



41st Parliament, First Session

The Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs has the honour to present its

FIFTY-SEVENTH REPORT

Your Committee, which is responsible for all matters relating to the election of Members of the House of Commons, pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(a)(vi), has considered the objections filed in respect of the *Report of the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for the Province of Saskatchewan*, in accordance with section 22 of the *Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act*, R.S.C. 1985, c. E-3, and is pleased to report as follows:

After each decennial census, the number of Members of the House of Commons and the representation of each province is adjusted in accordance with the rules prescribed by section 51 and 51A of the *Constitution Act, 1867*. An independent three-member electoral boundaries commission is then established for each province with the mandate to consider and report on the division of the province into electoral districts, the description of the boundaries and the name of each electoral district.

The *Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act* provides the rules governing the division of a province into electoral districts. The population of each electoral district must be as close as possible to the electoral quota for the province, that is, the population of the province divided by the number of Members of the House of Commons allocated to the province in accordance with the Constitution. Each commission shall also consider the community of interest, community of identity or the historical pattern of an electoral district in the province; as well as the manageable geographic size of electoral districts, in cases of sparsely populated, rural or northern regions. A commission may depart from the provincial electoral quota by plus or minus 25% in order to respect the community of interest, community of identity, or the historical pattern of an electoral district, or to maintain the manageable geographic size of sparsely populated districts. In circumstances that are viewed as extraordinary by a commission, the variance from the electoral quota may be greater than 25%.

A commission is required to hold at least one public sitting on proposed electoral districts' boundaries and names to hear representations by interested persons. After the completion of the public hearings, each commission prepares a report on the boundaries and names of the electoral districts of the province. These reports are tabled in the House of Commons, and referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. Members of the House of Commons have then 30 calendar days to file objections to the proposals contained in a report. An objection must be

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

After the expiration of the period for filing objections, the Committee has 30 sittings days, or any greater period as may be approved by the House, to consider the objections. The report of the commission is then referred back to the commission, along with the objections, and the minutes of the proceedings and the evidence heard by the Committee. The commission has then 30 calendar days to consider the matter, dispose of any objection, and finalise its report with or without amendment depending on its disposition of the objections.

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

Objections

The *Report of the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for the Province of Saskatchewan* was tabled in the House of Commons, and referred to the Committee on January 28, 2013. By the end of the 30-day period, the Clerk of the Committee had received 13 objections.

General Comments

The Report of the Commission proposed fundamental changes to federal electoral boundaries in Saskatchewan. The Commission recommended more than mere readjustments to existing boundaries; it put in place boundaries based on the urban-only model for the two largest cities of the province, and abandoned the “hub and spoke model” unique to Saskatchewan that had resulted in mixed rural-urban ridings for the province. The Commission “felt that time had come to have a number of electoral districts located solely within the geographical limits of the province’s two largest cities.”

The proposal of the Commission met with significant opposition. The Committee was informed that most people who made representations during the public hearings were opposed to the approach taken by the Commission. Objection to the proposal is also evidenced by the dissenting opinion of Commissioner David Marit in the Report of Commission, and the 12 objections that were filed by MPs against the Report.

Mr. David Anderson, M.P. for Cypress Hills–Grasslands; Ms. Kelly Block, M.P. for Saskatoon–Rosetown–Biggar; Mr. Ray Boughen, M.P. for Palliser; Mr. Garry Breitkreuz, M.P. for Yorkton–Melville; Mr. Rob Clarke, M.P. for Desnethé–Missinippi–Churchill River; Mr. Randy Hoback, M.P. for Prince Albert; Mr. Ed Komarnicki, M.P. for Souris–Moose Mountain; Mr. Tom Lukiwski, M.P. for Regina–Lumsden–Lake Centre; Mr. Gerry Ritz, M.P. for Battlefords–Lloydminster; Mr. Brad Trost, M.P. for Saskatoon–Humboldt; Mr. Maurice Vellacott,

M.P. for Saskatoon–Wanuskewin; and Ms. Lynne Yelich, M.P. for Blackstrap, all objected to the Report of the Commission.

