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# Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

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Chair: The Honourable Bardish Chagger





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Tuesday, April 18, 2023

• (1105)

[*English*]

**The Chair (Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.):** Good morning, everyone. I call the meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 62 of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

The committee is meeting today to begin its study on the report of the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for British Columbia.

Before we start, at the last meeting on Friday, I did not mention—I was mistaken by the week—that Sophia, who had been joining us and learning under our clerk, Miriam, has moved on to clerking a full committee. She's flying, and Miriam has successfully sent her on her way. I'm sure she'll continue watching our proceedings. I told her that she can join us any time, but I did want to give a shout-out to Sophia on behalf of all PROC committee members.

The second thing is that I circulated an email. If we're looking at the timelines and the intent of our committee in ensuring that when witnesses for election interference are available, we prioritize them, we have requested all the extra time we would like through the clerk. We don't get the okay off the bat for all of them; it is a moving target. The clerk continues to work with witnesses and the House to ensure that time.

Looking at translation, and making sure we can submit everything in both official languages, to stay within the act and following the rules, I am suggesting an extension for the four remaining reports. To give a date, we can suggest June 9, which is the last day of the regular sitting time. We will not need to go all that way; whenever we can get them done, we'll get them done.

In this situation, Alberta was turned around really quickly. We'll be doing the draft report for Alberta on Thursday. The Quebec report, which we hoped to have back by Friday—we wanted sooner—may not be totally.... It will be next week.

This is to have the leniency and ability, the flexibility I'll say, in case—we will not use it if we don't have to—we need to go back to the House to ask for that extension.

Are there any comments or concerns?

Mr. Nater.

**Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I will be brief. We do not support the extension.

Frankly, this committee wasted 24 hours on a Liberal filibuster. That would have been the equivalent of 12 meetings, 24 panels. We could have dealt with this well before today. I just want that on the record. The reason we have to ask for an extension is because of a lengthy filibuster by the Liberal Party to prevent and then to allow Katie Telford to testify.

We don't support the extension, and I'm going to leave it there.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Madame Gaudreau.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Madam Chair, I worry about the fine work of the interpreters and the translation bureau. If it looks like it will be necessary, we could give them extra time to make sure we get suitable materials. Who knows? Maybe we'll even be pleasantly surprised and get them before the deadline.

I understand that we're asking for an extension, but that doesn't mean the date won't change. For the sake of quality, though, I think it's important to make an adjustment.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Ms. Blaney.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** Thank you so much for this, Chair.

I also want to be on the record that it was disappointing to see the Liberals filibuster. However, I also recognize how important it is that we continue our work on foreign interference. At this point, if we don't ask for an extension, it means we will be undermining that study. I will be watching closely, but will support it so we can continue the important work we're doing on foreign interference in our elections.

**The Chair:** Mr. Turnbull.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.):** Thanks, Madam Chair.

I think this committee has operated in good faith on pursuing multiple priorities at the same time, all of which are important. It makes perfect sense, common sense in fact, to extend the timelines for this important work on redistribution, given the fact that we would have to compromise, as Ms. Blaney said, on other priorities if we were to try to meet the very short timelines we have left to complete redistribution.

I think it's more than fair to ask for an extension and to utilize our time wisely to complete the work we've started. Thanks.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Romanado.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I want to reiterate that this committee has also sat in every single riding week. While I understand what Mr. Nater said, I also know we have been putting in the extra hours. If he feels that we shouldn't extend the timeline for redistribution, then we can put aside the study for foreign interference.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Having heard all of your comments, I believe that we have agreement to ask for the extensions. I will take the steps necessary to make that request of the House.

With that, I welcome our colleagues to the procedure and House affairs committee.

With redistribution, we've been doing well, so please feel free to speak to each other. If there is a need or a concern, then I will take my chairpersonship responsibility very seriously and let you know.

For our first panel, we have with us today Mr. Don Davies, MP, Vancouver Kingsway; Mr. Wilson Miao, MP, Richmond Centre; the Honourable Dr. Hedy Fry, MP, Vancouver Centre; Mr. Taleeb Noor-mohamed, MP, Vancouver Granville; and the Honourable Joyce Murray, MP, Vancouver Quadra.

You will each have four minutes for an opening statement. Feel free not to use the four minutes, but you are welcome to them, after which we will proceed to questions from committee members.

I will start with Mr. Davies.

Welcome.

• (1110)

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to all committee members for the opportunity to appear before you.

At the outset, I would just like to express that I'm both supportive of and pleased by the addition of one additional seat for British Columbia, as well as the decision of the electoral boundaries commission to allot that new seat in the southern interior. While reasonable alternatives exist in the placement of that seat, I believe that the rationale of the commission is strong and sound in this regard.

I appear to express my concerns, specifically about the proposed boundary changes as they pertain to my electoral district of Vancouver Kingsway. Specifically, I believe that it's both inappropriate

and unnecessary to place the expansion of Vancouver Kingsway into the area at the southwestern corner of the riding as proposed by the British Columbia Electoral Boundaries Commission in its revised proposal.

The first proposal would have extended Vancouver Kingsway across municipal boundaries into Burnaby. When I appeared before the commission and raised our concerns about that, it erased that proposal and instead popped Vancouver Kingsway into a significant portion of Vancouver South.

I handed out a map that I hope all of you have. I will be referring to that in a few moments. I have extra copies if you need them.

During the consultation process, I submitted and personally presented a proposal to the BC Electoral Boundaries Commission that provided two different options for Vancouver Kingsway specifically, and for all six Vancouver federal ridings in general. Both outlined rational and minimally disruptive boundaries. Both resulted in very close alignment with the provincial population quotient and very close equality of residents between the ridings. Both respected historical, cultural, electoral and social factors. We were dismayed to see the electoral boundaries commission's subsequent map largely ignore our proposal.

I will, of course, accept whatever the final outcome of this process is and enthusiastically represent, to the best of my ability, all residents who may be added to Vancouver Kingsway. However, I must add my voice to those who are concerned that the BC Electoral Boundaries Commission so fundamentally ignored the bulk of the public feedback it received and proposed a second map that contained radically different boundaries from its initial map. By doing so, in my view, it effectively rendered public input meaningless.

For the purposes of this submission, I will focus on my original first-choice plan for Vancouver Kingsway, which addresses the problems with the current proposal and more effectively respects the legislative direction and common law principles of relative equality of voters and communities of interest and identities.

Please refer yourselves to the map. Rather than expanding Vancouver Kingsway south to 49th Avenue between Knight Street and Main Street, I propose that it makes much more sense to keep the present southern boundary of my riding at 41st Avenue, and instead expand Vancouver Kingsway westward to Ontario Street from the current western boundary of Main Street. That's about three blocks west.

Ontario Street is the formal dividing line between the east and west sides of Vancouver. It starts at 000, and municipal addresses extend numerically upward in each direction, designated as west or east. Municipal lot sizes differ on either side of this line, with lots to the west generally being 40 feet or more wide and those to the east being 33 feet, resulting in different property tax interests and community densities.

Historically and culturally, the east and west sides mark a socio-economic division. Many residents identify as “east side” or “west side”. I note that this area has also historically been a part of Vancouver Kingsway, whereas the proposed addition never has. Vancouver Kingsway represented this area historically from 2004 to 2015. 41st Avenue is a major natural historical boundary, and I think confusion would ensue if we crossed it.

I've attached maps that illustrate it.

I hear the timer. I'll conclude by saying that I believe other impacted MPs adjacent to my riding concur with this proposal. I ask for your favourable recommendation.

Thank you.

• (1115)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Davies.

Next is Mr. Miao.

**Mr. Wilson Miao (Richmond Centre, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to all PROC committee members for this opportunity today to present my opposition to the electoral commission report's redistribution of the electoral boundaries for the proposed riding now named Richmond Centre—Marpole.

The report's boundaries for Steveston—Richmond East had maintained the Richmond municipal boundaries, but to meet the population average, Marpole Vancouver was added to the riding of Richmond Centre.

In the submitted objection document, I have the support of my neighbouring and affected members of Parliament—the Honourable Joyce Murray, the Honourable Harjit Sajjan, member of Parliament Taleeb Noormohamed and member of Parliament Parm Bains—on this proposed option for a new riding boundary. It is also supported by the mayor of Richmond, Richmond and Marpole community organizations, and residents of Richmond and Marpole.

The report points out that there is now public transit access connecting the city of Vancouver community of Marpole with the riding of Richmond Centre on the other side of the Fraser River. It assumes that physically joining these two communities would logically allow the residents of these two distinct communities to interact naturally or to feel connected as one community. This is not the reality, and the TransLink usage numbers confirm that it is these suburban residents who utilize transit to commute to jobs in the city of Vancouver. The usage by those working in Richmond is very minimal.

