan River.

Mr. Scott Reid: Red Deer River.

The Chair: Are there any questions on what we're seeing on the overlay?

I have to say that Mr. Cullen has made a very good point here that each of the members have said what's perfect and how it mixes right, but this new Bow River riding has been created and there currently isn't someone who represents it.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I don't know how we as a committee.... Say there are communities in that riding that absolutely hate this. We have no capacity. I'm not suggesting that we get the capacity, we just don't know. We've heard from those that are impacted directly and implicitly by this in those three or four counties, but we haven't heard anybody from Vulcan County and we're not going to. It's just an interesting thing for the committee to—

The Chair: But the commission has, hopefully, in its—

Mr. Nathan Cullen: But what the commission proposed was for Vulcan County to be down with Taber and that's it. Now we're not going to hear from somebody down in Ross Lake how they feel about being connected to Milo in Vulcan County. I don't know what that drive is like. Others who do it more frequently can tell us but you'd have to leave your riding a few times to get around, that's for sure.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: I think the boundaries commission would have to step in because they have information that we don't.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: That's what we're saying based on that.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: They may reject what we're saying because it doesn't make sense for the riding, it doesn't have representation.

Mr. Scott Reid: We talked about Lethbridge being the natural centre for all of the different parts of the Bow River riding, essentially it surrounds Lethbridge like the letter C. And I know that's one of the philosophies that the Alberta boundaries commission discussed. Do we create a hub and spoke? Do we create doughnut ridings? That's almost a doughnut riding being proposed there. Next, they go through and discuss the merits and demerits. I thought it was a good discussion. Without commenting on their conclusions, I thought they were trying to be fair about that.

The question I have is it's not really 100% a doughnut surrounding Lethbridge as its natural centre. The top part is actually closely linked to Calgary. I bet people there never find themselves going up to Lethbridge.

My question was to the Elections Canada people. The part that's not in your map right now, if you could just go to that part, to the top up near Wheatland and so on. What percentage of the population is in that northern area, which is clearly going to be Calgary Centre? What percentage of the Bow River riding is in that chunk?

Mr. Benoit Montpetit: I can confirm that number.

The Chair: There are four or five counties there. But you're right, those four counties would have more to do with Calgary.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: The commission obviously felt comfortable enough bringing some of those near Lethbridge communities together with these ones that are close to Calgary and found some common ground. I'm assuming it's mostly farming country, and a little bit of energy.

It's fascinating. It's Solomon's choice on this stuff.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Chair, I have a question about procedure.

At the end, during the review, would it be possible to have all of the proposals made by the members grouped together and all of the proposals made by the commissioners grouped together, for the entire province? We would like to see all of the results and their impact. We want to see if omissions have been made or if there are things that are not working, so that we have a better understanding and can prepare our report.

• (1200)

[*English*]

The Chair: When we go to write the Alberta report, then I suggest that would be correct. We would see the northern areas that the members talked about the other day, the Peace River piece and the Fort McMurray piece and whether it gets down into where we're talking about. And then the same thing today; we're going from the south upwards. We're about to have a couple of members from Calgary. So, you're right; I think we'll need to see—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nycole Turmel: The other—

[*English*]

The Chair: Put all the changes on and see what it looks like then. Okay?

This Thursday we have one member, and then we're going to talk about the Alberta report. At that time we'll look at the province in its entirety.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: That's this Thursday?

The Chair: Right. You can think about it while you're on your break, but the rest of us may have completed it.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: I thought you said next Thursday.

The Chair: Then we have the access to information report also on Thursday, just so we can fill our time.

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse: Are we doing the standing orders as well, on Thursday?

The Chair: We could start, yes. All right, let's go ahead and do that then.

It's where we discuss what goes in it. I saw the panicked look. No, you're okay. Thought you were better than that.

Oh, you want the whole week we're home to work on it, okay. I suppose you'll want Christmas off again this year too.

If I can get myself together, we'll call ourselves back to order.

Ms. Crockatt, it is great to have you here with us today. You have five minutes to share your thoughts with us on the redistribution in your riding and around it. Mr. Shory is joining you shortly, but I'm certain he already knows what you're saying.

Ms. Joan Crockatt (Calgary Centre, CPC): I'm not so sure.

