



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

REPORT ON THE REPORT OF THE FEDERAL ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION FOR THE PROVINCE OF SASKATCHEWAN, 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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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-EIGHTH 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 Saskatchewan*, 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 SASKATCHEWAN, 2022*

INTRODUCTION

On 2 February 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 Saskatchewan* (the Commission and the Report).

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 was tabled in the House of Commons, and referred to the Committee on 6 December 2022. By the end of the 30-day period, the clerk of the Committee had received three objections.

A. Electoral Boundary Changes

1. Daniel Blaikie, the member for Elmwood–Transcona

Daniel Blaikie, the member for Elmwood–Transcona, objected to the Commission's decision, in its Report, against creating a central urban riding in Saskatoon. He notes that the Commission, in its initial Proposal of 9 May 2022, had created such a riding, which it named Saskatoon Centre.

He indicated that the Report stated the Commission found that there was both interest and desire to have a central urban riding in Saskatoon.

In appearing before the Committee to explain his objection, Mr. Blaikie acknowledged that he represents a riding in Manitoba and that he did not claim to be a subject-matter expert on the province of Saskatchewan. He stated that some residents in Saskatchewan had contacted the New Democratic Party's (NDP) federal office to express their support for a potential central urban riding in Saskatoon organized around the idea of political representation for the urban core. These residents have concerns with the Commission's Report and prefer the boundary proposals for Saskatoon found in the initial Proposal. They contacted the federal NDP in order to have a voice in this stage of the process.

Mr. Blaikie stated that the population growth of Saskatoon made it no longer tenable to deny the merits of a central urban riding in Saskatoon. Further, he indicated that the matter of creating such a riding began in 2012 and the conversation about its creation will continue, in ten years' time with a larger population in Saskatoon, if not addressed during the current boundaries readjustment process.

Mr. Blaikie asked the Committee to provide its reflections to the Commission about the nature of political representation and how to make the representative role of members of Parliament more cohesive or coherent. He raised the question about whether it makes sense to create split urban-rural ridings, whereby one member of Parliament is expected to properly mediate and represent the concerns of both urban and rural residents.

He noted that the Commission, in its Report, recognized that urban cores have unique challenges with respect to transit, housing, homelessness, and so on. He indicated that residents who spoke in favour of creating a central urban riding in Saskatoon did so to have advocacy and representation that focused on the urban experience and would not be divided between two very different communities of interest that have very different infrastructure needs.



In his view, one effect of creating urban-rural ridings was that one of either rural residents or urban residents will end up feeling like their member of Parliament does not truly speak to their specific concerns. As such, some residents will feel like they don't have a voice for their concerns.

In sum, Mr. Blaikie advocated for creating ridings where the communities of interest for urban areas and rural areas is well respected.

The Committee supports Mr. Blaikie's objection and recommends that the Electoral Boundaries Commission for the Province of Saskatchewan consider it favourably.

2. The Honourable Andrew Scheer, the member for Regina–Qu'Appelle

The Honourable Andrew Scheer, P.C., the member for Regina–Qu'Appelle, raised two separate objections about the boundaries of the proposed Regina–Qu'Appelle riding.

Firstly, he objected to the Commission's proposal to move a neighbourhood located west of Lewvan Drive, in the southwest corner of the current Regina–Qu'Appelle riding, into the neighbouring riding to its west of Regina–Lewvan. Mr. Scheer stated that, in his view, the Commission violated section 15 of the EBRA by not fully considering the community of interest or community identity in or historical pattern of an electoral district in the province. It may be worth noting that Warren Steinley, the member for Regina–Lewvan, has raised the same objection on the same grounds.

According to Mr. Scheer, Lewvan Drive is a major arterial north-south road that acts as a boundary that separates the communities and neighbourhoods on either side of it. He stated that

- there are few links between neighbourhoods on either side of Lewvan Drive in this part of Regina;
- many streets do not cross Lewvan Drive because it is three lanes wide in either direction and a high traffic road; and
- all the community and neighbourhood associations are split by Lewvan Drive.

Mr. Scheer pointed out that North Central Regina, located in the south-western corner of the current riding of Regina–Qu'Appelle, is a very distinct, cohesive, uniform and easily identifiable area, with housing that was constructed in the same era and similar demographics among the residents. By comparison, across Lewvan Drive, the

neighbourhood is completely different, in terms of demographics and the uniformity of the housing. He indicated that North Central Regina has been in the Regina–Qu’Appelle riding for over 30 years. In North Central Regina, the schools cooperate and support each other, and outreach and urban services are offered by institutions and organizations, such as the Indian Christian Métis Fellowship and the North Central Family Centre.