In the statistics of the City of Richmond, specifically for the riding of Richmond Centre, the community of Marpole affirms the location situation. Richmond is a city accessible only by several bridges and a tunnel. It has the highest population percentage of

new immigrants of Asian background. A large majority of them reside in the residential developments within Richmond Centre, which accounts for more than 75% of Richmond's annual population growth.

The 2021 census undertaken during the pandemic had a higher-than-average undercount rate for Richmond Centre. That's because many residents would have been missed because they were not residing in Canada during the pandemic. Since then, many large condo development projects have been completed and occupied, and at least two major developments in Richmond Centre will be completed within the year or next year. This rapid growth has necessitated the building of an additional transit stop.

Marpole sees itself as a distinct community within the city of Vancouver. The City of Vancouver's Marpole community plan expects 30% growth in the next 30 years. Due to this significant growth, the City of Vancouver's parks board is replacing the existing Marpole-Oakridge Community Centre to meet this demand.

As a resident of Richmond Centre for over 25 years, I have seen first-hand how this municipality has changed and grown. Personally, I don't feel any cohesion with the communities along the Vancouver side of the Fraser River, and residents of Richmond like me feel that we have our own distinct and unique local characteristics, culture and identities. I am certain that the residents of Marpole feel the same way.

With this distinct local challenge, Richmond organizations have been formed to meet community service needs, so that the residents in Richmond are not required to leave their island community. Some examples of these organizations are Richmond Cares, Richmond Gives; the Richmond Centre for Disability; and the Richmond Multicultural Community Services society. The community of Marpole also has its own local organizations that serve the distinct needs of the community, such as Marpole Neighbourhood House and Marpole Oakridge Family Place.

I hope these provided objection materials support the conclusion that Richmond and Marpole residents would be better served by a member of Parliament who represents their respective municipalities only. Richmond East—

**The Chair:** I'm going to have to say thank you.

**Mr. Wilson Miao:** No problem. Thank you.

**The Chair:** I appreciate that. We look forward to hearing more through comments and questions.

Next is Mr. Noormohamed.

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.):** I'm sorry, Madam Chair, but was Ms. Fry not next? No. I am happy to speak.

Thank you, Madam Chair and members of PROC, for allowing me to have this opportunity.

I wish I didn't have to be here. I'm here largely because the last version of the map the commission put forward looked nothing like the initial proposal, and I share many of the same concerns as Mr. Davies and Mr. Miao. No one in the three communities that have been affected by these material changes had the chance to be here, so I'm here on their behalf and I want to articulate what those three communities are.

First is the Punjabi Market and the historic organizations and entities of the South Asian community. My colleague, Mr. Sajjan, the member for Vancouver South, will speak to those later this week, but those historic institutions have always been together in one electoral district, and now it is proposed that they be separate.

Second, as you heard from Mr. Miao, Marpole, one of Vancouver's oldest neighbourhoods, a historic neighbourhood adjacent to and integrated with the Oakridge community right next door to such an extent that there are organizations there such as the Marpole-Oakridge Community Centre and Marpole Oakridge Family Place, is being proposed to be severed completely from Vancouver and basically joined to the Richmond riding. Marpole is connected to Vancouver. It's where the schools are. It provides the policing for these services and schools, and, as you heard from Mr. Davies, two blocks of east Vancouver are being placed predominantly in a west-side riding.

We let our constituents know on social media. Within 24 hours we had this stack of letters, emails and phone calls. Why? Why did they object? It was because the commission chose to sever Marpole—as I said, one of Vancouver's oldest communities, one that is connected physically to the city of Vancouver—and join it to the city of Richmond, which is separated from Vancouver by the Fraser River, the very same river that the commission noted should serve as the natural boundary between the ridings of Richmond and Delta.

It is our view that the same logic should apply when we're talking about the separation of Vancouver and Richmond. Anyone who has been to Vancouver, who has been to the airport, anyone who knows Vancouver knows that getting from Marpole to Richmond is not easy. With bridges, buses, walking, whatever, it is not actually easy, despite the exhortations to the contrary.

We've heard from so many residents. We've heard from MLAs. We've heard from city councillors, mayors, and members of Parliament. You've heard my colleagues here and others, all of whom are strongly opposed to this decision by the commission. Most important, we've heard from everyday citizens, and I will share with you some of their words.

The Commission must not know of Marpole's deep historic cultural, political and economic ties to the City of Vancouver. Marpole is not and has never been part of Richmond.

I live in Marpole. I was shocked to hear the boundary is what it is. In my opinion, Marpole has nothing to do with Richmond. It is physically separated. It makes it hard for us.

How can Marpole be part of Richmond? We are part of Vancouver.

I strongly resent the removal of our area, and I want you to convey our opinion in the strongest terms. These people don't know Vancouver.

As a resident of Marpole for 60 years, I am outraged at this [proposal]. Whoever has proposed this, whatever group, should be fired immediately! They don't understand Vancouver. This is our heritage and it cannot be handled in this offhand manner as if we citizens don't count. We were given no chance to voice our concerns.

These are just a few of the over 150 letters we got in 24 hours. Many of those have been attached to the submission I made.

What we're dealing with is the fact that had there been a chance to speak to this, you would have had thousands of people submitting their objections and speaking out. They didn't have that chance.

The other thing to note is that the residents of Marpole have an average income of approximately \$30,000 less per year than do those in the rest of the city of Vancouver. Those are the residents who access their MPs. Those are the ones who come to us for their services. To say to them now, "You must go to Richmond to access these services, and somebody will have to advocate for you with the City of Vancouver," is unfair to them and ignores fundamentally the premise of why we do this.

We do this so that votes matter, so that voters' voices count. All we are doing is disenfranchising people by putting them in a riding with which they have very limited affinity and almost no relationship.

My request to PROC is that they take into account what the report has said about other ridings: that the Fraser River should serve as the natural boundary between Delta and Richmond. We believe that same logic should apply between Vancouver and Richmond, and I agree wholeheartedly with what Mr. Davies has said with respect to the line between east and west being Ontario Street. That is how the City of Vancouver sees it. That is how the electoral boundaries commission should see it.

Thank you.

● (1120)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We will now go to Minister Murray.

I'm going to Dr. Fry last, because I need to do a sound check.

**Hon. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Thank you very much for this opportunity to participate in the commission's work.

I am objecting to the February proposal for Vancouver Quadra, which basically turns it into Vancouver East Broadway and is a dramatic and radical change to the boundaries. It's not just a move of certain parts of the boundary, but it changes the entire constituency from being a north-south one on the peninsula of Vancouver to being an east-west boundary out to essentially Ontario Street along Broadway. This was done without consultation.

The June redistricting addressed the issues and the challenges that were being faced by the area. That was acceptable, so I didn't connect with the commission at that point. It maintained Vancouver Quadra as the peninsula and added some of Kits Point to bring the Kitsilano community together. Therefore, the fact that it went from that to a radical redraw with no consultation is completely unacceptable.

I will tell you the key reason for that: The community of the Musqueam is being fragmented into two constituencies under this proposal. The map shows that are a number of key reconciliation, land ownership and development opportunities for the Musqueam that would be in one constituency, while the Musqueam community residential area is in a completely separate constituency under the February plan.

Under article 19 of UNDRIP, it says, "States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them."

I have a letter of objection from the chief of the Musqueam Indian Band regarding this fragmentation of their community with zero consultation. I have hundreds of letters from Vancouver Quadra residents. I'm going to read just one of them, because I think this captures it. I'm not sure who it's from, frankly, but it says:

Splitting the area where the Musqueam are located seems to me comparable to building a highway through Vancouver's downtown core (which was thankfully avoided years ago). The UBC area, and the South Coast including the still standing forest of the peninsula is historically, culturally and physically a part of the Indigenous community. Dividing them does not make sense and hampers a meaningful relationship and cooperation with the residents of that part of the riding [whose] efficient representation and understanding of their needs...has been neglected for [too] long.

Separating Arbutus Ridge, Mackenzie Heights, Kerrisdale, Southlands and most of Dunbar from UBC and Point Grey area shows a lack of understanding of how the whole area west of Granville grew over Vancouver's historical development. I think the Quadra riding as it stands in last year's proposal should be valued as a distinct area to be appreciated as is and represented as a natural whole under its present name.

That really captures the fact that this is a very dramatic change to the riding that takes out many historic neighbourhoods. I share the concern about Marpole being taken and put as part of the Richmond riding. I share the concerns of others about that. If that were to be restored, I think that is a part of the redistricting that needs to be done in Vancouver that would protect the Musqueam lands and keep them contiguous with their residential community hub.

Thank you.

• (1125)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

The timer did not go off, and we'll look into that. However, you were awarded 29 extra seconds.

