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# **Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Thursday, February 7, 2013**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Joe Preston**



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•(1105)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC)):** I call the meeting to order.

We will go ahead and get started. We are in public today. We're here in our first meeting with members of Parliament from Alberta. We're starting at the top with Mr. Jean and Mr. Warkentin. We will give you each five minutes to present your cases today. Then we will ask you questions. Thank you for coming.

Mr. Jean, we will start with you, if that's all right.

**Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to be here today.

I would like to let you know at the start that like all members of Parliament in this House, one of the greatest honours I have had is to be a member of Parliament. Certainly one of the greatest honours I've had is to represent the people of northern Alberta.

I do not have any difficulties with my north boundary, nor do I have difficulties with the west boundary. If I may, I'm going to illustrate this by showing a map here. There have been many maps circulated, so I'm not sure if you have this. I believe Mr. Warkentin has passed it out. That's excellent.

As you can see, the reason I don't have a problem with the north boundary or east boundary is that both are the Alberta provincial boundaries. The only question, then, is the west boundary and the south boundary. My difficulty with what the commission came out with is simply that they included a community called Wabasca-Desmarais, which is a huge aboriginal reserve, plus one of the fastest-growing areas in Alberta with oil sands. They included that area, not recognizing that there is no direct route from Fort McMurray to that particular community. In fact, if you drive to Wabasca, which is currently in my riding.... I take great pride in representing that area, but the difficulty is that it has no economic ties with Fort McMurray. The economic ties are all with High Prairie, Slave Lake, and Athabasca. In fact, you cannot get—

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Sorry to interrupt, Mr. Jean. It's not a comment on your testimony. I'm trying to read where Wabasca is.

**Mr. Brian Jean:** That's the difficulty with all of these maps.

**The Chair:** The maps are terrible PDFs.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Can you give us an idea of where it is on the map?

**Mr. Brian Jean:** I will, and I was going to do that.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Sorry, Mr. Jean. I wanted to follow the roads and where the challenge was logistically. I just can't find it.

**Mr. Brian Jean:** Yes, absolutely.

If I may, Mr. Chair, with your permission, I will indicate that on the map my current boundary comes down like this, then over here, in essence, and it includes the area of High Prairie, Slave Lake, and Athabasca.

Wabasca is north of Athabasca. In fact, the only way you can get to Wabasca is through Athabasca, through High Prairie, or through Slave Lake, which have highways connecting to them. In fact, that is the trading area. It is an economic trading area and a family trading area. I would suggest that they do most of their shopping in Athabasca, High Prairie, or Slave Lake, with absolutely no connection to Fort McMurray. If you want to go to Wabasca, you have to travel down Highway 63 or Highway 881 over to Athabasca, and then straight back up, which gets you a lot closer to Wabasca, but of course there is no connection.

As there is no connection by highway except through Athabasca, my argument is simply that there's no benefit to including it there. It's a smaller community. In fact, my suggestion is to include only the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo.

I'll be very brief on that, Mr. Chair, if you could give me an idea of when my time is at one minute.

The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo has 63,000 square kilometres. My constituency has 180,000 square kilometres. My argument today is based on the federal census, which I do not believe is accurate—I'm just going to do it in summary—and that is primarily because of their data collection techniques.

In Fort McMurray, as you may be aware, most people do shift work. They work 12-hour shifts. Consistently, we have the lowest voter turnout in the country, year over year. In fact, for that low voter turnout in 2008, when I did a survey of my constituents, 52% came back and said they couldn't vote because of work. We all know the reality of that. Their situation or their perception is they're not going to work a 12-hour shift and then return to vote on something, and most of them, since the average age is 29, are not great at voter turnout.

The municipality of Wood Buffalo also did a census for 2010. The federal census came in at 66,000. The municipality of Wood Buffalo census came in at just over 103,000. There is a discrepancy of over 25%.

If you believe the federal census, then you have to suggest that the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo should be included with other areas. If you do not believe that census and you think there is an issue with it, by the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo census there will be 150,000 residents by 2015 in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, and by 2025 they will have 304,000 constituents in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, which is only approximately one-third of my entire constituency as proposed by the commission.

That is the difficulty. Even with the federal census, based upon their suggested increase, by 2025 there will be 140,000 people in that riding just in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo.

In saying all this, I am in agreement with my colleagues, Mr. Warkentin and Mr. Storseth, relating to the particulars of the boundary redistribution that they have proposed and that most of the Alberta caucus has proposed. My only suggestion is that the boundary should be Highway 63, which is the highway that best represents Fort McMurray and goes straight south, as the map indicates. As that roadway is there, and based upon what is necessary in Alberta, this particular line shown on the south can go north and south, depending upon what you need.

What I'm suggesting to you today, in conclusion, is that Fort McMurray is one of the fastest-growing areas in the country year over year, and I think that growth and the recognition of all the projections that suggest the population is going to be over 250,000 by 2025, which will be the next division, suggest that there should be special consideration for this particular area, especially in giving regard to economic growth.

Thank you.

•(1110)

**The Chair:** That's great. Thank you very much, Mr. Jean.

Mr. Warkentin, we have five minutes for you, please.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC):** Thank you, Chair.