The Chair: Go ahead for five minutes, and then we'll ask you some questions.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Great. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I really appreciate the opportunity the PROC committee is providing to allow me to appear before you with regard to the electoral boundaries commission and to represent the citizens of Calgary Centre so their voices can be heard. That's why I was elected. That's why each of us was elected. I have been hearing from Calgary Centre residents very loudly and clearly.

I'd like to say that I really appreciate, as do they, the fact that the electoral boundaries commission has set as its goal to equalize the weight of each Canadian's vote. It will strengthen democracy. The changes I'm proposing here will leave all the ridings affected within plus or minus 5%, give or take, of the target population. They are strongly supported by the community. No MPs are opposed, and further, they're all within the current boundaries of Calgary Centre right now.

I'd like to make a point about recent history, and then provide three reasons that the commission's new map contravenes the three major objectives set out in the act. I'll argue that the population goal is achieved at the expense of them, and conclude how it can be achieved with these three goals in mind—to rousing applause, no doubt.

The recent history is that as you might recall, the former MP resigned in May. That meant the residents of Calgary Centre did not have a sitting member of Parliament throughout the bulk of the redistribution consultation. As a result, they feel the radical changes that are being proposed to their riding did not receive the attention they deserved.

I was sworn in on December 11, just as the report of the boundaries commission was coming down on December 13. I've heard from my residents over and over, and now I'm here appealing the changes on their behalf. As much as possible these changes we're proposing reflect historical patterns and communities of interest, and they follow the traditional provincial, federal, and municipal boundaries.

There are three reasons that the proposed map should be rejected. Number one, it's radical surgery that's unnecessary. Number two, it's kicking folks out of their historical homes. Number three, it's putting together strange bedfellows.

To the radical surgery, Calgary Centre is currently overpopulated and is therefore under-represented in Ottawa. It's just a question of which area to place in another riding in order to reduce its size. Because this riding is characterized by constant growth, it should really be a priority to maintain cohesion in a riding that's accepting newcomers at the rate of tens of thousands every year.

I was seeking an analogy to describe what the boundaries commission recommended, and it's kind of like slicing off one entire side of your body to lose weight, and then realizing that you cut off too much so you're going to graft on an appendage on the other side. That's essentially what's been done here.

You see the map there. Sarcee Trail is the large ring road on the right. Now, neither of these is the original riding.

On the left-hand side is the Calgary ring road. You'll see that Sarcee Trail is the Calgary ring road. Essentially, what the boundaries commission did was move the boundary on the east side to the middle of a series of residential communities that are very cohesive, residential communities whose traffic patterns are east-west, and it disrupted that long-standing community.

That brings us to number two, which is kicking folks out of their historical home. This community on the east side of the ring road....

● (1205)

Ms. Joan Crockatt: The ring road is on the left side of your map, Sarcee Trail, and these are all very cohesive communities into the east of the ring road. Signal Hill, conversely, is on the other side of the ring road. It's the highest point in Calgary. There's a huge change in elevation. It's a high-end community, brand new in the last little while. These other communities are 40-year-old communities. Their community associations all work together. They do family days. They have churches and schools and bussing patterns that all fit together in that community. There's virtually—

The Chair: It's out this far? It used to be in Calgary Centre.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: It is in Calgary Centre right now, and the commission is proposing to take it out and put it in Signal Hill, to the left. Severing these communities all the way from north to south has no persuasive argument at all, and it disrupts all these relationships and common interests and concerns that are inside the ring road where the communities do share commonalities. A primary goal of redistribution should be to maintain strong communities and also enable them to be well served by Ottawa.

That brings us to number three, which is putting together strange bedfellows. I've already talked a bit about this but on the west side, the Signal Hill riding, which we just talked about, has very few ties to Calgary Centre, which is sort of more of a working class area. Signal Hill is kind of tony and upper class. That's where they built the condos for the Olympic Village, etc. This topographical difference is also a very significant one because it means there is virtually no traffic flow on a daily basis between the neighbourhoods inside the ring road and outside the ring road.

Furthermore, the provincial ridings of Calgary-Elbow and Calgary-Currie both use Sarcee Trail as their boundary, and this is recognizing the things I've talked about. We propose the boundary should be east-west from Sarcee Trail as much as is humanly possible. Instead of severing the riding from north to south, if you need to take some land out of it, you make the line east-west and at least keep the communities of interest together.