Their objections asserted that the “hub and spoke model” has served Saskatchewan well in the past, and that it had deep roots in Saskatchewan’s electoral history. They noted that the population of Saskatchewan did not increase so significantly as to justify the fundamental shift the Commission is proposing. It was also asserted that mixed urban-rural ridings require all MPs to be knowledgeable on both rural and urban issues, and Saskatchewan representation would have been strengthened as a result. It was further asserted that the Report of the Commission would diminish the agricultural voice in Ottawa. It was also argued that having urban-only ridings for Saskatoon and Regina would make the rural ridings surrounding them unworkable.

Mr. Ralph Goodale, M.P. for Wascana, also filed an objection, not against the Report of the Commission, but against the dissenting report from Commissioner Marit. Mr. Goodale fully endorsed the Report (of the majority) of the Commission, and rejected the arguments put forward in the dissenting report. He noted that the majority of the Commission “produced a measured, reasoned, and balance plan” that “will allow both rural and urban voices to be reflected in the House of Commons.” Mr. Goodale also noted the support in Saskatchewan for the Report of the Commission.

Strong language was used by many MPs to criticize the Report of the Commission. It was suggested that the Commission may have had a mindset that was pre-disposed to the establishment of urban-only electoral districts even before the beginning of the readjustment process. One Member saw “bias” in that approach and cause for recusal. The disposition of one commissioner in particular, Dr. John Courtney, Professor Emeritus of Political Studies, was of concern to some MPs. The Committee examined carefully the Report of the Commission, the dissenting report from Commissioner Marit, objections filed by MPs, and numerous letters and other submissions for and against the approach taken by the Commission. The Committee would like to state unequivocally that nothing in the record suggests bias or any other improper behavior from the members of the Commission. The Committee concluded that the allegations of bias and lack of objectivity have no merit. The Commission has fulfilled its mandate with objectivity and impartiality, and that while its approach towards the implementation of urban-only ridings may be disagreed with, that approach is compatible with the provisions of the *Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act*.

The Committee feels that it would not serve the interest of Saskatchewanians to insist, at this stage, on a complete redraft of the proposed electoral boundaries of the province. The independent arm’s length Commission was tasked to draw new boundaries for Saskatchewan, and it has made a decision in accordance with the conditions and requirements of the *Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act*.

The Committee, however, could have hoped that such a fundamental shift had taken place in different conditions – not with a Commissioner dissenting to the Commission’s Report, 12 out of 14 MPs of the province objecting to the proposal, and significant public objection.

As stated above, the Committee does not recommend a complete redraft of the proposed Saskatchewan electoral map. However, based on the objections filed by Members, the Committee does recommend some changes to electoral boundaries.

The Committee trusts that the Commission will receive the proposals in this report with openness and with a view to striking the appropriate balance between representation by population and the maintenance of communities of interest and communities of identity in existing electoral districts.

The Committee also notes that the statistics found in this report, in respect of estimated regional populations, were provided by Elections Canada using current census data.

Electoral Boundary Changes

Desnethé–Missinippi–Churchill River

Mr. Rob Clarke, M.P. for Desnethé–Missinippi–Churchill River, filed an objection respecting the boundaries for the proposed electoral district of Desnethé–Missinippi–Churchill River. His objection has three components, two would also affect the proposed electoral district of Prince Albert, and one would also affect the proposed electoral district of Yorkton–Melville.

Firstly, Mr. Clarke proposed that the towns of Shoal Lake, Red Earth and Cumberland House, all located at the South-East of the proposed electoral district of Desnethé–Missinippi–Churchill River, be included in the proposed electoral district of Yorkton–Melville “as a natural extension of the riding to its north.” He alleged that these communities have a greater proximity and affinity with Yorktown and Melville, both located in the district of Yorkton–Melville. Mr. Clarke also informed the Committee that as a result of changes made to the electoral boundaries, he would have to travel through another district to reach these communities.