Mr. Scheer surmised that changes were made to the southwest corner of the current Regina–Qu’Appelle riding to add population to the riding. This is because, in the Report, the proposed riding of Regina–Qu’Appelle loses communities in its northern portion. Mr. Scheer proposed that the Commission ought to move the neighbourhoods west of Lewvan Drive back into the Regina–Qu’Appelle riding and make fewer changes to the proposed riding’s northern communities.

Secondly, Mr. Scheer objected to the removal of the communities of and around Wynyard and Ituna from the current Regina–Qu’Appelle riding. He stated that these communities have, for decades, been in the same riding as Kelliher and Fort-Qu’Appelle. Mr. Scheer indicated that, in making such a proposal, the Commission did not fully consider communities of interest or historical patterns of the Regina–Qu’Appelle riding.

He noted that during the public hearings, submissions made by residents of Wynyard and Ituna all sought to be included into the same riding as Fort Qu’Appelle. He told the Committee that Fort Qu’Appelle is the hub for residents of that area and is the largest urban centre outside of Regina.

Mr. Scheer stated that his proposal to add Wynyard and Ituna to the proposed riding of Regina–Qu’Appelle is a transfer of about 2,700 residents and would have a minimal impact on the population figures of both that riding and the neighbouring riding of Yorkton—Melville. He further noted that the Commission had given itself wide latitude in departing from the province’s electoral quota, as evidenced by the variation from the electoral quota of -53.22% for the proposed riding of Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River.

Lastly, Mr. Scheer indicated that the residents of Regina and Saskatoon, and Saskatchewan generally, experienced dramatic changes to the design of their ridings as a result of the 2012 electoral boundaries readjustment process. In this regard, he indicated that residents would likely welcome a greater sense of continuity between the 2012 and 2022 readjustment processes, as opposed to having to experience another round of massive changes to their ridings, especially if these changes are not justified by demographic growth or shifts in where the population resides.



The Committee supports Mr. Scheer's objection and recommends that the Electoral Boundaries Commission for the Province of Saskatchewan consider it favourably.

3. Warren Steinley, the member for Regina–Lewvan

Mr. Steinley's objection is the same in substance as Mr. Scheer's objection, and concerns the neighbourhoods on the west and east of Lewvan Drive. Mr. Steinley proposes to transfer two neighbourhoods between the proposed ridings of Regina–Qu'Appelle and Regina–Lewvan. Specifically, he proposes to

- transfer a neighbourhood, totalling 5,771 constituents, located to the east of Lewvan Drive from the proposed riding of Regina–Qu'Appelle into the proposed riding of Regina–Lewvan; and
- transfer a neighbourhood, totalling 5,275 constituents, located to the west of Lewvan Drive from the proposed riding of Regina–Lewvan into the proposed riding of Regina–Qu'Appelle.

Mr. Steinley's objection is based on the existence of communities of interest and identity in that part of the province, as well as the historical pattern of the electoral districts of Regina–Lewvan and Regina–Qu'Appelle, as found in section 15 of the EBRA.

He told the Committee that residents in the affected area have lived and voted together for decades in ridings separated by Lewvan Drive. Further, Lewvan Drive acts as a boundary for residents, school boards, school community councils, community associations and so on. The city wards in Regina do not cross Lewvan Drive, nor do the provincial ridings for members of the Legislative assembly of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Steinley indicated that he could not have raised this objection during the public hearings because his objection is based on the Commission's Report, which was issued after the conclusion of the public hearings.

He stated that his proposal would keep over 11,000 constituents within their current riding, and follows the principle of section 15 of EBRA, regarding the Commission's obligation to fully consider communities of community identity in, or the historical pattern, of an electoral district in the province. He noted that his proposal has no domino effect on other ridings and that it was supported by Mr. Scheer and his colleagues in Saskatchewan.

The Committee supports Mr. Steinley's objection and recommends that the Electoral Boundaries Commission for the Province of Saskatchewan consider it favourably.