Dr. Fry, hello and welcome. It's really good to have you here. You will have up to four minutes for your opening comments. The floor is yours.

**Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.):** Thank you very much.

I understand the reasons commissions make changes. I want to suggest that I do not disagree with the changes made, except for one very important change.

Granville Island is a historic and traditional part, where indigenous people used to meet. It connects directly to the west end. What this change has done is to draw a line that divides Granville Island, per se, into two pieces. This is a community of interest. Actually, all of the people in the west end, where the hotels are, come into Granville Island, which is a tourism hub.

I am suggesting that if the line could be rejoined to let Granville Island remain intact and not divided from the communities of interest—the people who work and live there, and the historic areas of Granville Island—it will increase the number of votes in that riding by 17. That's one and seven. This is not going to interfere with anyone else's riding or remove all the boundaries. Granville Island is connected to the west end and not to Kitsilano, which is a small piece of Granville Island. Those of you who have been there know it's like shaving off a piece of Granville Island and sticking it where it doesn't belong. It shows that the people who drew those lines didn't understand Granville Island and the area in which they are now creating communities of interest.

You have letters from the Granville Island Council, which is run by local people. It's part of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. They have written letters. A lot of people in that area have objected very strongly to dividing up Granville Island. What has happened is.... Granville Island is a transport hub with the west end, with footpaths, bridges and ways of getting around by water taxi. It is part of the west end. To take off this small slice of Granville Island—which makes absolutely no sense, with only 17 voters in it—is actually breaking up communities of interest, a transportation hub, and the economic and business component of Granville Island. The people who run Granville Island have written a very strongly worded letter suggesting this is the wrong thing to do, because, again, the historic, indigenous.... People used to meet there at all times. The indigenous communities are very closely linked to Granville Island, so there's a whole piece of development there that must stay.

I think it's important to note—and I'm going to repeat this many times—that it's only going to increase my voter turnout by 17 votes, because of the fact that it's mostly a business transportation community of interest. There was an artists' and artisans' hub built there. Granville Island was also brought about by the original member of Parliament for Vancouver Centre, the honourable Ron Basford. The park in Granville Island is named after him. To divide up the park and the whole community makes absolutely no sense whatsoever.

• (1130)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Dr. Fry.

That's perfect. I think you have made your—

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** You have several letters, etc.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Anything provided to our committee, for the information of all of our witnesses today, will be submitted to the commission. We don't get to pick and choose what we pass forward. Everything that comes to us goes back to the commission as we report through the House.

We'll now start with our first round. We will begin with Mr. Albas.

**Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate being here at the PROC committee. I haven't been here that often.

Thank you to my colleagues for their presentations today.

I'll start, first, with Mr. Davies.

Mr. Davies, I certainly understand that you submitted your own submission to the commission and were dismayed by its response. I think it's very important we bear this in mind: “This Report for this region”—this is on page 16—“is much changed from the Commission's Proposal in response to thoughtful presentations and submissions received, primarily on the Commission's choice of river crossings and division of municipalities. Making different choices about those matters has had a ripple effect on almost all the region's...districts.”

When it comes to your area, it says, “Vancouver Kingsway”—this is on page 19—“maintains its boundaries, with minimal change in its southwestern area.”

Lastly, I would say, on the conclusion of the process—and I may bring this up with other members—that, “While not all ideas presented are found in this Report, many are, and all have been considered. The public input has greatly influenced the configurations for the entire province.”

I certainly understand, sir, that you have an issue with what they have described as “minimal change in [your] southwestern area”, but they are balancing a much tougher picture.

Madam Chair, am I asking questions directly of committee members, or do I just make my comments? I don't want to split off, because I was hoping to touch on more than one submission. However, I don't want to pick on Mr. Davies.

• (1135)

**The Chair:** Would you like him to respond, though?

**Mr. Dan Albas:** Yes, just briefly.

Sir, they have said that they have tried to accommodate public input, and they've described the changes in your riding as minimal. How do you respond to that?

**Mr. Don Davies:** Yes, I've read those same comments. I think the answer is that, taking that defence of theirs as a whole, I simply disagree. They claim that they've taken into account all the feedback. I can tell you that I put in two proposals that would have contained all six federal ridings within the boundaries of Vancouver and given two different looks at it, and they ignored those completely.

More importantly, I think..., and you're right, Mr. Albas. With respect to my riding, there was minimal change. They changed it from adding a piece to Burnaby to adding a piece to Vancouver South. What I can tell you is that there wasn't a single person who asked for that, that I'm aware of.

The radical changes that they made to my colleagues in Quadra and Granville, though, are really beyond the pale. That's why I say that when the commission puts out its first proposal, I think that's its opportunity to be creative, and then it gets feedback. If it then comes back with a completely radical proposal after the public feedback has been given and without any further opportunity for public feedback, that's where I think the commission is overstepping its bounds, and I think it did so in this case.

**Mr. Dan Albas:** I think I understand your viewpoint here, and I appreciate that you said the real changes were to ridings other than your own. Acknowledging that shows the balance in your presentation today.

I'd like to actually talk a little about the removal of Marpole and moving it to Richmond Centre, because I'm going to address it more broadly than that.

First of all, with regard to it—and this is from page 18 of the report:

Many residents of the municipalities touched by this previous proposal frankly and helpfully questioned it as contrary to historical pattern and community of interest. While the Cities of Richmond and Delta have shared representation in the past, this solution was opposed by presenters on both sides of the Fraser River.

They originally proposed something. Everyone came out against it, similar, it seems, to the MPs here. Page 18 also says—and this is interesting, especially with regard to Mr. Noormohamed's comments:

It was suggested that the urban nature of Richmond Centre, the success of Canada Line transportation, and the location of two bridge crossings of the north arm of the Fraser River supported including lands in the historic Vancouver area of Marpole within the existing Richmond Centre district. Crossing the Fraser River is a significant step in the design of an electoral district. The Commission considers that historical patterns of Marpole and Richmond and communities of interest between neighbourhoods are sufficiently strong to support this crossing.

I totally understand, Mr. Miao, Mr. Noormohamed and even you, Minister, that you are all saying that there are no communities of interest and that the submissions were only one-sided, in your favour, for your argument. However, it clearly says right here that that's just not the case. The case is that the Richmond ridings didn't have the population, and that there are corridors and traditional communities of interest, and people said that to the commission. How do you respond?

Maybe we'll go to Mr. Noormohamed first.

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** Thank you, Mr. Albas.

I'd start by saying that if you were to speak to anyone in Marpole and ask them how often they go to Richmond, you'd find that that's actually not necessarily where they ordinarily go to shop, to get their services, to do their banking or to get their community services. They're not residents of Richmond. That's the first thing.

The second thing is the idea that the Canada Line is the be-all and end-all of transportation between Vancouver.... I would invite anyone on this committee to go and situate themselves at the corner of Fremlin Street in Vancouver, or 70th Avenue, and try to make their way easily to any of the historic offices of MPs—the last five MPs in Richmond—to see how long it takes you to get there by transportation, by car, by foot, by bike or by boat. Or, you could swim; that might even be faster. It doesn't work.

The other thing that is important to consider is that when you think about the nature of the community in Marpole, their ties to the city of Vancouver and the degree to which they are connected to what happens in Vancouver, you cannot understate the value of what people in that community feel about where they actually belong.

• (1140)

**Mr. Dan Albas:** As an MP who comes from an area where West Kelowna and Kelowna are separated and where there is an issue of the transportation, I will say that there are more transportation hubs between these two areas. Second to that, the answer was that I share an office with an MLA on the other side. I understand the arguments; I just don't agree with them.

I would just hope that the commission takes those viewpoints, because I think there's a stronger argument to be made just with regard to the population. You cannot have areas of representation that are unequal.

Thank you.

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** That's not true, actually.

**Mr. Dan Albas:** Are we going to have a second round? Yes? Okay.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Aldag.

**Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.):** That's great. Thank you.

It's a pleasure to be here at the much-esteemed PROC committee. This is the first time I have been here. It's good to see all my B.C. colleagues presenting.

I find it quite interesting that it seems that the primary concerns we have heard this morning relate to Vancouver. As a member of Parliament from the Lower Mainland of British Columbia, I think we need to get it right in Vancouver, absolutely, but I would also like to make sure we're not pushing anything out into, say, my region as we try to get it right in Vancouver.

There was a comment made by my Conservative colleague about not getting the numbers right. Richmond could be low. I think there are ranges within the mandate that the electoral commission related to the population. Dr. Fry has spoken about how hers would see a difference of only 17. That seems very reasonable.

Mr. Davies, you mentioned that you'd come up with a plan for Vancouver. I think you mentioned six seats. I'll start with you, but I would like to hear from others as well about any plans they've come up with and what the population targets would be. Could we actually have the proposed boundary changes within Vancouver that would maybe not exactly reflect an equal number but be within the range the boundary commission is able to work with?