You'll see in your package something that looks like this, which is what we're proposing. The reason we propose you take the chunk out at the top is, if you look up behind you, you'll see there already is a chunk along the river that's a part of Signal Hill, so we're at least keeping some of the communities of interest there together on an east-west basis.

Finally, on the east side, this is where we've really added strange bedfellows. As much I love them, we have the communities of Ramsay and Inglewood, which have always operated independently from the downtown. I don't know if you can see on my map, but there's a river that goes through on the green map, and the communities of Inglewood and Ramsay are on the other side of the river. Because of that, they have always been very separate from downtown. The provincial and municipal riding boundaries, again, are the river. They are also separated from downtown by three bridges, the Stampede grounds, an industrial area, and the railway yard. It makes no sense to add those into Calgary Centre.

As well, the boundaries commission has also added a very large industrial yard down here into Calgary Centre, which really makes it almost ungovernable. From the point of view of the federal government, you've already got one of the most populist ridings in the country. You have the second largest head office capital in the country and all of those people need to be served. You have some of the largest homeless shelters. You have a huge immigrant population that's moving in every year to that riding. And you also have all of your suburban communities. Why add a big industrial yard into that mix and expect it to be well served? The riding of Calgary Shepard, into which we're proposing you put it, can take the population. There's very little population there. The riding of Calgary Shepard includes the large, industrial area that the riding is actually named for.

That's the end of my presentation, Mr. Chair.

• (1210)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Shory, you have five minutes.

Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Mr. Chair, thank you very much.

I don't think I'll need five minutes because my ask is very, very small.

I'm asking the committee to consider that my riding should be extended, adding some commercial area on 32nd Avenue going all the way to Deerfoot, which will not make any noticeable change in demographics. The reason I'm asking for this is that it will allow me to keep my office at the same place where it has been for the last 25 years or so. The other thing is that quite a few business owners live in my riding and have been living there for a long time. As I said, there is no noticeable change in the population being represented.

If you notice, the committee gave me two scenarios. Scenarios one and two do not make any difference in population. In scenario two there is a difference of five individuals, which is not very noticeable. It does affect only one neighbouring riding, Calgary East, which is currently represented by Mr. Obhrai. I have spoken to Mr. Obhrai and he has no objection. As a matter of fact, I have a copy of the email he sent to the committee confirming that he has no objection.

I would submit that the committee recommend to the commission that this change be made, as it does not affect any population.

The Chair: Thank you.

Are there questions from the members?

Mr. Lukiwski.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Thanks, Chair.

Thanks to both of you for being here.

Joan, just let me say how sorry I am, as I think we all are, about your recent loss. I know this is a difficult time for you, so thank you for being here with us.

I want to go back to an earlier comment you made about the period of time when Calgary Centre was not represented because of Lee's resignation and before you were elected. For how many months were they literally unrepresented?

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Well, Lee resigned in May, toward the end of May, so it was right through.... I was sworn in on December 11 and the report came down on the 13th, so it was essentially from May until I was sworn in.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Okay. When during that time did the boundaries commission conduct hearings?

Ms. Joan Crockatt: I believe it was through that period. To be honest, I was engaged in other things.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Sure.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: I heard about this from people afterward. I knew it was going on. In fact, we asked about it. We just felt at that point that it was not our issue and that we had to focus on the things we needed to focus on. It took place during that period.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Okay.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: What I heard from people after the fact was, hey, we didn't know how to get involved or when, and we just feel like we were ignored here.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: That's what I'm getting to. In your opinion, then, did many of the points you've made here today fail to get made to the commission? I mean, did they have the same information that you were presenting to us?

Ms. Joan Crockatt: My understanding is that they absolutely did not, that there really wasn't any significant representation, certainly not from the community associations and people from the schools and churches who were talking to me, and who operate on that east-west flow and have their seniors' centre on one side and then the church and the school on the other side. Those people felt that they just had no venue for being able to express their views and kind of found out when it was all over.

• (1215)

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Okay. Well, that's problematic, obviously, and it just is a question of timing, unfortunately, with the boundaries commission having to do its job within a certain timeframe, but Lee's resignation kind of jumped right into the middle of all of that.