Secondly, Mr. Clarke suggested that the town of Shellbrook be transferred from the electoral district of Prince Albert to the electoral district of Desnethé–Missinippi–Churchill River. He asserts that “[t]he R[egional] M[unicipality] is already in my riding and I fight for funds, services and constituents there.” Mr. Clarke suggested that this change would harmonize the regional municipality and the town of Shellbrook by placing them in the same electoral district.

Thirdly, Mr. Clarke proposed that the towns of Choiceland, Love, White Fox, and Seaton be transferred back into the electoral district of Desnethé–Missinippi–Churchill River. These communities are currently located in the electoral district of Desnethé–Missinippi–Churchill River, and the Commission offered no reasons for its decision for placing them into the proposed electoral district of Prince Albert.

Mr. Clarke’s proposition with respect to the transfer of the towns of Shoal Lake, Red Earth and Cumberland House into the proposed electoral district of Yorkton–Melville was not supported by Mr. Breitkreuz in his testimony before the Committee. The electoral district of Yorkton–Melville would be extended to its North-East to include an area that was previously located in the electoral district of Desnethé–Missinippi–Churchill River. Mr. Breitkreuz informed the Committee that this

area is difficult to access, noting that he “would have to go into another constituency for most of the year to access that area.” Mr. Clarke’s suggestion would now further extend to the North-West the territory covered by the district of Yorkton–Melville, by adding the towns of Shoal Lake, Red Earth and Cumberland House.

An issue raised for Mr. Clarke by the Committee during his testimony was the opposition from Lac La Ronge First Nation regarding his recommended changes.

The Committee notes that the changes relating to the boundary between the district of Desnethé–Mississippi–Churchill River and the district of Prince Albert are supported by Mr. Randy Hoback, M.P. for Prince Albert, but Mr. Breitzkreuz, M.P. for Yorkton–Melville, indicated no support for the transfer of towns of Shoal Lake, Red Earth and Cumberland House into that riding.

The Committee refers Mr. Clarke’s second and third proposals regarding the boundary between the electoral district of Desnethé–Mississippi–Churchill River and the electoral district of Prince Albert to the Commission for its consideration. As to Mr. Clarke’s first proposal relating to the boundary between the electoral district of Desnethé–Mississippi–Churchill River and the electoral district of Yorkton–Melville, the Committee does not endorse this proposal.

The proposed electoral district of Desnethé–Mississippi–Churchill River has a population 69,471 people with a variance of –5.88% from the electoral quota. Adding the town of Shellbrook and the communities of Choiceland, Love, White Fox and Seaton to the electoral district would increase its population by 2,600 and 1,482 people respectively establishing therefore its population at 73,553 and resulting in a deviation of 0.35% from the electoral quota. The Committee will discuss below the impact of these changes on the electoral districts of Prince Albert as they must be considered in combination with other changes suggested to the boundaries of this riding. At this stage, the Committee notes that the resulting variance would be very close to the electoral quota.

Prince Albert

Mr. Randy Hoback, M.P. for Prince Albert, filed an objection with respect to the electoral boundaries for the proposed district of Prince Albert.

The proposed electoral district of Prince Albert includes almost all of the territory of the existing district with the same name; it is also slightly enlarged to include some new northern and southern areas. Mr. Hoback proposed the addition of two other areas to the electoral district.

Firstly, Mr. Hoback suggested that the communities of Batoche, Domremy and Saint-Louis and their surrounding areas be moved from the proposed electoral district of Humboldt–Warman–Martensville–Rosetown into the district of Prince Albert. Secondly, he suggested that the communities of Saint-Brieux and Naicam and their surrounding areas be moved from the proposed electoral district of Yorkton–Melville to the district of Prince Albert.

Mr. Hoback’s objection is based on the community of interests between these communities and the greater Prince Albert area. He indicated that these communities work in, and received their public services from within, the district of Prince Albert; it is also where constituents go for

“entertainment, sports, and leisure.” Mr. Hoback also underlined that constituency services will be more easily accessible for these communities should they be located in the electoral district of Prince Albert, as residents will be closer to the constituency office.