Perhaps you could speak to particularly in yours, Mr. Davies, what you would see as being the population effects. Perhaps you could also talk about the larger piece you did for Vancouver, with the populations of the new ridings being within an acceptable range for population.

**Mr. Don Davies:** Thank you, Mr. Aldag.

I'll give you some numbers. The population of Vancouver, as used by the electoral boundaries commission and I think largely accepted as being the population of the city of Vancouver, is 682,000. That's the population. Divide that by six and you get an average of about 114,000. The provincial quotient is 116,000.

I showed the electoral boundaries commission how you could keep all six seats within the municipal boundaries of Vancouver. I just want to pause here and say that this is Canada's third-largest major city. With some very, very logical moving of boundaries, you could have each seat be 114,000 or 113,000.

In fact, it's 114,000 for Vancouver Centre, 114,000 for Vancouver East, 114,000 for Vancouver Granville, 114,000 for Vancouver Quadra, 113,000 for Vancouver South and 113,000 for Vancouver Kingsway, with virtually identical electors between the ridings and within 2,000 or 3,000 of the provincial quotient. You may know that the act permits a deviation of up to 25%. We're talking about 1.5% off the provincial quotient.

I also recognize that sometimes, as Mr. Albas said, you have to go across municipal boundaries. I recognize that, but that was not necessary in the case of Vancouver. When we put those submissions in, I have no idea.... The original submission had Vancouver South and Vancouver Kingsway popped over into Burnaby without any explanation. When they came back the second time, they moved Kingsway back into Vancouver. They took Vancouver South and put them even further into Burnaby, and then inexplicably took a piece of Richmond and grafted that onto Vancouver without any explanation. Just for them to say the words that, well, we have listened to everybody and we have taken into account the submissions—that is not sufficient.

I would conclude by saying that it seems to me that what the boundaries commission did was to slavishly adhere to the numerical equality of voters and not give sufficient attention to the equally important and legislatively required criterion of community of interest. That, I think, is what is underpinning all of our submissions today.

• (1145)

**Mr. John Aldag:** Thank you so much for that.

I think you've hit a really good point with what you've suggested, that it would be within a couple of thousand. We know that in Vancouver, within the metro region, we're going to see a huge population growth within the coming decade. I know they look at where we are at this point in time, but frankly, if we're worried about losing population, I would say it's not going to happen in any of the Vancouver ridings in the coming decade. I would think that each of those ridings would soon surpass the target of 116,000.

I'd like to turn to the others at the table and get their thoughts as well on this kind of redistricting and what the impacts would be on neighbouring ridings. Maybe we can go from left to right, if there's still time.

Ms. Murray, you mentioned as well the very significant impacts on the Musqueam community. Have you looked at what your proposed boundary would be? What are you suggesting for Vancouver Quadra?

**Hon. Joyce Murray:** The proposal in June made a lot of sense. It brought in a part of Kitsilano that had historically not been in Vancouver Quadra, so it connected the Kits community.

I didn't have the tools and the time to redraw the whole Vancouver and adjacent areas. My objection is about the fact that the consultation led to a proposal in June that was acceptable; there was no further consultation, and then there was a radical and dramatic change.

My key argument there is on the community of the Musqueam, who historically have lived at the mouth of the Fraser River. The chief is a fisherman actually, and fishing is a big part of the community. That community is now being completely severed from the lands where they are planning to provide housing for members as their community grows. As well, the Musqueam community's interest in things like the reconciliation centre out at UBC would be severed.

**The Chair:** Okay, thank you.

**Hon. Joyce Murray:** When—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, but when I start demonstrating my impatience, I need you to respond by providing me back the floor, and then I don't have to do this.

I appreciate that exchange. It was very fruitful.

The one thing I have in common with British Columbia is that my initials are the same.

[*Translation*]

Go ahead, Ms. Gaudreau.

I'm going to give you the time you lose because of the interpretation. Everyone has the right to speak in the language of their choice.

Go ahead, Ms. Gaudreau.

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

First, I have to be honest and say that I still haven't been to Vancouver Island or British Columbia, but you make me want to go, hopefully this summer.

I fully understand that you have to go through a number of steps because of a turnaround that seems to make no sense, which you rightly pointed out. I'm going to give you an opportunity to explain further, Ms. Murray.

I represent Laurentides-Labelle, a rural riding that spans a large area. I'd like to give you a chance to explain how natural communities in urban areas can be very different from one another, even when they're just a few blocks apart.

What impact would the proposed boundary redistribution have? You've talked about it some, but now you have a chance to explain further. The members of the commission are following these proceedings.

**Hon. Joyce Murray:** Thank you for your question.

Here's a map of what Vancouver Quadra looks like currently. You can see the electoral boundary readjustment proposed in June. The whole riding is rooted in Vancouver's historical development and has been part of the district's peninsular geography for a hundred years. Arbutus, Dunbar, Mackenzie Heights and Blenheim streets are all complete neighbourhoods that would be divided.

I also want to underscore to the committee that indigenous lands were fragmented without any consultation. None whatsoever. In a time of reconciliation, that is completely unacceptable. Indigenous people even expressed their dissatisfaction in a letter that was sent to the committee.

• (1150)

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Thank you.

Obviously, I'm not in a position to ask extremely specific questions since I'm not familiar with your ridings.

That said, this may be a good time for you to challenge the criteria behind the redistribution. Things change, realities change, circumstances change.

Do you think now is the time to review the much talked-about criteria? There's the quota, but there's also the community of interest. I'd like to hear your thoughts on that.

Would you like to go first, Mr. Noormohamed?

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** Thank you for your question.

I'd like to make two points. First, the process is indeed being questioned. A map was proposed, but people weren't then given an opportunity to provide feedback. Subsequently, a completely different map was proposed, without residents having any opportunity to speak to the people making the decisions. There's a problem with that process.

Second, in regard to your question about the criteria, I think it's very important for communities of interest to stay together. It's also important to take municipal boundaries into account. It's incredibly difficult for a member to represent the residents of two different cities, when you're talking about big cities like Vancouver and Richmond. They are totally different. They each have their own mayor and city council. That makes things very difficult, not only for constituents, but also for the member, who then has to work with two city councils and two governments.

I think it's necessary to consider changing the process and steps, as well as the rules and criteria.

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** We are making work for ourselves, here, but it's a hugely important issue.

When all the factors are being weighed, it's necessary to ask what's more important. The population has grown, and that has to be dealt with. You mentioned the process, but it seems to me there's a step missing. There needs to be consultation before coming back, to say whether the proposed change is acceptable.

I'd also like to hear your thoughts on the criteria or process.

[English]

**Mr. Don Davies:** If I may, I'm not so sure that the problem is with the criteria as with the fact that they were ignored in this case. The criteria under "community of interest" are.... Some are set out in legislation and some through jurisprudence, but an electoral boundaries commission is supposed to look at the history. It is supposed to look at geography. IT is supposed to look at demographics. It is supposed to look at communities of interest. I don't think there's a problem with those. It's a problem with the fact that it misapplied or ignored those when it came to drafting the boundaries for Vancouver.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Over to you, Ms. Blaney.

[English]

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you to all of our witnesses here today.

I'm just going to ask a simple question. I'll allow all of you to answer it, because it is probably the last round.

What are the most concerning consequences if the current boundaries are kept in your community?

I'll start with you, Minister Murray.

**Hon. Joyce Murray:** First, there's no reason to dramatically redraw Vancouver Quadra, because it's within the population numbers. It does have some growing development and will continue to grow appropriately, so it's not necessary.

Second, as I've been saying, it is very dismissive of the rights of indigenous people for them not to be consulted. Had they been consulted, I know they would have said absolutely not to fragment their lands, interests and activities into two different ridings.

• (1155)

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Mr. Davies.

**Mr. Don Davies:** Thank you.

The truth is, for my riding, it's not going to be profound. I empathize with my colleagues, because I think there are profound impacts on my colleagues, not so much for me.

To me, we do this every 10 years. This is an opportunity to get it right. It's not that anything terrible is going to happen to Vancouver Kingsway. It's just that something so much better could happen, so much more logical.

I'll just hold this map up and show you. This is Kingsway. Kingsway used to have this piece here. In 2015, they removed that piece and just kept the boundary at 41st. For some reason, instead of going into Burnaby, now the boundaries commission has moved this piece here.

I guess this kind of picks up the question from our Bloc Québécois colleague. This part here is historically South Asian. If you go up Main Street, you start getting into what has historically been called Punjabi Market, which starts at 47th Street, whereas this riding goes to 49th Street. It starts dividing Punjabi Market, which I think is a problem for my colleague in Vancouver South.