Can you give some assurances, then, to this committee that subsequent to your election you have talked to as many of the stakeholders within Calgary Centre as possible? Are they all in agreement with what you're proposing today or are there some areas or pockets of opposition to what you're proposing in terms of boundaries?

Ms. Joan Crockatt: You know, I've heard no opposition to this at all. These are the historic boundaries for this riding. In fact, some of the local MLAs have suggested to me that this should be together, because there is a lot of working together in Calgary, and this seems like a very disruptive change that really just didn't have any representation when it was being made.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Again, not to be critical of the boundaries commission, perhaps because it may not have had all of the information since there was no one there to present it, but do you think the reason they came up with the proposed boundaries that you are now objecting to was just based primarily on trying to get in with that population quotient?

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Yes, absolutely. They did meet the population quotient. I think that was their primary objective.

It's only when we look at the other three objectives, which are maintaining communities of interest, traffic flow patterns, and the sorts of historical ways in which that riding has operated, that we run into the problem. We worked very hard to make sure that the proposal we have come up with still meets the population objectives, so it satisfies that all around.

Also, I did knock on 16,000 doors in the election campaign and I heard concerns. They thought the process was all over and they hadn't gotten involved.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Finally, I have just a quick question. You've mentioned this before, but I just want to get confirmation of this. The changes you're proposing here will impact a few of the other ridings surrounding Calgary Centre as proposed by the boundaries commission. Do you have a sign-off from the other MPs? No one has problems with what you're suggesting?

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Yes. No one is objecting to it.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Okay.

I think I'm fine, Chair.

The Chair: Good work.

Mr. Cullen.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Thank you.

I have a couple of questions to follow up on what Tom was asking. I'm less concerned with other MPs, but in the communities, what support is there? Many of the MPs who have come forward have brought supporting documents from community groups and community associations. You talked about neighbourhood clubs that associate one to the other. Do you have anything you can provide the committee that shows support for this at the community level?

Ms. Joan Crockatt: We can certainly amass that. Just in the interests of time, there hasn't been an opportunity yet to do that.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I'm sorry. I didn't understand your last point: "in the interests of time".

Ms. Joan Crockatt: I've only been involved in this file for a short while, so I've gone on phone calls that we've had to our offices, etc., but I'm sure we can provide it if you want the information.

There are several community associations. They hold joint festivals, like Canada Day celebrations, or the Marda Loop Communities Association, so they're used to working together, and

they just feel that it has been a tremendous source of strength to be able to have those groups all working together. They'll hold common meetings with their MPs. Then they feel that they can utilize their combined efforts to bring us in, so they can get three or four who will attend a joint community association meeting.

This is just severing all of those communities, right north to south.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: What kind of outreach did Elections Canada do to notify the community that the hearings were taking place?

Ms. Joan Crockatt: No idea; you might know that more than I.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I assume the constituency office stayed open during the byelection period?

Ms. Joan Crockatt: You know, this is all information that isn't... I wasn't elected, so...

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Sorry, I don't know what you mean.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Well, I wasn't in charge of the constituency office.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I know.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: I believe they had one person there.

Mr. Scott Reid: I think the Speaker is in charge of the constituency office.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I think it's the whip.

I'm trying to understand the north-south patterns in these two maps. As it is proposed, Elections Canada didn't propose going right up to the river, they fell just short. You're suggesting pulling that back and keeping those two northwestern communities enhanced.

What are those two parts of Calgary right now?

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Sorry, what side are you speaking about, the east or west side of the riding?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Northwest.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: So the northwest side.

If you look at the orange line at the top, that's the Bow River that flows. That's a natural boundary.

The past riding already included one of the communities at the top, next to the river. Our proposal is that we extend the portion that will go to the Calgary Signal Hill riding, at least so it is attached to the existing piece that's already in the other riding and maintains the east-west flow of that community.

• (1220)

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Do those communities go by a name?

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Yes. There's Spruce Cliff, Westgate, Rossarock—all communities that are sort of affiliated and all on the same side of the ring road.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Can you see the ring road on the maps that you have provided?

Ms. Joan Crockatt: You can see it here. Sarcee Trail is on the left

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Sarcee Trail is what you've been calling the ring road?