Mr. Trost, M.P. for Saskatoon–Humboldt, in his objection, expressed agreement with the proposal made by Mr. Hoback and underlined that these changes would strengthen the community of interest of the francophone communities located in these areas by joining them with the district of Prince Albert that already contains francophone communities.

The population for the proposed electoral district of Prince Albert is of 77,361 (with a variance of 4.81% from the electoral quota). Above, it is recommended that 4,082 individuals (2,600 + 1,482) be removed from the electoral district of Prince Albert and transferred into the district of Desnethé–Missinippi–Churchill River. The two changes Mr. Hoback is proposing would increase the population of the district of Prince Albert by 2,175 people (from Humboldt–Warman–Martensville–Rosetown), and 1,126 people (from of Yorkton–Melville). As a result of these changes, the population of the electoral district of Prince Albert would decrease to 76,580 with a variance of 3.75% from the electoral quota.

The population for the proposed electoral district of Yorkton–Melville is 71,270 people. Mr. Hoback’s proposal would remove 1,126 individuals from it resulting in a population of 70,144 with a deviation of –4.97% from the electoral quota. As for the proposed electoral district of Humboldt–Warman–Martensville–Rosetown, its population would decrease from 74,585 to 72,410 and the deviation from the electoral quota would change from 1.05% to –1.9%.

The changes proposed by Mr. Hoback, combined with other changes also proposed to affected electoral districts, result in deviations very close to the electoral quota. The Committee refers Mr. Hoback’s proposal to the Commission for its consideration.

Regina–Lewvan and Regina–Qu’Appelle

Mr. Lukiwski, M.P. for Regina–Lumsden–Lake Centre, filed an objection with respect to the boundaries for the proposed electoral districts of Regina–Lewvan and Regina–Qu’Appelle. He suggested that the area known as the Cathedral area, located in the proposed electoral district of Regina–Lewvan according to the Report of the Commission, be transferred into the proposed electoral district of Regina–Qu’Appelle.

The purpose of Mr. Lukiwski’s objection is to lower the deviation from the electoral quota for both electoral districts, and to take into consideration the expected population growth in the proposed electoral district of Regina–Lewvan. Mr. Lukiwski asserted that if the transfer was not made, the population of Regina–Lewvan could be as much as 25,000 greater than the other two Regina ridings. According to Mr. Lukiwski, his proposal has no negative impact on the Cathedral Area Community Association and other community of interest, as the Cathedral area remains in its entirety within one electoral district. According to Mr. Lukiwski, the changes proposed would also align the line between both electoral districts with the Wascana Creek at its North, a more natural boundary. Mr. Lukiwski informed the Committee that Mr. Andrew Sheer, Speaker of the House of Commons, and M.P. for Regina–Qu’Appelle, agrees with his suggested changes.

The population of the proposed electoral district of Regina–Lewvan is 79,587 people, with a variance of 7.82% from the electoral quota; and those of the proposed electoral district of Regina–Qu’Appelle are respectively 72,891 people and –1.25%. The total variance for both districts is 9.07%. Transferring the 5,812 residents of the Cathedral area to Regina–Qu’Appelle would result in a population of 73,775 and a variance of –0.05% for the proposed electoral district of Regina–Lewvan, and a population of 78,703 and a variance of 6.62% for the proposed electoral district of Regina–Qu’Appelle: with a total variance of 6.67% between the two electoral districts. These numbers in Mr. Lukiwski’s proposal are accurate.

The Committee refers Mr. Lukiwski’s proposal to the Commission for its consideration. The Committee notes that while Mr. Lukiwski is a member of the Committee, he recused himself and did not participate in the proceedings of the Committee relating to the examination of objections filed concerning the Report of the Saskatchewan Commission.

Saskatoon–West and Saskatoon–University

Ms. Block, M.P. for Saskatoon–Rosetown–Biggar, and Mr. Trost, M.P. for Saskatoon–Humboldt, filed objections respecting the boundaries between the electoral districts of Saskatoon–West and Saskatoon–University.

Ms. Block and Mr. Trost jointly proposed two changes that would not affect any other electoral districts, and that, they assert, would more closely align the community of interest within the city of Saskatoon.