My proposal is to just add this piece here to Vancouver Kingsway, which has the benefit of actually aligning the western boundary of Kingsway with the east-west divider of Vancouver. It just makes so much more sense.

**Mr. Wilson Miao:** Thank you.

I think the main objective of this redistribution is to better represent the people of our community. The distinction between Vancouver and Richmond is that they have two different municipal structures and they pay different taxes. I think it's important to know how we represent these communities.

Vancouver Airport, although it's named Vancouver Airport, is also part of Richmond Centre. I think there's underlying population growth in Richmond as well, because there will be a lot of development happening in the next decade, and there will be representation of not just Canadians but also immigrants, newcomers and tourists. These people were not considered when the report was done, during the pandemic.

I have heard from my constituents and Marpole residents that it is very important to have the representation reflect the historical boundary, which will also better represent them in the community they live in. It's important that we be mindful of that. Of course we want to work out the numbers, but the numbers are not accurate at this point, because, according to the city report, the population between my riding and Steveston—Richmond East is 230,000, and if we have an equal split, the numbers would be the same as well.

That's why, with the ripple effect that was caused by the proposal initially, my colleague and member of Parliament Parm Bains went to the commission to share that concern, and that's why they made the changes to put the riding of Delta back to being on its own, as well as keeping Richmond by itself. Now, with that ripple effect, I've been given, in addition, the area of Marpole.

Thank you.

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** I'll keep it very brief.

If you look at this map, this is the city of Vancouver here, as you can see. I am very concerned that this part of the city of Vancouver is being chopped off completely. That's the reality we're talking about. That's Marpole. I agree completely with Mr. Davies about moving the line from Main Street to Ontario Street. Ontario Street is the natural dividing boundary.

Fundamentally, we need to recognize that communities of interest matter, and I draw the committee's attention to paragraph 15(2) (a) of the act. It says:

- (2) The commission may depart from the [prescribed population for each riding] in any case where the commission considers it necessary or desirable to depart therefrom
- (a) in order to respect the community of interest or community of identity in or the historical pattern of an electoral district in the province

In this case, Marpole has voted as part of a Vancouver riding for 100 years.

The city of Vancouver has used Ontario Street as the dividing line between east and west for over a hundred years. We are talking about communities of interest. We are talking about historical precedent, and all we are asking is that the commission actually adhere to the rules that they have been assigned by the legislation. That's what all of us are saying. All of us made minor tweaks to the proposal that was made to respect communities of interest, such as the Ontario Street argument that Mr. Davies and I have both been keen on, but in no world did we imagine that portions of the city of Vancouver would just be chopped off.

Those are my concerns. I think we all share the concern that the commission.... They've done very good work. I am not objecting wholesale to everything that's been done. I think we need to be mindful of communities. We need to recognize that they've done great work south of the Fraser, but they should be using the Fraser River as the line that divides Vancouver and Richmond, just as they're doing between Delta and Richmond.

Thank you.

● (1200)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I know, Dr. Fry, you're online, but the timer went off and we need to continue to the next panel. Do you want to say something, really quickly?

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** I just want to say that I agree with my colleagues from Vancouver. I think what is happening to Quadra is absolutely untenable and I think one of the things to remember is that anyone who lives in Vancouver and in British Columbia knows that Richmond and Vancouver are two different places. Therefore, to

just lump a piece of Vancouver into Richmond doesn't make any sense.

Someone has their mike on, and that's why I'm echoing.

As I said before, what they've done is to draw a line through a business district and through somewhere people live and work. They've divided a community of interest, historic communities and indigenous communities, and they don't seem to care—and all of that is for 17 votes.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Dr. Fry.

I would like to confirm to you that when there is a microphone on in the room, there's a red light, as you would know, that is shown. There were no red lights on when you were speaking. We continue to try to improve our technical systems around here, but there was not a mike on when you were on, just so we know this.

With that, I want to really thank everybody. This was a very fruitful and exciting conversation for the first panel on British Columbia. We thank you all for your time and attention. If there's anything else you would like to share with us, please share it with the clerk, and the clerk will share it with all members.

With that, I will suspend, and we will return with Vice-Chair Nater for the second panel. I wish you all a good day.

PROC will be meeting from 6:30 to 8:30 this evening on foreign election interference, and we'll see you again then as well.

With that, we will suspend for three minutes.

● (1200)

(Pause)

● (1205)

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Nater):** We will call this meeting back to order for the second half of our meeting looking at the reports from the British Columbia electoral commission.

Joining us today are Tako Van Popta, Langley—Aldergrove; the Honourable Kerry-Lynne Findlay, South Surrey—White Rock; Peter Julian, New Westminster—Burnaby; and Bonita Zarrillo, MP for Port Moody—Coquitlam.

Each member will have an opportunity to make an opening comment, followed by rounds of questioning.

We will begin with Tako Van Popta for four minutes.

**Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC):** Thank you. I won't take four minutes. My submissions are very, very simple. It's a request to have the name of the proposed riding changed from Langley Township to Langley Township—Fraser Heights.

I stated the reasons in my submissions, which I'm assuming you've had a chance to read. The new riding alignment will include the north half of the township of Langley and the northern little corner of the city of Surrey. For those of you who are not familiar—although most of you are probably familiar—Langley and Surrey are two separate cities. The Fraser Heights district, within the city of Surrey, is now going to be joined together with the northern half of the township of Langley.

We are surprised that the commissioners wouldn't have included the name of the Fraser Heights neighbourhood in the name of the riding. It is logical, and for the reasons set out in my submissions, I think they need to be respected.

I would point out that this has the support of some of my neighbouring colleagues—Mr. Hardie and Mr. Aldag are present—whose current ridings also contribute to the new riding. They completely support the concept that the Fraser Heights neighbourhood in Surrey should be included in the name.

I have support from the mayor of the city of Surrey. She was so compelled by my arguments that she just copy-typed them into her own letter. It shows that it has broad support from the people living in that neighbourhood. Thank you.

• (1210)

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Nater):** Thank you, Mr. Van Popta.

That's the record to beat now for the remaining commentary.

Ms. Kerry-Lynne Findlay, you have four minutes, please.

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the procedure and House affairs committee.

It's my pleasure to be with you today as you kick off your review of the report of the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for B.C.

In my comments, I will provide my rationale for the objection, which I filed with your clerk on March 10, 2023, to the commission's proposed boundary change that impacts the ridings of Nanaimo—Ladysmith and Courtenay—Alberni.

The commission's report proposes what some might think is a small change to the boundary between the two ridings, moving the municipal district of Lantzville from the southern riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith into the northern riding of Courtenay—Alberni. However, according to the mayor of Lantzville, Mark Swain, the proposal represents a significant and unwanted change for his residents.

The mayor wrote a letter to the commission to outline his concerns with the proposed boundary changes, wherein he provided compelling rationale for his position that this committee should consider.

He wrote:

Lantzville relies on partnering with the City of Nanaimo for infrastructure, safety, policing, recreation, services, sewer, and water. Additionally, Lantzville residents participate in many cultural activities, major holidays, and festivities in Nanaimo and are closely connected. Lastly, we are very concerned polling stations will be moved further away from the District of Lantzville creating a potentially inequitable situation for Lantzville voters.

The mayor went on to suggest that the commission could consider changes to the southern border of Nanaimo—Ladysmith to accommodate the inclusion of his population, which isn't that large, in the existing riding. Specifically, he suggested that the commission could look at moving a community like Saltair and surrounding areas into the riding of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, as their community of interest aligns well with the city of Duncan, which, if

you know the island at all, is heading south and is firmly in that riding.

The mayor sent a copy of his letter to a representative from each party in British Columbia in hopes of securing non-partisan support for his position during this committee review. The letter was sent to the Liberal minister from Delta, the NDP member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, the Green Party leader from Saanich—Gulf Islands and me.

I was born in Ladysmith and raised in Nanaimo. I owned property in Nanaimo until about two years ago. I maintain close family and community ties throughout Vancouver Island, but specifically in the area we're talking about. I was therefore honoured to receive the letter from Mayor Swain and am proud to act on behalf of his citizens.

I recognize that the other members copied on the letter are not here to join me in filing an objection, yet it is my hope that their parties will support the mayor's common-sense, non-partisan request.

Mr. Chair, on a personal note, I'd like to thank you and the members of the committee for the important work you're doing to strengthen Canada's democracy, from redistribution to your ongoing investigations. It is my hope that your work will lead to the necessary changes that will restore public trust in our electoral process and strengthen our democratic institutions.

With that, I'm hopefully quite prepared to answer any questions you may have.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Nater):** Thank you, Ms. Findlay. That was well under time as well.

Mr. Julian will be next. He has voluntarily opted to take about two minutes.