Colleagues, I want to thank you for this opportunity to present my concerns regarding the redistribution of the electoral boundaries of northwest Alberta.

It has been my privilege, and it is my privilege, to represent the residents of the Peace River riding for the past seven years. This riding includes the majority of what we locally call the Peace Country. The current Peace River riding stretches from just south of Grande Prairie north to the Northwest Territories border, and from the British Columbia border east to nearly the midpoint of the province.

It has been one of the greatest privileges in my life to represent every portion of this very large riding. It's about 168,000 square kilometres, and it pains me to see any changes that will impact the inclusivity of the Peace Country residents in the new proposal. However, the current riding of Peace River has the largest population

of any riding in the province, and thus changes are needed to ensure my current constituents are more democratically represented. As they've been impacted by the increase in population, the time has come for northern Albertans to be represented and to receive their additional seat in the House of Commons. Thus, I advocate for changes based on what I've heard from my constituents and from local municipalities.

The work of the commission and this committee is essential and difficult. I thank both bodies for their diligence and their work. The assignment is difficult, and disproportionately so, when dividing and combining dispersed populations in the most appropriate manner.

Northwest Alberta has seen significant growth over the past decade and is expected to continue to see that growth at the same or higher rate over the next decade. However, the population remains dispersed, predominantly rural, and regionally and socially divided.

It appears to me that the commission in Alberta undertook the division of Alberta ridings with a preoccupying adherence to the balancing of populations between proposed ridings. However, I feel that in doing so, they have compromised other important principles, such as communities of interest, common service areas, municipal boundaries, and practical issues of transportation for MPs and for constituents who might seek meetings with their representatives.

In my time as a member of Parliament, I have learned the important value of being physically available in the communities that I represent. In northwest Alberta, there are dispersed populations of first nations, farming communities, and smaller towns. These populations, especially, expect their MP to be physically available. While social media and other forms of written communication are something the commission has cited, these are not necessarily options for constituents in these areas, as their access to Internet and mobile phones is very limited. In some cases, they are not available at all. Also, in some of these communities literacy rates fall far below the national average.

In order to successfully protect the interests of the Peace Country, it is important to recognize the independence of this region from the central Alberta service area just south of this area, which is represented by Edmonton and its service area.

This disconnect is not only social and economic, but also physical. A forested and relatively unpopulated area lies between Valleyview and Whitecourt. It's difficult to see from this map, but there's a significant forested area, and Fox Creek is in the midst of that. There's a very strong forested swath that, to drive through, is over 150 kilometres. The commission's proposal in their first and revised maps creates a new riding that they propose to call Peace River—Westlock, which spans this large forested area. It has been universally rejected by the community and residents who would be affected by that proposal.

The communities in the northern region of this proposed riding have no meaningful connection with the southern region and would be poorly served if they were combined into a single riding. In their submission to the commission, local residents and communities en masse requested that the southern border of the northern ridings not extend further south than the geographical divide of this large forested swath. In order to accomplish this desired outcome, this committee and the commission would have to accept that the three northern ridings would include small population numbers that would be only marginally smaller than the average Alberta riding.

●(1115)

As you know, reduced populations are compatible with the principles and the legislation that direct redistribution, and reduced populations are often the norm in rural areas and regions where the populations are dispersed.

While the populations would be marginally less in these three ridings, I am convinced that this is the only way to ensure that northern Albertans would be served adequately. Significant efforts must be undertaken to try to address those concerns.

Chair, I'm getting a signal here. Am I out of time?

**The Chair:** Yes, you're out of time.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** I have just a few.... I can probably answer in my questions.

**The Chair:** Yes. We'll get to it in questions.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** All right.

**The Chair:** Great.

Mr. Lukiwski, you're first, please, for five minutes.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, CPC):** Thanks. I'm not sure if I'll take all five minutes.

Brian and Chris, I agree with both of you, and Nathan over there, that it's tough in these hearings to follow along with the maps in front of us. I think that's the biggest frustration I have, to literally try to follow your recommendations as you're proposing on the map, when we really can't tell the....

That's just my whine for the day. Perhaps, Mr. Chair and the analyst, we could try to do something for future meetings, because it really is frustrating. We're trying to do the best we can here, and for a lot of it I'm just going on the basis that you know what you're talking about. I can't tell by the map.

That said, I want to go back to something you said, Chris, because I think this is going to come up with a lot of boundaries in large rural geographic ridings. You talked about the need for public meetings and having limited Internet access in some of the northern ridings in Alberta.

I have read suggestions that with today's new technology, whether it be email, Skype, or the like, MPs really shouldn't have a concern about how large an area they represent in terms of communicating with their constituents, because they have other accesses to do that.

My question is to both of you, actually, but I'll start with Chris. How important is it to your constituents to have the ability to meet with you as their elected representative on a face-to-face basis, as

opposed to meeting over Skype or through an email or even by telephone?

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Thank you very much.

I think the best way to answer that question is to ask any person who lives in urban Canada if they would find it acceptable that their member of Parliament never returned home—if members of Parliament all remained in Ottawa all of the time, and people could just Skype in or phone.