Firstly, they suggested that the area of Saskatoon that is East of Idylwyd Road, South of 33rd Street and West of the South Saskatchewan River be moved from Saskatoon–West into Saskatoon–University. This change would maintain in one electoral district the downtown core of Saskatoon and its communities. They explained that the River is not a natural barrier in this area of the city, as bridges allow the downtown communities to span on both of the River.

Secondly, Ms. Block and Mr. Trost proposed that the community of Silverwood Heights be moved from Saskatoon–University to Saskatoon–West. They described the area covered by the community as North of Lenore Drive, East of Warman Road and West of the South Saskatchewan River. They explained that in this part of Saskatoon, the River is a natural barrier that separates this community from the electoral district of Saskatoon–University, as there is currently no bridge connecting this area with the east side of the River. They assert that the community of Silverwood Heights has far more in common with communities on the west side of Saskatoon, where they “predominantly work, play, and do their shopping.”

In addition to his joint proposal with Ms. Block, Mr. Trost suggested the inclusion of an East suburban area of Saskatoon into the electoral district Saskatoon–University. Mr. Trost described this area as the area North of Highway 5, South of Twp. Road 380 and West of Old 27 Road. This area, located at the East of Saskatoon, has a population of 876 people. Mr. Trost’s objection is based on community of interest; he alleged that these communities “all live, work, and have their utilities from Saskatoon.”

Should the electoral boundaries of Saskatoon–West and Saskatoon–University be adjusted as proposed by Ms. Block and Mr. Trost, the population of Saskatoon–West would increase to 80,274 with a variance of 8.75% from the electoral quota, and the population of Saskatoon–University would decrease to 73,563 with a variance of 0.03% from the electoral quota. These changes would also have a minor impact on the proposed electoral district of Humboldt—Warman—Martensville—Rosetown, which would lose 876 people and result in a population of 73,709 with a deviation of –0.14%. These variances would be well within the variance authorized by the Act, and in line with the variances adopted by the Commission for other electoral districts in the province.

The Committee refers Ms. Block’s and Mr. Trost’s objections to the Commission for its consideration.

Mr. Trost’s objection also included suggestions respecting the electoral district of Prince Albert, discussed above, and comments respecting the city of Humboldt, discussed in the next section.

Humboldt

Mr. Trost submitted to the Committee letters from the City of Humboldt objecting to the City being located in the proposed electoral district of Humboldt–Warman–Martensville–Rosetown.

In these letters, the City of Humboldt asserted its community of interest with other communities that are part of the “Potash Belt” and located in the electoral district of Yorkton–Melville and the electoral district Moose Jaw–Lake Centre–Lanigan. It alleged that the City has “no trade or commonality of interests” with the communities located in Humboldt–Warman–Martensville–Rosetown. The City of Humboldt stated that it would socially and economically naturally belong to either the electoral district of Yorkton–Melville or the electoral district Moose Jaw–Lake Centre–Lanigan.

The City of Humboldt is not directly adjacent to either electoral district. Transferring the City of Humboldt to another electoral district would also imply the transfer of the larger Regional Municipality of Humboldt which surrounds it, in addition to other municipalities located between it and the electoral district of Yorkton–Melville if the City were to be transferred to that electoral district. The Committee notes that it received no indication from these municipalities with respect to this proposed transfer.

While the Committee understands the case made by the City of Humboldt, it does not see fit to formulate its own proposition as to where the City of Humboldt should be located. Transferring the City of Humboldt and the Regional Municipality of Humboldt surrounding it out of the district of Humboldt–Warman–Martensville–Rosetown would remove at least 6,000 people from the electoral district and allocate these individuals to either the electoral district of Yorkton–Melville or the electoral district Moose Jaw–Lake Centre–Lanigan. The Committee notes that 6,000 people represent, by itself, 8.13% of the electoral quota.

In light of issues raised in the two preceding paragraphs, the Committee does not endorse this part of Mr. Trost's objection.