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Sarcee Trail is the ring road, yes.

You can see it on this green map. I think you have a photograph as well. I don't have the full package with me, but if you look at your map, you'll see you have a photograph as well that shows you Signal Hill, which is the dividing line.

Calgary is essentially a bowl that has very large hills around it. Sarcee Trail is the dividing line. Signal Hill is this large bluff that overlooks the city on the other side of the ring road.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I'm just trying to follow the Sarcee Trail on this map right here. Is it where Elections Canada has the dividing line right now, or is it one over, where you've put the new boundary?

Ms. Joan Crockatt: You're looking at the map that we're suggesting. It's the orange line....

Where is Sarcee Trail?

It's where the grey meets the green on the left-hand side.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Right. So it's the further one.

You're saying that the ring road is the natural dividing line—

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Yes, and it has been the consistent boundary.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: —and the boundary should be pushed there.

You've suggested taking this further part out on the eastern side of your riding and including that southwestern piece as compensation. But that Calgary Shepard area is not well populated, correct, and mostly industrial?

Ms. Joan Crockatt: It's industrial.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Is it also in that bowl that you talked about, as Calgary is designed?

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Well, it's on the other side, kind of...but yes, I guess it is. Actually, I think the topography kind of goes back up at Blackfoot Trail.

That's all industrial going through Calgary Shepard. In fact, that's what Calgary Shepard is named after, a big industrial area. It makes perfect sense that the little sliver of industrial that they were planning to put into Calgary Centre should be in Calgary Shepard.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Great. Thank you.

Mr. Shory, I think the changes you've talked about are quite nominal. Did you say at one point in your testimony that they were talking about nine electors being changed from—

Mr. Devinder Shory: Five.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Oh, five. Excuse me. I didn't want to exaggerate your statement.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Nathan Cullen: So it's five electors, and it's a commercial section of town.

Mr. Devinder Shory: It is commercial. I honestly don't know where those five even live. I didn't think anyone lived in that section.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: We didn't see a map proposal from you, did we? Or maybe I just missed it during your testimony.

Mr. Devinder Shory: I received the proposed copies from the committee, so you should have it somewhere.

The Chair: Can we bring up Mr. Devinder Shory's riding? There is a section on it.

Can you explain to us, Mr. Shory, the changes on this map?

Mr. Devinder Shory: Is this scenario one or two?

On the west side, at present this new riding called Calgary Skyview will go on 32nd—

The Chair: Using the map, can you tell us?

• (1225)

Mr. Devinder Shory: Yes, at present it runs on the west side of 32nd Street and it goes up to 36th Street. I'd like to extend it all the way to Deerfoot Trail, which is on the northwest side of 32nd Street, and as I mentioned, will have all commercial activities. My office is right in between 36th Street and Barlow, which is scenario one, sent to me by the committee.

The Chair: So that brown area would be in Calgary Forest Lawn under the new map, and you'd like it back in—

Mr. Devinder Shory: That is correct. It has been in my riding.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: If you were seeking the nomination, you'd be in Skyview?

Mr. Devinder Shory: Yes.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Okay, I just want to make sure. So you're seeking to include that.

You're suggesting what seems like a fair number of blocks, but by your estimate only a few people would be affected.

Mr. Devinder Shory: According to the scenarios I am given, there are five individuals but I don't think anyone lives there.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: It's interesting. I'm not familiar with that part of Calgary.

Mr. Devinder Shory: It's all commercial.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Oh, look what you've done. You're showing off now. Elections Canada is really—

The Chair: He's pointing to the five people.

Mr. Devinder Shory: As I said, this area has been part of Calgary Northeast for all time, and it doesn't make any difference as far as population is concerned. This will definitely allow those business owners to be part and parcel of—

The Chair: When Mr. Obhrai is in the country, he represents the other, and you were able to find him and get an e-mail from him. That was very good.

Mr. Devinder Shory: I was fortunate enough to find my neighbouring MP yesterday.

The Chair: Would somebody please tell Deepak I made fun of him, it just helps.

Mr. Dion.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: I agree with the changes to these five constituencies.

Mr. Devinder Shory: I definitely will find him now.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: As you're a new MP, I understand you didn't have the opportunity to make your point to the commission. But what is your understanding of what the commission intended to do with your riding?