It's inappropriate for urban folks and it's inappropriate for folks who live in rural areas, especially when you consider that literacy rates in some of these communities fall below the national average, in some cases significantly.

In my first nations communities as well as communities that have traditionally been farm communities, the expectation is even greater, I find, in those communities than in my urban populations to have face-to-face meetings on a regular basis and be accessible in that format.

I think it's absolutely imperative that this committee and our commissions accept their responsibility to allow constituents to be well served in that capacity to have one-on-one meetings.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Thanks, Chris.

**Mr. Brian Jean:** I would submit to you that at this stage, I actually have two constituencies; in fact, I have had two for the last nine years I've represented my area.

You might find that strange until you realize that when I fly home, I fly home to Edmonton, rent a car, and drive to the southern part of my constituency. Then I drive back to do any events there, which would be in High Prairie, Slave Lake, Wabasca, or any of those areas that go quite closely up to Chris's riding. I have to fly into Edmonton, drive up, drive back to Edmonton, and fly back here. That's all the time I have. I don't have time to go home.

If I want to go to Fort McMurray for an event there, I have to fly to Fort McMurray and then drive around either to Wandering River or to Lac La Biche, which is even further south in the riding, so I alternate between the two areas on all of my events.

Half of my population, when I started, was in the south, and half of the population was in the north. That's why I had in essence two constituencies. It was impossible to drive in the south and then go up to Fort McMurray on what is considered to be the "highway of death" in Canada, which is Highway 63.

●(1120)

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** To the question that I'd specifically asked about, on the importance your constituencies put on the face-to-face

**Mr. Brian Jean:** I would agree with Chris. Nobody deserves to have less attention from their elected representative, whether urban or rural.

My constituents certainly expect to see me. My number one complaint from my constituents is that they don't see me enough, notwithstanding that I travel home frequently.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** That being the case....

Do we have another minute or two?

**The Chair:** You have one minute.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** That being the case, do you think that in general—and I'm not talking just about northern Alberta, but perhaps across Canada—the commissioners should put a greater weight on the geographic size of some of the rural constituencies, versus the population? We all know that many large rural ridings have a relatively small population base but a huge geographical area.

How do you balance that? How do you square that circle, knowing that you need to get face-to-face meetings on behalf of your constituents and that the commission is looking at trying to average, on a population variance, constituency to constituency?

**The Chair:** We'll have a quick answer from both.

**Mr. Brian Jean:** I think you've hit the nail on the head. The difficulty also is the federal census and their methodology, which does not take into consideration places such as northern Alberta. It just does not.

How can you have a municipal census that is done door to door and shows a 25% greater number of people in the area than a federal census that doesn't do door to door? Yet the federal census is accepted, and the municipal census is not accepted. They show 103,000 people right now in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. It should be its own riding. There is no question that it should be, but the federal census is all that everybody seems to rely on, and as a result of that inaccurate data, I think exactly what you've suggested is very important.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Well, I think there has to be a filter that's put on across the country with regard to dispersed and rural communities. Think of the responsibilities that rural MPs have. They're different from those of urban folks, in that when the urban MPs want to meet with their municipal council, they have one council, which is often shared by several MPs. In my case, I have 26 municipal councils that I have to meet with, and I have 32 first nations leadership groups.

When I'm going to meet with these folks, it means that I have a significant number of folks to deal with. Meeting one-on-one with each of those is much more difficult. Even though half the population lives in one community of Grand Prairie, I also have over a dozen Royal Canadian Legions, so you can see the difficulty.

I think there has to be a filter, and there has to be a provision to understand that rural MPs with dispersed populations do have added responsibilities. There needs to be consideration of that.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Cullen is next.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Thank you.

Can I make a small intervention following up on what Tom had to say? I'm not sure this room can accommodate it, but for the clarity of the conversation, we need clear maps. I too was trying as well as I could to follow between the old map and the one presented, and neither is good enough.

I don't fault our witnesses today, but we need something, an approximation that allows MPs greater clarity. Perhaps the PDF could be sent to us and we could all bring laptops or something.

We're going through very important work. I feel as though we're flying a bit blind right now, because when these gentlemen leave, we're going to try to make recommendations based on their testimony and on maps that I can barely read.

**The Chair:** We're not taking away from your time.

We did discuss it. In all of these cases, we could do it two or three ways. The way we originally started off—we didn't need to do it with Newfoundland and Labrador—was that we would have the members come in, and they would tell us their issues. Elections Canada would provide us with maps.

They have provided us with the maps based on the recommendations by the two gentlemen here, and printed in colour, which may stand out a little better than black and white.

We have also left time in each province for us then to—

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Do you guys have those maps?

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** They may have been sent to me. I have not seen them.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** I haven't see them.

Do you have colour, Chair?

**The Chair:** They were sent out yesterday. My crackerjack administration staff printed mine in colour, and it really makes a big difference.

**A voice:** Mr. Chair, not everybody has colour printers—

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** Okay, but there is a solution here. Before we get back to the witnesses, if you like, we could try to do this in real time with Elections Canada here with mapping, right?

The problem was that we didn't think that would be as quick and as important as getting the testimony from the members and then doing a bit of research against the mapping. We've set aside days after each province to do that. We didn't use it in the case of Newfoundland because it was very clear.