Mr. Julian, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** I'm now under pressure, Mr. Chair.

It's very good to be back at procedure and House affairs. It's good to be back with you.

The first version of the commission's boundary redistribution proposal for New Westminster—Burnaby and the Tri-Cities was unbelievably bad. The community pushed back in hearings throughout the Lower Mainland. The second version is much better, but, inexplicably, the boundaries commission has proposed the splitting apart of three key neighbourhoods in a number of ridings. That's what I wanted to speak to today.

First is the community of interest that is the Edmonds neighbourhood. As you know, Mr. Chair, having been out to the Lower Mainland often, Edmonds is at the peak of a hill. It is a very diverse community. Over 100 languages are spoken in that area. What the boundary commission is proposing is a split in that community of interest. Historically, Edmonds has remained together in one federal riding and certainly continues to be in one provincial riding.

Second is the community of interest in the neighbourhood of Maillardville. I know that my colleague will be addressing that. This is the historic French centre of British Columbia. Inexplicably, the boundary commission is proposing wrenching it apart. That makes no sense. Earlier, we had a Vancouver member of Parliament talking about having to relate to two cities. Putting a portion of Maillardville with New Westminster—Burnaby means that member of Parliament will have to be responding to the needs of three cities. It makes no sense. Maillardville is beyond the Brunette River valley and beyond the Brunette rail yards. Maillardville should be with Port Moody—Coquitlam.

Finally, Anmore, Belcarra and the Westwood Plateau are split. Historically, they have remained together, and the proposal is that they would go in Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam. Happily, Mr. Chair, all of this is within the quotient as defined by the boundaries commission, so it's a good-sense solution to a problem.

Thank you.

• (1215)

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Nater):** That's with 10 seconds to spare.

Ms. Zarrillo, you have four minutes. Go ahead.

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to follow up on the comments my neighbour in this presentation made today. That is on the changes that need to happen in the Tri-Cities.

The Tri-Cities are actually three cities and two small villages. They're wholly encapsulated in Port Moody, Coquitlam and Port Coquitlam. We're going to make some suggestions today for that to remain, because we share an RCMP detachment, local newspapers and a chamber of commerce with the start-up Tri-Cities.

I was shocked to see the tabled boundary of Port Moody—Coquitlam. These changes are the opposite of what was proposed and have already had the effect of destabilizing my community. Since this news appeared, I have received calls from not-for-profits in the Tri-Cities and my area. They are worried they will be negatively impacted. For decades, they have had the stability of being part of Coquitlam and have a relationship with their MP. The boundary line the commission tabled splits this community in half; it removes Maillardville from Coquitlam; it affects community business areas; it separates school systems; it leaves local community centres no longer a part of Coquitlam; it separates the Legion; and the local MP's office is now outside the riding of the residents it serves.

Maillardville is the oldest area of Coquitlam. It is the heart of south Coquitlam. The recent proposal does not maintain the community of interest in this historic neighbourhood, and it does not respect the way the community uses its services.

Another major concern is that Maillardville, which is now being proposed, by the commission, to go to New Westminster—Burnaby—this is what I'm opposing today—resides upon unceded Kwikwetlem territory. When the boundary report was tabled, I heard from the chief of Kwikwetlem, who had not been consulted. The new boundaries also mean that Coquitlam I.R.1 would be federally

separated from the unceded territory. There was no effort to consult with the local indigenous communities that have stewarded these lands and their watersheds for millennia.

I will mention that we've also learned a lot in the journey since the discovery of the 2,015 children. We know we are on a journey to reconciliation. I want to note that the commission has suggested there should be the naming of Maillardville in a new riding. Father Maillard was an oblate. He is the founding father of Maillardville, but to perpetuate and elevate this name in a new riding, in 2023, when he was also the principal of a residential school in northern B.C., seems unconscionable at this point in time.

Despite the federal boundary commission's stated principle to respect the integrity of different entities and communities, including first nations and municipalities, this commission's most recent report does the opposite in regard to our shared boundary.

On behalf of my community, I oppose the commission change to Port Moody—Coquitlam that removes the very important neighbourhood of Maillardville from Port Moody—Coquitlam, as it does not respect the well-established municipal and first nations boundaries or communities of interest.

Keeping Maillardville with Port Moody—Coquitlam will mean that the commission can amend the arbitrary split of another neighbourhood in Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam: Westwood. The Westwood neighbourhood has been wholly in the riding of Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam for a very long time. In fact, all of Westwood can remain in this riding, as it has since 2014, with the changes Mr. Julian and I are presenting today. The integrity of Westwood can be maintained north of Guildford Way and should stay with the current riding of Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, along with the villages of Anmore and Belcarra, in order to keep the quotient the commission requires.

Those are my comments, Mr. Chair.

• (1220)

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Nater):** Thank you to all the witnesses who were within time. There was no need for the “beep, beep, beep”.

We'll now go to our six-minute questioning rounds. I believe Mr. Albas is first, with six minutes.

Go ahead.

**Mr. Dan Albas:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. You're vice-chair, I guess, but right now you're chair, so there you go. It's good to be here.

I want to thank our colleagues for coming here to talk about their ridings. I know that there is no bigger honour as an MP than to represent an area. You can sure tell that people care about their areas, and even some of their traditional areas.

I'll start by commenting briefly on the name changes, Mr. Chair, because there will be quite a few of them. First of all, the Conservative members have had discussions, and we feel strongly that we should defer to individual members of Parliament and let them...to say, you know, if we're going to change the name of this riding, and we're going to put that forward, that we believe that it should be supported by this committee, as it's ultimately up to the voters to decide whether or not it's appropriate. Hopefully, other members can agree with it.

To Mr. Van Popta, message received; obviously, this is an important issue for mayors in your area and for you. I congratulate you on your presentation here today.

Second, I just want to address a few issues around indigenous consultations, because that has come up a number of times. Historically, when I was the member of Parliament for Okanagan—Coquihalla, there was the separation of the Shackan Indian Band lands between what was previous to Okanagan—Coquihalla and Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon. That was something that was eventually flagged to the process and dealt with. Now the Shackan Indian Band is part of Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon. They are very happy to have one member of Parliament.

Maybe that is something that potentially the government could look at. I know Minister Murray came in and said it was the government's responsibility. I would just point out—unfortunately, she's not here to hear the comments—that I agree with her. It is the government's responsibility. It's not necessarily the electoral commission's responsibility. If there needs to be a new structural re-think, perhaps the Prime Minister might include a minister of democratic reform or at least encourage his minister of indigenous reconciliation to make that one component of this. You get these things only once every 10 years, and obviously in the census there have been some issues with first nations reserves, so perhaps that should be looked at.

When it comes to the Port Moody—Coquitlam riding, it says the following on page 19 of the report:

Presentations and submissions urged the Commission to reconsider the number of electoral districts it had previously proposed for lands in the City of Burnaby. Presentations and submissions in neighbouring municipalities also questioned some of the boundaries set out in the Proposal. In response to this public input—

I just want to stop and editorialize for a second. There is a tremendous amount of reference in this report to “public input”. Some members have said there was none, and I just want to say that this was not the case.

I'll go back to the quote, Mr. Chair:

In response to this public input, the Commission now proposes to significantly redraw the electoral district boundaries affecting Burnaby and surrounding municipalities.

The proposed redesign provides Burnaby with a presence in four electoral districts, a number reduced from the Proposal. The four districts are: one wholly within the City of Burnaby, to be called Burnaby Central...and newly named New Westminster—Burnaby—Maillardville.

Maybe I'll start with you, Ms. Zarrillo, with this question, because this has to do with your riding. There was considerable concern raised on the first draft proposal. They went in and appeared to make drastic changes, but one thing has been pointed out again and again and again. First of all, there was uneven population growth.

Second, it also says that they tried to fix everything by the feedback they heard, but just because things didn't end up the way some people might have wanted, they certainly listened, and they tried sketching it out.

What do you say to the electoral commission, after reference after reference to public input and struggling to try to make the system work here, where you could have both equality of votes distributed in ridings and what you're presenting here today?

● (1225)

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo:** Thank you very much for that.

I'll start by saying that Mr. Julian and I have a solution for them. When this was presented, if I can talk about Port Moody—Coquitlam, the commission did not present that Port Moody—Coquitlam would lose any of southern Coquitlam. Even the municipality itself splits Coquitlam into north and south, and there was no proposal that south Coquitlam was going to be impacted in any way in regard to any changes.

My neighbour in Coquitlam was affected. There were going to be changes south of the Fraser River. That happened in the 2012 changes as well. What's happened to Port Moody—Coquitlam is because of what happened out in the east side, in the east ridings. That's what happened. Our community of Port Moody—Coquitlam was not consulted with these changes at all. It was news to the chief, it was news to me, it was news to the mayors and it was news to the MLAs. It was news. Unfortunately, what they've done is they've taken the heart of Coquitlam out, and they haven't consulted with indigenous nations. That's totally unacceptable.