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	2023/02/02	49
Daniel Blaikie, M.P., Elmwood—Transcona		
Hon. Andrew Scheer, P.C., M.P., Regina—Qu'Appelle		
Warren Steinley, M.P., Regina—Lewvan		

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

A copy of the relevant *Minutes of Proceedings* ([Meetings Nos. 49 and 53](#)) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Bardish Chagger
Chair

Report on the Report of the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for the Province of Saskatchewan 2022: Conservative Dissenting Report

This Dissenting Report reflects the views of the Conservative Members of Parliament who serve on the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs (“PROC”): MP John Nater (Vice-Chair of the Committee, Perth-Wellington), MP Luc Berthold (Megantic-L’Erable), MP Blaine Calkins (Red Deer-Lacombe), and MP Michael Cooper (St. Albert-Edmonton).

Introduction

Three Notices of Objection were submitted to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs (PROC) in response to the Report of the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for the Province of Saskatchewan by MPs Daniel Blaikie, Warren Steinley, and the Honourable Andrew Scheer. We respectfully disagree with the conclusions in the Report of PROC to support the objection put forward by MP Blaikie and set out our observations in this Dissenting Report. We agree with the conclusions in the Report of PROC to support the objections of MPs Steinley and Scheer, however, we wish to offer our observations regarding these objections.

The Blaikie Objection

MP Blaikie encouraged the Commission to establish a central urban riding in Saskatoon, spanning both sides of the South Saskatchewan River, as proposed in the Commission’s initial proposal.

We respect the decision of the Commission in its report to disband the establishment of a central Saskatoon riding, and instead maintain three Saskatoon urban ridings (the “Final Proposal”).

The Final Proposal Reflects Community Input

The Final Proposal reflects the feedback that the Commission received during the consultation process. At the public hearing in Saskatoon, most presenters spoke against a central Saskatoon riding. These presenters represented a cross-section of the community, including: a community association president, business leaders, representatives of downtown development organizations, members of immigrant communities, Indigenous peoples, including the Chief of the Saskatoon Tribal Council, who represents seven local First Nations.

By contrast, it is our observation that MP Blaikie’s objection is motivated by partisan considerations, not reflective of the feedback from diverse voices received by the Commission. For example, four presenters who spoke in favour of a central Saskatoon riding at the public hearing in Saskatoon were affiliated with the NDP. MP Blaikie is an NDP MP, who notably is not from Saskatchewan, and acknowledged at PROC that he is not a “subject matter expert” on Saskatchewan.¹ At PROC, MP Blaikie said that he was motivated to put forward the notice of objection based on feedback that NDP headquarters had received from some individuals.

¹ Evidence, Procedure and House Affairs Committee, 2 February 2023 (Daniel Blaikie).

We acknowledge that individuals with partisan interests have every right to make submissions to the Commission. However, this objection appears to be supported primarily by the NDP, without evidence of broader community support. This diminishes, in our opinion, the overall weight and credibility that should be attached to it.

The Final Proposal Connects Communities of Interest

The Final Proposal, in our opinion, better connects communities of interest within Saskatoon than the initial proposal that included a central Saskatoon riding.

Having regard for section 15 of the *Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act*, R.S.C., 1985, c. E-3, and the need to consider communities of interest, the Commission decided that a better community of interest or identity is achieved by not extending beyond the city limits of Saskatoon.² The Commission was able to draw three ridings situated entirely within city limits of Saskatoon as reflected in the Final Proposal.

By contrast, the drawing of a central Saskatoon riding necessitated, based on the Commission's initial proposal, the drawing of a hybrid urban-rural riding (Saskatoon-Wanuskewin) consisting of the northern suburbs of Saskatoon, along with a significant small town and rural component. It also resulted in Saskatoon-Grasswood extending outside of Saskatoon to include part of the RM of Corman Park.

We note that MP Blaikie, in his submission to PROC, cited what he characterized as an "important principle" in creating ridings "where the kind of significant community of interest that exists between urban and rural areas is well respected."³ Ironically, a central Saskatoon riding resulted in the establishment of the type of urban-rural riding that MP Blaikie has advocated against.

We also submit that a central Saskatoon riding would separate communities of interest. This includes, as acknowledged by the Commission, communities of interest that span Circle Drive. It would also have the effect of separating Indigenous communities of interest. At the Commission's public hearing in Saskatoon, the Chief of the Saskatoon Tribal Council, Mark Arcand, noted that Saskatoon's Indigenous population is concentrated on the west side of the South Saskatchewan River. Chief Arcand presented data to illustrate that a central Saskatoon riding would dilute the Indigenous population, which is currently concentrated in the riding of Saskatoon- West. The Commission's Final Proposal keeps Indigenous communities of interest together within Saskatoon-West.