It's your call, committee.

• (1125)

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Yes, and the committee can discuss this later as we get through things.

**The Chair:** That's what we were thinking.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Aside from the clearer maps, whichever way they come to us.... If we think these colour ones, which I haven't seen yet, are better, then great, or perhaps something like an overhead would work better. I would offer, though, that at least having an observer as well as someone who can speak from Elections Canada—not about a judgment call they made, but over a logistical fact such as a road—would also help us.

I think it's going to be difficult after the fact. If you look not at Alberta but at Ontario or Quebec, where the implications are going to be broad and moving targets, to hear all the testimony and then come back with an Elections Canada official and then try to parse through the testimony—

**The Chair:** We'll have Elections Canada officials in the room.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** I know that, but they won't be at the table.

**The Chair:** You're right; they won't be at the table.

If that's the recommendation—and we certainly need to get through the testimony of these two gentlemen and follow up on it—we may have to move to a larger room in order to accommodate real-time maps for us.

I will go to Mr. Reid, and then we will go back to the witnesses.

**Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC):** Thank you. Of course I hope none of this is coming out of Mr. Cullen's time.

**The Chair:** It is not.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** Okay.

I was confused and I was going to ask some questions when it came to my turn with the witnesses to clarify the maps I had in front of me. I had two; now I've discovered I have a third map from Elections Canada that bears no resemblance to either the one I had in the Elections Canada book in our large package or the one that was handed out today.

I might suggest—we did this ten years ago, and I would strongly urge that we do this from now on—that we have an Elections Canada person here, and that they have an overhead showing both the status quo and what their most recent report proposes that the ridings be. Then it's up to the witnesses to say what they are advocating. Presumably it would be something that is somewhat different from either of those.

**The Chair:** That's a perfect idea.

Mr. Jean, did you have something to add to that?

**Mr. Brian Jean:** I agree 100%.

I think any maps you receive of rural Canada should show the roads. I do have Google Maps here, and if you have your iPad in front of you, I can point out exactly what you need to do, but I've been working on this for a while, and it's very difficult to print out the exact maps that we want. Whatever you do for rural Canada, you need to have the roadways, because it just does not make sense otherwise.

In particular, in my riding, I don't have any scheduled flights except to Fort McMurray, so anything I have to do is charter. I can't afford to charter anything, so I have to drive everywhere, which means I have to drive, in this particular case as proposed, from Fort McMurray—

**The Chair:** Down to go up.

**Mr. Brian Jean:** —down to go up, and then back down again to go back home and then back down to Cold Lake in a different direction, which just doesn't make sense.

**The Chair:** Okay, let's let the members ask you some questions to see if we can get through more of that.

Go ahead, Mr. Cullen.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Thanks very much for that, Chair, and thanks for the committee's indulgence. As somebody who has to fly into Yukon to visit part of my riding, I get you.

I have a couple of questions. One for Mr. Jean is about the particular nature of the oil sands, the development there, and the mobility of the Canadian citizens who are coming in and out.

You talked about the census being wrong. We have challenges with the census for different reasons. For instance, they use land lines to phone in, and a lot of our communities either don't have land lines due to a lack of resources—they just don't have the money—or the younger folks don't have land lines because they don't think they're useful.

The extra nature of your particular part of the world is that there is a resource boom going on, and a lot of people are moving in. The declaration of where they actually live and where they actually vote seems to be a factor in the population question you've raised.

Is there any way to parse out, in the census data—because that's too old and inaccurate—how many people actually live there, particularly in the unique circumstance—and maybe this is true for Mr. Warkentin as well—of that large population that is not on the electoral map and is not being affected by this thing one way or another?

**Mr. Brian Jean:** Yes. I think the reliance on the municipal census is always best, just as municipal governments spend money better than large federal governments do, in my opinion. The closer you are to the people, the better the job you do. In this particular case there has been a municipal census, because obviously there is a serious deficiency in their funds from the federal or provincial governments.

In this particular case, how can you not recognize that there has to be a problem? There's a 25% difference for the same year.

The difficulty is that people do select where they live. Look at it this way: we have 1.8 million people flying into our airspace every year, and 940,000 passengers are flying into just the regional airport, up from 150,000 nine years ago. You may say that those people don't live there, but somebody is living there and taking their spot when they're not there, so someone's always living there. Fifty per cent of the people in the emergency department in the local hospitals don't reside in Alberta. There are many things like that.

It's not like northern Ontario, where you have a cottage country and people come in for the summer and then leave. It's totally different. Those people come to Fort McMurray; there are up to 65,000 people who don't call Fort McMurray or the regional municipality home, but they're living there and they live there full time and they use our services. That's why you have to wait an hour and a half in line when you want a Tim Hortons coffee.

• (1130)

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** I imagine that also leads to emergency room visits.

**The Chair:** That in itself is an emergency.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Did Elections Canada consider that?

Elections Canada is putting another riding into two ridings and trying to some effect—to your point, Mr. Warkentin—to alleviate the challenge you have with a large, expansive riding.