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Honestly, I can't find a rationale. I think they put population first, and that's to be lauded and I think it is important to democracy. But I think what ended up happening is that other people made representations all around Calgary Centre and it got carved up and I got the leftovers.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: The changes you are proposing will affect the number of constituents you have in which way? You will still be close to the quota?

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Yes. I believe it's essentially a 3.8% or 4% variance, so it's over.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: How many other ridings will be affected by your change?

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Essentially, Calgary Signal Hill and Calgary Shepard.

We want to reduce the population in Calgary Centre so they are more equally represented, so some population has to be lost. Signal Hill will receive the people in the top left-hand side, as you see indicated in green, that chunk out of the top of the riding. They already include some of that in Signal Hill so they're essentially getting an additional chunk and that will bring down the riding population so it's within the variance.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: And the other riding?

Ms. Joan Crockatt: The other riding is Calgary Shepard, which is a new riding so it doesn't have a sitting MP. As I mentioned, most of the area there involves an industrial area.

I think you can see on the green map before you that the Canadian Pacific Railway yards are on the right-hand side, so that leads into that big industrial area that's down in the southeast corner. I have no idea why they would want to put that in Calgary Centre, it seems to very much belong in Calgary Shepard.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Is it because the new riding would then become too big?

Ms. Joan Crockatt: I don't know if they're concerned about geographical size or not. It wouldn't seem to me—

Hon. Stéphane Dion: No, I'm talking about numbers.

• (1230)

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Oh, no, not population: all these changes are still within the 5%.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: It would help the committee if you were able to bring a lot of support for your proposal from the people of the communities. How long would you have to do that?

The Chair: It would be before we write the report.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: There'd be letters of support and so on.

The Chair: We'll discuss writing the report on Thursday, and over the break we'll likely write it and accept it when we get back.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: So it's a matter of days?

The Chair: Yes, it will be days or hours, or minutes.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Are you able to bring some?

Ms. Joan Crockatt: I would be able to. I've had a letter from Deepak saying he doesn't object. His riding abuts it.

But we could probably pull together at least a couple from community associations.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Can you repeat that, please?

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Sorry. We could probably pull together at least a couple of letters from community associations.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Colleagues, please. Please, can you repeat that again?

Ms. Joan Crockatt: *Mais oui.* I'm sure I can pull together a couple of letters. Is that what you'd like to see?

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Yes, I think it would help you.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Dion.

The Chair: I have Mr. Reid next.

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Shory, I'm just guessing that the five addresses of people they have down as living there are people who are using a business address to receive their mail and there's been some kind of clerical error and they've been assumed to live there because that's where they get their mail sent to.

That's probably the explanation.

Mr. Devinder Shory: That's probably the reason. It is all commercial.

Mr. Scott Reid: I wanted to ask you that question to make the point. Somebody said you live there but you don't actually live there. Your constituency office is there.

Mr. Devinder Shory: That's correct.

Mr. Scott Reid: Right. So that raises the question. I think I know the answer to this already from looking at the map, but when they were zooming in, you could see that it was a fairly major road, and in a sense, if people were living in the office, it would be natural to use the road as a dividing line. I think I'm right in saying this. You can correct me if I'm wrong, because there would be a road that's hard to cross by foot, and they're isolated from the riding.

But in this case the problem, I gather, is actually the opposite. The fact that it's a major road means it's easy for people to get from the rest of the riding to the office even though the office is not central in the riding. Would that be correct?

Mr. Devinder Shory: That's absolutely right, and not only that. I would say that since the office has been there—my riding is very diversified—it's very convenient. There's a lot of parking there. This place has been known to the constituents, as I said, for years and years. It's very convenient for the community.

Mr. Scott Reid: It was the constituency office before you were the MP as well.

Mr. Devinder Shory: That's correct. It was there for 15 years before I got elected.

Mr. Scott Reid: I then wanted to ask Ms. Crockatt about the same thing, major roads and the way they divide things up. I can't tell from the maps they've had up there, but looking at the one you provided to us, with the green overlay that looks like it's a satellite view, I get the impression that the road that the boundaries commission is using for a dividing line as your western boundary is a road that is not a limited access highway. It's a road that can be crossed fairly easily while the Sarcee Trail is in fact a limited access highway that forms a sort of impermeable boundary.