**Mr. Dan Albas:** Again, I'm not going to state on that, but I will say that in the area of the Okanagan, for example, the Penticton Indian Band actually made representation to the commission, and they were heard. This is a difficult situation. I think, by reading the report, it's balancing those two things together, so I appreciate your submission here today.

Ms. Findlay, again, one of the challenges is where the boundary should be struck. Can you re-emphasize what the importance is of the northern boundaries' being maintained in their current form and what you propose otherwise?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Nater):** We are at time, but I'll give Ms. Findlay a short time to give her response. I think Mr. Julian wants to give a quick response, too, so we'll have a short response from each.

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay:** Vancouver Island—no surprise—is very north-south oriented. However, Lantzville, being on the northern border, used to just be considered a subdivision of Nanaimo, and it's been part of it forever. As the mayor pointed out, they rely on Nanaimo for infrastructure, safety, policing, recreation, services, sewer, water and cultural activities. It makes a lot more sense to carve—and we're not talking about a big amount—a little out of the south end, which orients itself far more to Duncan, Duncan being the next-biggest city on the island. That's just the way it's been, frankly, forever.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Nater):** I have to cut you off, Ms. Findlay.

Mr. Julian, please give a brief response.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** I think Mr. Albas is correct that the commission responded to the pretty inappropriate initial proposal, the pizza pie in Burnaby with six different ridings, New Westminster, Surrey, North Fraser, South Fraser. There is strong public reaction. However, carving Maillardville out of Port Moody—Coquitlam and putting it with New Westminster—Burnaby never came up. They never proposed it; it was never discussed. It came out of nowhere.

Happily, though, what we're proposing within the quotient that has been set by the boundary commission is a reuniting of the communities of interest of the Edmonds neighbourhood, of Maillardville with Coquitlam, and of Westwood Plateau with Anmore and Belcarra. We're proposing a solution that meets the quota requirements and ensures the communities of interest of all three of those neighbourhoods.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Nater):** We'll now go to Mr. Aldag for six minutes—with some flexibility at the end.

**Mr. John Aldag:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and good morning, colleagues.

I'm going to start with just a couple of statements related to name changes and then go to some questions, if there's time, on populations and the impacts on surrounding districts through the proposals that you're making today.

I want to start with Mr. Van Popta, neighbour of my riding, as well as Ms. Findlay. The name change you put forward I fully support. As you noted, Langley township now has part of Surrey in it, and it would be a complete misrepresentation to not have that reflected. Just for the record, I fully support what you indicated for the proposed name change.

I would also point out to the committee that I opted to not do an in-person presentation. I put forward a name change as well, so I would hope that you had a chance to look at that and consider a name change that is fairly benign. I just wanted to get a little plug in there for Cloverdale—Langley City—Sullivan Heights as perhaps the new name for my riding.

Ms. Zarrillo, I was intrigued by your comment about the name for the proposed New Westminster—Burnaby—Maillardville and the very interesting history you pointed out in the spirit of reconciliation. Do you have any thoughts on what that...? I guess if the community is actually kept intact, then it may not need to be represented, and the name is not what you'd be saying. Would you be

suggesting that the New Westminster—Burnaby riding would simply be New Westminster—Burnaby?

That's for either one of you, Mr. Julian or Ms. Zarrillo, if you'd like to give us some context on how we could get rid of the reference to Maillardville.

• (1230)

**Mr. Peter Julian:** New Westminster—Burnaby would be the name, because what we're proposing is that Maillardville be intact in Port Moody—Coquitlam. Again, with regard to the quotients, we're proposing that the Edmonds neighbourhood that has been divided be restored—so a community of interest as well. All three of those changes, including Westwood Plateau with Anmore and Belcarra, are the historical communities of interest that have always existed in Burnaby, New Westminster and the Tri-Cities, and they're within the quotient. What we are hoping for is a consensus through PROC that would recommend to the commission to take those common-sense steps to ensure that communities of interest are kept together.

**Mr. John Aldag:** Thank you.

The final piece I'll go to is on the numbers. Maybe the three of you who are looking at some tweaks to boundaries can speak about giving reassurance that the proposed boundaries you'd be looking at would be within that quotient.

Ms. Findlay, maybe I'll start with you, and then if there is time, I'll go to Mr. Julian and Ms. Zarrillo. I think the commission did well on a lot of things, but maybe use that number as the primary thing to fixate on, and I think that there's some room. If you could just speak about the numbers and what you would see in your redistribution proposal...

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay:** Thank you.

Yes. In other words, it's basically equivalent. What we're saying is they're taking a little piece in the north and putting it with the northern riding, when what should have been done is that small piece in the south should have been pushed into the southern part.

It's a common-sense approach. If you're doing everything with one municipality, and you've always been a part of that municipality, it makes no sense to then push that community up north to be part of a riding that it doesn't work with in the same way. They're not as integrated as they are now.

Lantzville with Nanaimo is absolutely integrated. In the southern portion—which we're suggesting can take the place of that and go with the more southern riding—again, they're already doing that. That's how it works there.

We're talking about rough equivalents in order to make it fit.

**Mr. John Aldag:** Thanks.

I haven't heard the buzzer, so maybe either Mr. Julian or Ms. Zarrillo could speak to the numbers in their area.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Yes.

The B.C. riding quotients go from Kelowna to Victoria, with 105,000 to 125,000. What we're proposing is within that quotient and allows for the communities of interest in all three ridings of New Westminster—Burnaby, Port Moody—Coquitlam and Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Nater):** You still have a minute and a half.

**Mr. John Aldag:** Okay.

I'm interested in whether you're aware of any other discussions. We heard this morning from Ms. Murray about the inadequate or lack of indigenous consultation.

I think, Ms. Zarrillo, you spoke to that.

Are there any other areas you're aware of—other first nations communities or territories you've heard of—that may not have been represented as well through consultation?

I wonder if this has come up in any discussions you've had in your areas.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** We're not aware of any consultations with the Qayqayt First Nation.

In New Westminster—Burnaby, we are on the traditional unceded territories of the Hul'q'umi'num' and Squamish-speaking Coast Salish peoples. As Ms. Zarrillo pointed out, there was a fundamental lack of consultation within the Port Moody—Coquitlam riding boundary. I think it's fair to say that ensuring that Maillardville stays with Port Moody—Coquitlam helps to satisfy that lack of consultation by restoring the community of interest.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Nater):** Thank you, Mr. Aldag.

I understand that today is your birthday. It may be a milestone birthday, so happy birthday on behalf of the committee.

**Voices:** Hear, hear!

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Nater):** Mr. Fergus said 75. He's never looked better, but I'm not sure that's quite there.

• (1235)

[*Translation*]

Go ahead, Ms. Gaudreau. You have six minutes.

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. You're doing an excellent job, by the way.

The previous member gave me some food for thought. I realize now that the electoral quota is high. This is my first concern. What will happen in 10 years if the electoral quota is nearly maxed out already? How do you see future movements in the population or population growth? Are you worried right now? Might that be another factor to bring to the commission's attention in support of your objection?

Mr. Julian can answer first, followed by Ms. Findlay.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Thank you.

Unfortunately, the commission can't take population growth into account. For us, the most important thing is taking into account the current population.

Maillardville is the birthplace of British Columbia's francophone community. As you well know, it's home to a great many francophone institutions. Breaking up Maillardville, with part of the community moving to the New Westminster—Burnaby riding and the other part staying in Port Moody—Coquitlam, makes no sense.

The initial proposal was to put New Westminster and Surrey together. That's a bit like putting Laval with Longueuil. It doesn't make sense.

Also, the population reacted very strongly to the second proposal, because it breaks up the neighbourhoods. That is why we are proposing, in all three cases, bringing together the communities of interest of those neighbourhoods, so that Edmonds can stay together, Maillardville can stay in Port Moody—Coquitlam, and Westwood Plateau, Anmore and Belcarra can also stay together.

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay:** Thank you.

[*English*]

In the last 10 years—those are the time frames we're working with—all of the development in Nanaimo has gone north, not south. Again, that's another reason why it makes sense for Lantzville to be included there. That is no doubt as to why the mayor of Lantzville is saying, "We rely on Nanaimo for all its services, even water, sewer, and all the infrastructure. We work together." That's just the way the growth has been. It has not been south; it's been north.

Ladysmith is south of Nanaimo, so it makes sense to incorporate that smaller community and draw the line there, but in my view, it does not make sense to put Lantzville into a riding further north.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Thank you.

That brings something to mind. I asked someone in the previous panel whether we should review the criteria and the process. He said that the criteria existed, but wondered whether they were taken into account. Which criterion comes first?