You said in your testimony something about the differences between rural and urban in terms of the servicing, or about the realities for a representative. Can you expand a bit more on the implications of that in your consideration of the electoral map?

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Yes, absolutely.

Concerning the proposed Peace River–Westlock riding—which I reject because I feel Westlock has completely different interests and is geographically separated—I believe it's important that the Peace River riding, or that general area, be served by an MP who can connect to all of those areas.

What I proposed is a grouping of communities accessible through highways in such a way that you don't have to drive six hours to get to another community, because we are constrained by where we can get to by road. I think it's absolutely essential for that to be taken into consideration.

Concerning the deviations in terms of what we had proposed, or that I and my colleagues have proposed, I circulated a sheet about the populations of these proposed ridings as well as the deviations. You can see the largest deviation is negative, nearly around 12% for Peace River.

Like Mr. Jean, I reject the Canadian census data, because my municipalities have also rejected it. If you had an accurate census, you would find that the populations are consistent and would be in the same general areas as the other ridings.

I think it's important that you build a riding connected by roads and with interests that are shared.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** That's helpful.

**The Chair:** Mr. Jean, did you have a comment on that?

**Mr. Brian Jean:** In reply to Mr. Cullen, I think the one thing missing in all of this is where the population is going. It is going to Alberta. You can accept it or not. It's going to Saskatchewan, and it's going to go to Newfoundland as well, and anywhere there's an economy that's going well.

Industry has projected, the Alberta Government has projected, and anybody else involved has projected that Fort McMurray itself is going to have 250,000 people by 2025. Even the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo statistics, based upon the last 10 years of growth, indicate it's going to have 304,000. That's only a third of my riding that's going to be that. That's not the entire constituency. That's just a third of my riding.

The data are wrong. You come up to Fort McMurray and tell me there are only 60,000 people who live there when you're lining up for three hours to go 30 kilometres to work every day. There are a lot more people there, and the data collection by Census Canada is not correct.

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

Monsieur Dion, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

To my two colleagues, I have four questions. Maybe you addressed my concerns partly or completely. If that's the case, repeat very briefly what you have already said, but maybe some parts of your answers will be new for the committee.

My first question is on your comments today, your objections. Are they new for the commission, or a reiteration? If they're new, why? If they're a reiteration, what can you add to what you have already said to the commission to convince it?

My second question is on how many other ridings are affected by your change. Chris, I think it's seven in your case. Could you just clarify that? Do you have the agreement of the affected colleagues? Did you try? What is your understanding of the consequences on these ridings if you don't have the agreement of your colleagues?

On the demographics, I'm very impressed that in Alberta the commission tried to stay within the 5%, plus or minus, while the law allows for the possibility of going up to 25%, plus or minus. Many commissions try to stay in the range of 10%, as is the case in my province. Maybe for Albertans it is very important to have equality of citizens, and too bad for taking communities into account.

We have these numbers in your case, but, Brian, could you explain how many people are affected by what you are proposing? I understand there is a discrepancy between the official census and what you see on the ground, but it will help us if we have numbers.

Finally, it's the size. I know size and access are not the same. I think that is what both of you are arguing. The commission would argue in your case, Chris, that the riding you have is 162,871 square kilometres, and what they are proposing is quite a lot less, 105,925 square kilometres. It's an argument they put in objection to what you proposed, I suppose.

Could you address that?

• (1135)

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** I appreciate that, and I'll begin with the last question, because I think it's absolutely essential.

The commission has talked about somehow dividing the square kilometres as being the determination of the workload or the population. Unfortunately, what they did in the last proposal is they divided what I currently represent up the centre and created this requirement that now two members of Parliament would travel eight hours to basically meet people on opposite sides of the highway, rather than having one member of Parliament going up the highway to meet with constituents on both sides of the highway in communities that are along the highway or off the highway.

I begin travelling from Grande Prairie. I go through Fairview. I hold a town hall meeting there. The folks from the outlying areas congregate there. Then I go up to Peace River, then Manning, and all the way up the way.



The proposal now is that I would go from Grande Prairie and get to Fairview. Fairview would now be outside of my riding. That's where the highway would take me, but I'm now out of my riding. I would drive for two hours outside of my riding. Unfortunately, all of the rural area surrounding the highway is still my riding, but I can't hold a town hall meeting in Fairview because it's not my riding, so there's not really a congregating point for the rural community.

Then I'd go further up. I'd bypass Peace River. It's not in my riding. Then I'd get to Manning, and I might hold a town hall meeting there, but then the rural community is again parcelled off to a different MP. I'd hold the town hall meeting there and I'd try to convince the local residents that because their farm is on the other side of a fence line from their neighbour, they're not my constituents.

Then I get to High Level, where I would hold a town hall meeting, and I'd have everybody there. Unfortunately, then we couldn't have the folks from the other farming community of La Crete there, because they're represented by another MP.

Then the other MP would have to go up the same highway and do exactly the same thing.

**The Chair:** Those are great answers. Mr. Dion asked you both four questions. You partially answered one in most of his time.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** I won't ask any more.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** I will answer just in one word. The proposal is not new. Municipalities all proposed exactly what I'm doing. In terms of how many ridings will be affected, the ridings articulated here will be all affected, but it's an attempt to adhere to municipal boundaries. That's what we attempted to do.