As noted, a central Saskatoon riding would span both sides of the South Saskatchewan River. The ripple effect of a central Saskatoon riding would likely result in at least another Saskatoon riding cross the South Saskatchewan River. For example, in the Commission's initial proposal, Saskatoon-Grasswood traversed the South Saskatchewan River.

² Report of the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for the Province of Saskatchewan, p.26.

³ Ibid.

The South Saskatchewan River runs through the middle of Saskatoon, creating an east-west divide. The Commission observed that the South Saskatchewan River continues to “influence travel and commercial and social activity.”⁴ The Commission further observed that the South Saskatchewan River is a “historic and natural boundary for electoral ridings.”⁵ There are also significant socio-economic, housing, and demographic differences between the west and east sides of Saskatoon.

The Commission acknowledged, based on the feedback that it received during the public consultation process, that this placed communities with significant social, economic and housing differences together in both Saskatoon-Centre and Saskatoon-Grasswood.⁶ This issue is generally resolved by respecting the natural boundary of South Saskatchewan River, as reflected in the Final Proposal.

A Central Saskatoon Riding Creates a Negative Ripple Effect

A central Saskatoon riding unhelpfully requires significant adjustments to not only ridings within Saskatoon, but also outside of Saskatoon. This is evidenced by the drawing of the hybrid urban-rural Saskatoon-Wanuskewin riding in the Commission’s initial proposal. This in turn likely had a ripple effect that resulted in significant adjustments to multiple other ridings that the Commission later addressed in its report, based on public feedback. Based on this public feedback, the Commission redrew the boundaries of several ridings outside of Saskatoon and Regina in a manner that generally reflects current boundaries. A central Saskatoon riding would likely upset this.

We submit that minimal disruption to existing boundaries is preferable, where possible, especially given that there were significant changes to electoral boundaries during the previous redistribution. General continuity is preferable, as it takes time for electors to adjust to major changes, including establishing a familiarity with their Member of Parliament.

The Steinley and Scheer Objections

We respectfully encourage the Commission to favourably consider the objections of MPs Steinley and Scheer.

The adjustments proposed by MPs Steinley and Scheer, between Regina-Lewvan and Regina-Qu’Appelle, can be described, as a “swap.” The effect of this is to provide continuity by keeping 5,275 constituents in Regina-Qu’Appelle and 5,771 constituents in Regina-Lewvan in these respective ridings.⁷ This is consistent with section 15(1)(b) of the *Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act*, which provides that the Commission shall consider “the historical pattern of an electoral district in the province.” The section of North Central Regina that, based on the

⁴ Report of the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for the Province of Saskatchewan, p.26.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.26

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.26

⁷ Evidence, Notice of Objection of Warren Steinley.

Commission's report, will be placed in Regina-Lewvan, has been part of the Regina-Qu'Appelle for thirty years.

MP Scheer has also reasonably proposed keeping the communities of Wynyard and Ituna in Regina-Qu'Appelle, based on strong ties to other communities situated in the riding, including Fort Qu'Appelle. We take note that the Commission moved Wynyard and Ituna into Yorkton-Melville, so that Yorkton-Melville's population would approach relative parity with other ridings. Although Yorkton-Melville is -9.11% below the electoral quota, we note that it is well within the plus or minus 25% of the electoral quota under the Act.⁸ The relatively minor population loss to Yorkton-Melville that would result from this adjustment would still place Yorkton-Melville reasonably within the range of other rural ridings from a population standpoint. For example, Souris-Moose Mountain, is -10.68% below the electoral quota, and Swift Current-Grasslands-Kindersley is -10.12% below the electoral quota.⁹

We respectfully submit that the connection that Wynyard and Ituna have with Regina-Qu'Appelle, from a community of interest standpoint, are compelling and will not materially impact the population of Yorkton-Melville relative to population parity with other ridings.

Conclusion

We respectfully submit that the Commission should maintain the Final Proposal for Saskatoon. We also respectfully encourage the Commission to look favourably upon the objections of MPs Steinley and Scheer, which are minor, targeted, and will not have an impact the boundaries of other ridings.

Respectfully submitted,

John Nater, MP, Vice-Chair
Perth Wellington

Luc Berthold, MP
Megantic-L'Erable

Blaine Calkins, MP
Red Deer-Lacombe

Michael Cooper, MP
St. Albert-Edmonton

⁸ Report of the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for the Province of Saskatchewan, p.7.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.7