Is that right?

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Yes, absolutely. That's just a normal neighbourhood street that they've used as a boundary, whereas Sarcee Trail is a six- or eight-lane ring road. Again, we don't know why they would have chosen that other than strictly because of a population calculation.

Mr. Scott Reid: That's helpful. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Madame Latendresse.

[Translation]

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse: I have a quick question for Ms. Crockatt.

Is this a map of provincial ridings with the proposed riding of Calgary Centre?

[English]

Ms. Joan Crockatt: That is a map of a provincial riding; you're seeing the boundary on the right-hand side. This is the map that has the blue on it. It's just showing you that the boundaries I'm proposing are very consistent with what you're seeing as both municipal ward boundaries and provincial boundaries. Again, there are a lot of reasons people have historically used these. That is the Bow River there. That's the road you need to cross to get to the other communities and that's why I'm suggesting the other communities could quite happily coexist in another riding.

•(1235)

The Chair: Mr. Lukiwski.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Just quickly to Devinder, just so I'm clear, you're just basically suggesting they move the boundary into that sparsely populated area just so you could retain the current constituency office?

Mr. Devinder Shory: Well, it's not only that. It has—

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: So it's all about you—is that what you're saying? I'm just kidding.

Mr. Devinder Shory: Well, no, it's—

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: All kidding aside, Devinder, it appears to me that if there are only perhaps five people there and it's a very small area geographically, but if the population base was the emphasis the commissioners were placing on the new boundaries, and you made this argument to the commissioners, why wouldn't they just accept it? It seems to me like a no-brainer.

Mr. Devinder Shory: Number one, I did not make this argument to the commissioners, because I did not expect the commission to basically isolate the business owners who live in my riding from the neighbouring riding.

Number two, it's not anything about me, because I have to go to work anyway.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: I was just kidding on that one.

Mr. Devinder Shory: It is very convenient. This location is very convenient for all constituents, because they can take McKnight Blvd., they can take Barlow Trail, they can take 32nd, they can take Deerfoot. As Mr. Reid mentioned, it's very convenient for the constituents to get there, and this office is known to all constituents. Parking is also an issue at other locations, so it's really working well.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: You answered my question, Devinder. When I asked you why they would have opposed this, the answer was that no one had made the argument to begin with. One would think that if you or anyone had made the argument to keep your riding, they would have accepted it, because, as I said, I think it's a no-brainer.

Mr. Devinder Shory: I'm sure they would have.

The Chair: Are there any further questions from the committee?

You answered our questions so well, we finished again in just two rounds. This committee is getting very efficient. I'm proud of you all.

Thank you very much for joining us today and thank you for sharing the information. Is there anything else from the committee for today?

A Voice: You did a great job.

The Chair: Thank you.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: We had to speed up the witnesses because we waited 20 minutes to see two witnesses.

The Chair: Yes and last week we went over with the witnesses we had. I understand, but do you want to stack our witnesses up like cordwood out in the hall and bring them in?

Hon. Stéphane Dion: It's my suggestion that when we know that colleagues agree and when it seems that—

The Chair: It's a little easier if we know they agree—

Hon. Stéphane Dion: —we may assume that 15 minutes will be enough.

The Chair: Madam Latendresse, do you have something to say on that subject?

[Translation]

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse: Yes, the analysis prepared by the team at the Library of Parliament summarized the proposals, and from it we could see that Mr. Shory's proposal was very simple. I think that it can work when the proposals are simple. But, generally speaking, we cannot always be sure. There might be a lot of questions that come up. I think it should be on a case-by-case basis.

[English]

The Chair: Right.

It is also the fact that the members who were available today were the members who were available today. There is another one who wasn't available today who will be joining us on Thursday. So, had he been able to be here, we would have done that, but you'll have to have a little bit of flexibility with us, because we're dealing with provinces. I can't put somebody from another province in while we're still dealing with Alberta, so I'll do my best.

Is there anything else from the committee?

Thank you very much.

I do thank you for our maps. This is a huge improvement. Thank you so much. This is helping a lot, and I think that may be another reason why we went a little faster today, because holding up paper maps the other day slowed us down a little bit too.

The meeting is adjourned.

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