As to whether there's agreement, I think you'll hear there's agreement.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Jean.

**Mr. Brian Jean:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

There is agreement, I understand, from all the rural MPs in northern Alberta, in principle, in relation to the boundaries that have been proposed by Mr. Warkentin and me.

I would say, first of all, this is new. I really feel that this process should be independent of politics. I did not get involved with the commission up to this point because of that, but I got involved because there's no common sense to their proposal to include Wabasca.

I knew the population would be an issue. It's an issue with the regional municipality and has been for 10 years. They have opposed the federal census twice.

What I'm suggesting is that you should allow in these ridings—Chris's, my own, and the third one—a negative quota differential of around 20%. I think that would be accurate. It's certainly not outside of the mandate. I think it would be more accurate to depict exactly the rural nature of the riding and also what's going on in the ridings as a result of the economic boom. If you don't know and if you've never heard me talk about it before, the oil sands are somewhere around 8% of the GDP right now. That means a lot of people go there to get work.

I do believe there is agreement, as you asked, Mr. Dion, and I haven't gotten involved before because there was no sense in doing so. In this particular case, it's just because of the common sense element of it. Including Wabasca and doing what Mr. Warkentin described—driving seven hours from my home one way, then seven hours another way, and through another riding for three hours—doesn't make sense.

I think I've answered all of your questions.

• (1140)

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

Go ahead, Mr. Reid.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** I'm going to ask you to help me sort out the various maps in front of us. This map was distributed to us today. Is this your proposal?

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Yes.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** That's your proposal. That's not the status quo.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** No. That is the proposal.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** Okay. That's the proposal.

Then I have this coloured map. If you don't mind, I'm going to bring this up to ask for the distinction.

**The Chair:** Sure.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** Which of these is their proposal? They're both Elections Canada maps. Is one the first round and one the second round?

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** No, this is the same map.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** No, it's not. They're different.

Look here. They moved out of Fort McMurray, Cold Lake, into Lakeland—this area right here. It's not the same map at all.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** This has been cut off here.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** So which one is their current map?

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** This is their current map.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** This one's the current map. What's that? Is that the first round, maybe?

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** No.

I think there's some difficulty with these two maps. I believe that they are attempting to propose the same thing. Unfortunately, Elections Canada would be reflecting the polls, and therefore wouldn't necessarily adhere exactly to the lines that this one does, but I believe that these are trying to reflect the same proposal, which is the current proposal. The first proposal by the commission was somewhat different from either of these.

**The Chair:** It's no longer on the table, so that's not an issue.

You're both suggesting, if I can help clarify, a change to some municipal boundaries that make more sense. Is that correct in both cases?

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** I believe you'll find that these proposals adhere more closely to municipal boundaries.

In the case of Grande Prairie, it would almost completely adhere to municipal boundaries. In terms of what would be Peace River, it is very close, and perhaps Brian can speak to Fort McMurray. I think the proposal is a better reflection of municipal boundaries.

**The Chair:** Mr. Reid, you're still going.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** Thank you.

You can see why we're confused.

I'll leave all that stuff aside. I'm going to have to ask that we have Elections Canada help us out or something, to sort this all out.

**The Chair:** We'd better solve that question now, then.

The chair remembers what the problem was.

We're not using your time on this, by the way.

We could have Elections Canada to do it, but remember its program is in only one language at a time. We need unanimous consent to have Elections Canada here to do that on-time mapping, and we didn't give that when we first asked that question. We thought, well, we would see what happens, because then we could do it in our room after doing the research.

If you're suggesting that's the case, and we'd like them at our meeting each time with the ability to draw a line or show us what the members are talking about, I need unanimous consent from the committee to do it in one language at a time.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** I have a question, Chair.

The suggestion is to have the program up on a screen, with the lines moving. I've been to many presentations here where there were two laptops, each language to a screen, each screen in a language. Is that not technically possible? Really, this is 2013.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Reid.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** I'm having the same kind of reaction. It's not just that I would have thought it was technical feasible, but it was technically feasible 10 years ago. I'm sure there's a way of doing it now.

The other thing I want to point out is that these are mostly going to be place names. Peace River is English, but it's also a proper name, so it's not really not French. Do you know what I mean?

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** There's not going to be a lot of text on the screen, I suppose.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Madame Turmel.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP):** That's what I want to clarify. If it's in only one language, for Quebec, will it be in French? [*English*]

**The Chair:** If that's what the committee would wish, your chair is always flexible.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** All the maps will be in French.

**The Chair:** Okay, I understand the technology has just improved and is now far better than we thought.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** Something was just newly invented, probably by a great Canadian company, and we would be able to do side-by-side computers and alternate things. It appears we're beyond our problem here now, so at the next meeting, that's exactly where we will be.

We're now back to your time, Mr. Reid. Go ahead.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** Thank you.

I had questions for both of you.

You mentioned that your municipalities have rejected the StatsCan population numbers. I assume they've done so in some form that is actually in print. I was wondering if you'd be able to submit to the clerk of the committee—not right now, but as soon as is reasonably possible—as many examples as you can find of that. It will give us some idea of what we're talking about if we have their suggested numbers and documentary evidence that is well founded.