Souris–Moose Mountain

Mr. Ed Komarnicki, M.P. for Souris–Moose Mountain, filed an objection proposing changes to the boundaries of the electoral district of Souris–Moose Mountain. He referred to two areas, polls 134 and 135 (709 people - which include the Rural Municipality of Elmsthorpe, Village of Avonlea and parts of the Rural Municipality of Terrell and of the Piapot Cree First Nation Indian Reserve), and polls 138 to 143 (2,724 people – which include the villages of Vibank, Odessa and Sedley, the town of Francis, and parts of Rural Municipality of Edenwold, Rural Municipality of Lajord, Rural Municipality of Bratt's Lake, and Rural Municipality of Francis) that are located in the proposed electoral district of Souris–Moose Mountain, that, according to Mr. Komarnicki's objection, should be transferred to the proposed electoral district of Moose Jaw–Lake Centre–Lanigan (polls 134 and 135) and to the proposed electoral district of Regina–Qu'Appelle (polls 138 to 143). Mr. Komarnicki also identified one area, polls 140 to 147 (3,123 people - which include the towns of Indian Head, Sintaluta and Wolseley as well as parts of Rural Municipality of Indian Head and of the Rural Municipality of Wolseley), located in the proposed electoral district of Regina–Qu'Appelle, that should be included in the proposed electoral district of Souris–Moose Mountain.

Mr. Komarnicki's objection stated that these changes "would better connect the community of interests that now exists." Before the Committee, Mr. Komarnicki did not elaborate further.

Currently, according to the boundaries established by the 2003 representation order, polls 134 and 135 are not located in the electoral district of Souris–Moose Mountain, but in the electoral district of Palliser; and polls 138 to 143 are also not located in the electoral district of Souris–Moose Mountain, but in the electoral district of Wascana. As for polls 140 to 147, they do not currently belong to the electoral district of Souris–Moose Mountain, but to the electoral district of Regina–Qu'Appelle.

Should the changes proposed by Mr. Komarnicki be proceeded with, the resulting population and deviation from the electoral quota for the affected electoral districts would be as follows: a population of 73,455 and a variance of 0.49% for the proposed electoral district of Souris–Moose Mountain; a population of 75,108 and a variance of 1.75% for the proposed electoral district of Moose Jaw–Lake Centre–Lanigan; and a population of 78,304 and a variance of 6.01% for the proposed electoral district of Regina–Qu'Appelle (taking into consideration the change proposed by Mr. Lukiwski). The Committee notes that these new variances are close to the electoral quota.

The Committee refers the objection filed by Mr. Komarnicki to the Commission for its consideration.

Mr. Komarnicki's objection must be considered in light of the objection filed by Mr. Ray Boughen, M.P. for Palliser. In his objection, Mr. Boughen stated that the constituents of a rural area of the current electoral district of Palliser expressed satisfaction with respect to changes made between the Commission's initial Proposal of May 2012, and the Commission's final Report. That area would have been located in the proposed electoral district of Cypress Hills–Grasslands according to the Commission's initial Proposal, but was moved into the proposed electoral district of Souris–

Moose Mountain in its final Report. Mr. Boughen's objection stated that the affected constituents welcomed this change, as they are being moved into an electoral district of a more manageable size, and their community of interest is more compatible with Weyburn and Estevan, both located in Souris–Moose Mountain, than with Swift Current, located in Cypress Hills–Grasslands. Although Mr. Boughen's objection did not specifically identify the communities affected by this change, they appear to be included in polls 134 and 135, which, according to Mr. Komarnicki, should be located in the proposed electoral district of Moose Jaw–Lake Centre–Lanigan.

The Committee heard the evidence presented by Mr. Boughen.

Conclusion

In accordance with subsections 22(3) and 23(1) of the *Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act*, the *Report of the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for the Province of Saskatchewan*, the objections, the minutes of proceedings and evidence of the Committee will be returned and referred back to the Commission for its consideration of the matter of the objections.

A copy of the relevant *Minutes of Proceedings* ([Meetings Nos 67, 69, 72, 74, 75, 77 and 80](#)) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

JOE PRESTON
Chair

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