I'd like you to talk about the changes being proposed today. The preference is to keep communities of interest together, but demographics also come into play. It's the same in Quebec.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Actually, Ms. Zarrillo and I don't doubt that the population grew. That said, we are proposing going about the redistribution differently, while preserving the communities of interest. What puzzles me are all the procedures.

A commission released a first draft of possible proposals, whether in Quebec or British Columbia. In some cases, that leads to significant changes. Subsequently, the population proposes other options. Then, a second proposal comes out, but the public isn't consulted on it. With the second proposal, the francophones of Maillardville should at least be asked whether they want the riding of Coquitlam split up. Their reaction would be very strong, indeed.

Currently, the process around the second proposal allows the commission to do what it wants. That's the problem. If the second map proposes significant changes without a historical basis for separating communities of interest, it only makes sense to consult the public a second time, in my view. It's important to take the public's view into account.

• (1240)

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** That confirms that, in some cases, a step is missing to ensure respect for both demographics and democracy over the next 10 years.

I think you have 30 seconds left to answer, Ms. Findlay.

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay:** Thank you.

[*English*]

I lived through the last redistribution, and there were dramatic changes then. There are some dramatic changes here, particularly in British Columbia. Often, one of the objections is that now, whoever the federal representative will be will have to deal with more than one municipality. The truth is that in my riding now, I deal with two cities.

In my old riding, which was Delta—Richmond East, not only was I in two cities, but I was across the river, so I heard some of the earlier testimony, “You're making us represent across a river.” I've actually done that, because it is possible. It is possible for a federal representative to deal with two or three different municipalities.

In some of our rural ridings, there are many cities and townships that people deal with, so it is possible. Sometimes, though, on the ground, it doesn't make sense. In my riding of South Surrey—White Rock, they're going to carve out a little bit and put it in Delta. That's another city, but it isn't dramatic enough—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Nater):** I have to cut you off, Ms. Findlay, with the greatest respect as our whip.

From one whip to the next whip, we have Ms. Blaney, for six minutes, give or take.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** “Give or take”. I like that.

Thank you to everyone who is here testifying today.

Of course, it's very lovely to see Mr. Nater in the chair and always nice to have a little change.

I think this comes back to a process question. In this committee, we've heard a lot about the fact that in the initial public input process, if people are content or don't have major concerns with it, they don't show up, and when there's a dramatic change, then people are very frustrated when they don't get an opportunity to respond to it. I think it is something this committee should take into consideration. How do we make sure people's voices are heard and that the process is clear enough so that people have time to respond in a meaningful way? The other issue that has come up several times, of course, is indigenous communities being consulted in a meaningful way.

I hope this committee will take a bit of time to discuss how we are engaging with the public on all the different needs they have, and how we ensure the process doesn't fall apart later on and leave

this committee in a place where we're trying to navigate these systems and information, maybe without all of the relevant information.

I'll move on to questions.

I have no questions for Mr. Van Popta or Madam Findlay. I have no problem with the interventions you've brought forward and will be happy to support them moving forward.

I have a question for Mr. Julian and Ms. Zarrillo, if there's interest in responding.

What I've heard very clearly is that there are key interests of communities that have connections to services in the community, and communities are completely being removed. It doesn't seem to make a lot of sense. I'm wondering, where did this come from? In the public hearings, were there actually people who said, “We want to take this community out of this community”? It doesn't seem to make sense. Could you provide any clarity, Ms. Zarrillo or Mr. Julian?

**Mr. Peter Julian:** That's a very good question, Ms. Blaney, and the reality is there was no heads-up from the commission that they were going to rip Maillardville out of Port Moody—Coquitlam, and no heads-up either, really, from the commission around splitting Edmonds in two.

This gets back to the point of the second version, with the second often proposing wholly new solutions without having had the public's feedback. Perhaps it's something that the procedure and House affairs committee can look at as well. A process whereby the public is eliminated from a second stage that can often be dramatic doesn't make a lot of sense.

There are ramifications of the second proposal for Edmonds, which is a community that has a great deal of cohesion, because one neighbour would have a different MP from another neighbour. In Maillardville, it's the same thing.

Maillardville, historically, has been part of Port Moody—Coquitlam, and, all of a sudden, they would have to go to New Westminster to get from their member of Parliament the supports they have the right to obtain. It is a dramatic shift in the second draft. It doesn't make sense for Maillardville. For everybody who's been in the Lower Mainland, to get from my riding to Maillardville you'd have to cross a stream, a rail yard and the freeway. To get to Maillardville, that does not make any sense at all.

There's only one input length: one street that actually goes between what is being carved out of Port Moody—Coquitlam in this proposal and put in with New Westminster—Burnaby. It wasn't a thoughtful suggestion from the commission, and there isn't a justification for it, because it doesn't meet the quotient. The quotient can be met by ensuring that Edmonds, Maillardville, Westwood Plateau, Anmore and Belcarra stay in the ridings they have historically been part of.

I don't understand the justification for the second version, and it certainly was not subject to any public feedback whatsoever.

• (1245)

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Thank you so much.

It sounds from your testimony like there were no big groups of folks proposing that this community be moved from the current riding into a different one.

I'm wondering if I could ask both of you, what would be the consequences within the region you serve if these current boundaries were maintained, Mr. Julian and Ms. Zarrillo?

Ms. Zarrillo, you go ahead first.

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo:** Well, if I speak about Maillardville, it will be the only community that is removed from the Tri-Cities in relation to representation.

There are economic impacts as well. Maillardville hosts the largest celebration of French culture in all of British Columbia. It's part of Coquitlam. It's marketed that way, so it has economic impacts. Also, it has impacts on the ground. I spoke about our Legion. The Legion is going to be split. The Legion that has traditionally been supported by and supports the south side of Coquitlam will no longer be in the federal riding.

The impacts are huge. This happened right in the middle of Canada summer jobs grant applications. I got calls from people in my community, not-for-profits and charities, who were asking how this was going to affect them and their summer jobs grants.

I think the impacts are wide. Certainly, there was no consultation. There was no one in the south side of Coquitlam who knew that this could possibly happen, that the commission would take a portion of the Tri-Cities and join it to something that is not physically connected. You can't actually walk from the two ridings safely at all.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Nater):** Thank you.

That is time, but Mr. Julian, did you want to make a quick response?

**Mr. Peter Julian:** If you tried to get between the two portions, you'd have to cross a ditch, cross a rail yard and cross a freeway. Your chances of living through all that are pretty slight.

The consequences ensure a less effective level of service. The current member of Parliament has their constituency office in the Maillardville area. Any MP who serves New Westminster, Burnaby and Maillardville would not have their constituency office there. We're talking about a poor level of service that the commission is proposing, and I don't think PROC should find that acceptable at all.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Nater):** Thank you. That concludes our six-minute round.

We have a bit of time left, so we're going to do a quick bonus lightning round.

I believe Ms. Romanado has a question.

I don't think we have any more questions from the Conservatives, Bloc or NDP, so we will go to Ms. Romanado for a last question.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** Thank you so much, Mr. Chair. Thank you for allowing me a quick question.

Mr. Van Popta, I won't ask you because we all kind of agree with respect to name changes. I'll ask something of the other three MPs here today.

I know when we do the objections, we usually get colleagues in our same party to fill out the names to get the 10 signatures. However, you didn't reference whether or not any MPs from other parties are supporting your position, so I want to check.

Ms. Findlay, you mentioned you were writing on behalf of the mayor, but you didn't mention whether the MP for Nanaimo—Ladysmith supports this change.

Could you let us know whether you have the support of other MPs?

• (1250)

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay:** Generally, in speaking with them, they weren't against it, but they weren't adding their name. It was kind of neutral, I guess you would say. That was the reaction.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** Okay.

MPs Julian and Zarrillo, do you have the support of other MPs?

**Mr. Peter Julian:** I don't think there's an objection from the MP for Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam.

I think the key issue of Maillardville is really between the two of us, and we have a consensus. It doesn't make sense for Maillardville residents to be tossed into New Westminster—Burnaby when historically, and with the community of interest, they've been part of Port Moody—Coquitlam.

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo:** I would note that Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam and Port Moody—Coquitlam share the Tri-Cities together. This historically has been the neighbouring MP's riding, and we work very closely together all the time.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** Okay, thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Nater):** Thanks, committee members. That does bring this meeting to an end.

Before we all leave, this is just a reminder that we have another meeting tonight, at 6:30, I believe, in the same room. The first hour is with Michael Wernick, former clerk of the Privy Council. The second hour is with Daniel Jean, former national security and intelligence adviser to the Prime Minister. That is at 6:30 p.m. tonight, after votes.

If there's nothing further for the good of the committee, we are adjourned.





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