The other thing—and this is my last question—is just that Mr. Cullen pointed to the land line issue in his constituency. Is that a consideration that may partially explain why you have lower numbers being recorded by StatsCan in your constituencies?

• (1145)

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** We have people in my riding who are on the waiting list for a telephone that will come five years from now, but there are a significant number of developments that all have cellphones.

**Mr. Brian Jean:** There's no question it's a huge issue in northern Alberta, for the same reason Chris is saying. Primarily, nobody is using land lines anymore; they're going with cellphones.

If I may, I want to let the committee know something. If you look at this map of roadways, and I'd like to say commerce, you will see that this is an industrial corridor.

**An hon. member:** What?

**Mr. Brian Jean:** This is an industrial corridor. This is an industrial corridor. The road to Fort McMurray stops just beyond Fort McMurray and the road to Grande Prairie keeps going, but it is an industrial corridor.

Because of the isolated nature here, all the roads in Alberta go north and south until just above Edmonton, where they go east-west. That might make it much easier. If you don't divide it here and if you divide it as they propose, you're moving this line over to here, which means then one has to drive down, drive up and drive around, which I currently have to do, some 9 to 10 hours to get to that area.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Warkentin, on this same point.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Just in terms of clarification, the major roadways are shown on this map. I know it's very difficult to see, but that's what you get in terms of main highways. There are other ones, and arterial lanes, but that is what you get.

**Mr. Brian Jean:** In response to your first question, Mr. Reid, if you go to this wonderful site—you may not have heard of it—called Wikipedia, you will see that they actually talk about the disagreement with the census from the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. This is nothing new. It's been going on for 10 years.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** What article in Wikipedia? Was it a Fort McMurray article?

**Mr. Brian Jean:** It was in Wikipedia, on the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. In the first page it talks about the problem with the population—why the census is wrong, why they challenged it, and how it could be so significantly different.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** Okay, thank you.

**Mr. Brian Jean:** I will refer to you the 2010 census that was just done.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We have about 15 minutes left with our guests and there are three more questioners, so about four minutes each will get us through there.

Sorry, two people are left.

Madame Latendresse, go ahead.

**Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP):** I have a really quick question. I want to clarify that this is the population of your proposal.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Yes.

**Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse:** That's why your two ridings are slightly under. It's because you're stating that you have many more people than there actually are. That kind of makes sense. I just wanted to make sure that wasn't the commission proposal, but your proposal linked to the map that you provided.

That's all. I just wanted to be sure.

**The Chair:** Mr. Cullen, do you want to share? Go ahead.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Okay, sharing is just as quick.

My question was partly answered by the very last thing that you said, but, Mr. Warkentin, I'm imagining Grande Prairie would be—I'm not trying to predict the future—the constituency that you would be seeking.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** That's right.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Mr. Jean, obviously we don't have representation from this third person or group that would be looking at this new riding, whatever it's called, whether it's Peace River—Westlock, or whatever name it gets, but this third place.

As a rural MP and knowing the logistical nightmares of moving around, I'm trying to understand, without really having a good sense of the roads and the communities connected, this third riding. I don't want to create a third nightmare for someone who can't be represented here.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** No, the majority of my time has actually been spent trying to accommodate a riding in the centre that's appropriate. My constituents are still my constituents, and they're rejecting the proposal of the commission.

The reason that I've advocated for this incarnation is that it is actually one that could be traversed in a reasonable way. The communities are all linked by highway.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** The other challenge that you've come up against—or that the boundaries commission, all of them, come up against—is that sense of competing priorities, right? There's one just around population number and trying to balance out the work of

MPs' logistics. I'm not sure if the commission can. It's hard to properly appreciate what it is to drive in the middle of February around some of these roads and leave your riding and come back into another one three or four times in a trip.

In terms of the competing interests, one of the strong ones that seems to be coming out early on is those communities of interest. The communities, as you said, Mr. Jean, are tied to one another economically. There are cultural connections, historical connections. It seems me to rise to the surface as one of the predominant filters on which we drive these maps through. If you break that rule for some other convenience, you run into so many other problems, never mind just driving distances and whatnot.

• (1150)

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** That's fundamental to the swath. I talk about the swath of trees. It's not a landmark that's on a sign or a map, but you will see in better maps that there is a significant area that's unpopulated between Edmonton and the north. I think it's absolutely essential that this not be crossed for these ridings.

Communities of interest are not exactly the same. In the centre portion, just outside of the Peace River riding, you're going to find a number of smaller French farming communities that are unique. They have an identity, and those are connected to the ones that have been included in this, as well as first nations communities and a whole host of others. What they all have in common is that they're not Edmonton and they're serviced by a regional centre that's outside of the centre of Alberta.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** The inherent nature of that is different from somebody living in Edmonton, or suburban Edmonton, or just on a farm within sight of Edmonton. The realities are so different.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** These folks have issues of medical transportation that a person next to Edmonton could never understand. It's one of the debates that's going on right now, so it's absolutely essential, and I can't make it strong enough. Regardless of what impacts it has on me personally, it's absolutely essential that this committee not recommend pushing communities that communicate better with the Northwest Territories to be with a suburb of Edmonton.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Jean, did you want to—

**Mr. Brian Jean:** Mr. Cullen, you might be interested to know in relation to this particular area and this map that is proposed that my riding went up to here. In this part right here, 80% of them vote for Conservatives.

