



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

REPORT ON THE REPORT OF THE FEDERAL ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION FOR THE PROVINCE OF NEW BRUNSWICK, 2022

**Report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and
House Affairs**

Honourable Bardish Chagger, Chair

**MARCH 2023
44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION**

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NOTICE TO READER

Reports from committees presented to the House of Commons

Presenting a report to the House is the way a committee makes public its findings and recommendations on a particular topic. Substantive reports on a subject-matter study usually contain a synopsis of the testimony heard, the recommendations made by the committee, as well as the reasons for those recommendations.

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THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

has the honour to present its

TWENTY-SEVENTH REPORT

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(3)(a)(vi), the committee has considered the objections filed in respect of the *Report of the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for the Province of New Brunswick*, in accordance with section 22 of the *Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act*, R.S.C., 1985, c. E-3, and has agreed to report the following:

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REPORT ON THE REPORT OF THE FEDERAL ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION FOR THE PROVINCE OF NEW BRUNSWICK, 2022

INTRODUCTION

On 31 January 2023, pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(3)(a)(vi) and section 22 of the *Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act* (EBRA),¹ the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs (the Committee) began its consideration of the objections filed by members of the House of Commons in respect of the *Report of the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for the Province of New Brunswick* (the Report and the Commission).

After each decennial census, the number of members of the House of Commons and the representation of each province is adjusted according to the rules found in section 51 and 51A of the *Constitution Act, 1867*.

The chief electoral officer (CEO) is responsible for calculating the number of members of the House allotted to each province. This calculation is mathematical and the CEO exercises no discretion in the matter.

The work of readjusting electoral boundaries is carried out in each province by an independent and neutral three-member electoral boundaries commission. The mandate of these commissions is to consider and report on the division of their province into electoral districts,² the description of the boundaries and the name of each electoral district.

The EBRA provides the rules governing the division of a province into electoral districts. The population of each electoral district must be as close as possible to the electoral quota for the province, that is, the population of the province divided by the number of members of the House of Commons allocated to the province under section 51 of the *Constitution Act, 1867*.

In setting the boundaries of an electoral district, each commission is legally obliged to consider the community of interest, community of identity or the historical pattern of an

1 [Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act](#), R.S.C., 1985, c. E-3.

2 Note that the terms “electoral districts” and “ridings” are used interchangeably in this committee report.



electoral district in the province. Further, electoral districts must have a manageable geographic size, in cases of sparsely populated, rural or northern regions.

A commission may depart from the provincial electoral quota by plus or minus 25% in order to respect the community of interest, community of identity, or the historical pattern of an electoral district, or to maintain the manageable geographic size of sparsely populated districts. In circumstances that are viewed as extraordinary by a commission, the variance from the electoral quota may be greater than 25%.

After coming up with an initial Proposal for the electoral districts in their province, a commission is required to hold at least one public meeting to hear representations by interested persons. After the completion of the public hearings, each commission prepares a report on the boundaries and names of the electoral districts of the province. These reports are tabled in the House of Commons, and referred to the Committee.

Members of the House then have 30 calendar days to file objections with the clerk of the Committee to the proposals contained in a report.

An objection must be in writing and in the form of a motion. It must specify the provisions of the report objected to, and the reasons for those objections. An objection must be signed by not less than 10 members of the House of Commons.

The Committee then has 30 sittings days to consider members' objections, unless an extension is granted by the House. The Committee's reports on members' objections are referred back to the relevant commissions, along with the objections, the minutes of the proceedings and the evidence heard by the Committee. The commission then has 30 calendar days to consider the merits of all objections, and prepare its final report.

Once all the commission reports have been finalized, the CEO prepares a draft representation order setting out the boundaries and names of the new electoral districts. This is sent to the Governor in Council who, within five days, must proclaim the new representation order to be in force and effective for any general election that is called seven months after the proclamation is issued.

OBJECTIONS

The Report of the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for the Province of New Brunswick was tabled in the House of Commons, and referred to the Committee on 30 November 2023. By the end of the 30-day period, the clerk of the Committee had received one objection.

A. Electoral District Name Changes

1. John Williamson, the member for New Brunswick Southwest

John Williamson, the member for New Brunswick Southwest, objected to the proposed name change for the current riding of New Brunswick Southwest. The Commission proposes, in both its initial Proposal and Report, to change the riding's name to Saint John–St. Croix.

Mr. Williamson stated that Saint John–St. Croix did not adequately reflect the proposed riding's geography or boundaries, whereas the current name New Brunswick Southwest continues to properly reflect the proposed riding much more precisely. He noted that the citizens living in that riding have a historical connection to the riding name of New Brunswick Southwest, as the riding has borne that name almost continuously since 1997.

He explained that the proposed riding of Saint John–St. Croix includes many communities, especially those located in the northwest, north and northeast of the proposed riding, who do not identify with either of the Saint John or St. Croix geographical areas. These communities included Saint George, Blacks Harbour, Maces Bay, the four Fundy islands, Belleisle, Apohaqui, Studholm Parish, Gagetown, Tracy, Fredericton Junction, and many parts of Sunbury County.

To this end, Mr. Williamson indicated that approximately 40 to 50% of the geographic area in the proposed riding was not included in the proposed Saint John–St. Croix name. Further he noted that two communities added to the proposed riding of Saint John–St. Croix, those of Burton Parish and Saint John West, can be aptly described as being part of southwest New Brunswick.

In Mr. Williamson's view, the riding name of New Brunswick Southwest better encapsulates the many small communities that make up the riding. He stated that New Brunswick Southwest is a name that people who live in the riding understand and feel it represents them. He indicated that he had spoken with a number of mayors and councillors about the riding's name and that broad agreement existed that New Brunswick Southwest should continue to be used.

He stated, in his written objection filed with the clerk of the committee, that New Brunswick Southwest is a more appropriate name because it speaks to the whole



territory that is being proposed under the new boundaries. Further, he told the Committee that the name New Brunswick Southwest “binds people together.”³

Mr. Williamson also told the Committee that, among New Brunswickers, the name Saint John refers to the city of Saint Jean and not the river. Meanwhile, the name Saint Croix is better known as either the river that forms the border with Maine or with the island of Saint Croix. Further, if the Commission’s proposed name of Saint John–St. Croix was employing Saint John to reference the Saint John river, this reference would be contentious as, currently, a debate was taking place in the province about the merits of renaming the river as Wolastoq, which is a traditional Indigenous name. In his view, the commission ought not enter into this debate on either side.

Lastly, he recounted to the Committee that the riding was previously named St. Croix–Belleisle. In his view, this name led to the mispronunciation of St. Croix (i.e., locals pronounce it “Saint Croy”) and confusion about its geographic location in Canada.

The Committee supports Mr. Williamson’s objection and recommends that the Electoral Boundaries Commission for the Province of New Brunswick consider it favourably.

3 House of Commons, Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs (PROC), *Evidence*, 1st Session, 44th Parliament, Meeting 48, 31 January 2023 (John Williamson, New Brunswick Southwest).

APPENDIX A LIST OF WITNESSES

The following table lists the witnesses who appeared before the committee at its meetings related to this report. Transcripts of all public meetings related to this report are available on the committee’s [webpage for this study](#).

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
House of Commons John Williamson, M.P., New Brunswick Southwest	2023/01/31	48

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

A copy of the relevant *Minutes of Proceedings* ([Meetings Nos. 48 and 52](#)) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Bardish Chagger
Chair