**The Chair:** I would bet they vote for you, not necessarily—

**Mr. Brian Jean:** No, I would say for Conservatives, but my point is that I'm losing the strongest Conservative part of my riding, by far, to recommend this to get what is fair, and that's why I stayed out of the process. It needs to be independent, but certainly it needs to be logical.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** This is the challenge. As you pointed out, by the nature of this process and the nature of the work we do—and I had the same deliberations in participating in front of the commission, or not—there is the inherent suspicion, at least from the public, that there is a partisan overlay on top of the map and on what the implications will be district by district and house by house.

Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Lukiwski is next.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Brian, I'll come back to you for a minute. This has a bit to do with communities of interest and how that aspect that weighs into the commissioner's decision on boundary relocation. It's a little bit on communities of interest as well.

You mentioned that in Fort McMurray the current population is roughly—what, 105,000 or 110,000?

**Mr. Brian Jean:** By their own census, it's 103,000. That's the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, which includes Fort McMurray.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** In the proposed map as presented by the commission, I would also assume that Fort McMurray is by far the largest centre in that riding. Correct?

**Mr. Brian Jean:** It is.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** You also said you believe that by 2025 Fort McMurray will have grown to approximately 250,000 people.

**Mr. Brian Jean:** That's what all the industry experts have predicted. That's what the Alberta government has predicted. Any website will show you that.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** The population variance for the Alberta ridings, plus or minus whatever you're trying to achieve, is what?

**Mr. Brian Jean:** Right now mine is about 11%. I think Chris's is at 12%.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** No, I mean the average population per riding, if you were to divide all ridings equally, would be what?

**Mr. Brian Jean:** I think it was 108,000, approximately.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** What you're saying is now that the.... Is it called the City of Fort McMurray?

**Mr. Brian Jean:** It is called the City of Fort McMurray, or it was. It's now called the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, which includes, as I said, 66,000 square kilometres, and Fort McMurray is in the centre of that. There are probably about nine hamlets on the outside, which are mostly aboriginal hamlets.

• (1155)

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** I'll back up a step, then. Is Fort McMurray proper 103,000, or does that 103,000 include the hamlets?

**Mr. Brian Jean:** It includes the hamlets.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** What's the circumference? Is it 25 kilometres, 50 kilometres?

**Mr. Brian Jean:** I go to the Northwest Territories, which includes Fort Chip and some other communities, so you're talking 400 kilometres.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Okay. What I'm trying to get at is this. What is the population now of, if we wanted to call it by its old name, the City of Fort McMurray, and what will it be by 2025?

**Mr. Brian Jean:** I did talk to Fort McMurray, and this is the problem with stats. Right now my understanding is that it's

somewhere around 83,000 in Fort McMurray proper—83,000 to 88,000—but by 2025 Fort McMurray is going to be 250,000.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** If we assume that the city, if we want to use that terminology, is around 85,000 right now, and the average population per riding, if you divided it equally, would be about 108,000 in a perfect world, then currently you're only—what, 23,000 under? At the rate of a population increase you're talking about, I would suspect that well before the next census is taken 10 years from now, the city of Fort McMurray proper would be at or above that 108,000 population base.

**Mr. Brian Jean:** Absolutely.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** I don't know what the commissioners are anticipating when they're trying to make these decisions, but it would appear to me, if all the studies and the surveys are correct, and I see no reason for them not to be correct....

In your opinion, would it not be wiser to have the city of Fort McMurray as a separate seat? This, of course, would go back to having to rejig the entire map and maybe add yet another seat.

**Mr. Brian Jean:** Because the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo controls Fort McMurray and controls the outlying riding, I believe that the regional municipality, without doubt, should be its own riding right now. It would make a lot of sense to do that. It would be the same council. There would be two MLAs, one north and one south. The population already supports that.

By 2020 it's going to be, just on my own projections based on the 7.4% annual growth we've had over the last 10 years—and we expect to have more growth in the future—213,000 by 2020 and 304,000 by 2025, which means the next time we make a change to the constituency in 2025, we're going to have 304,000 people in one riding.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** You're not recommending, though—

**Mr. Brian Jean:** I'm not recommending Fort McMurray as its own riding; I'm recommending the regional municipality as its own. It would make sense, no matter who represented that riding.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Is that what this map reflects?

**Mr. Brian Jean:** No, it does not. I am putting that forward.... I do not believe, since the municipal census has never been accepted by any board or any government, that it would be accepted at this particular time, so I just put that forward to say to you that the regional municipality should be its own constituency. There's no question in my mind. I think anybody who looks at it independently would have no question afterward. Cold Lake is in the same economic zone, but I believe that it could easily be put into another riding and that the regional municipality could be its own riding.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** I have a commentary to you, Chair, and perhaps to the rest of the people here.

Fort McMurray may be a unique situation in Canada, frankly, because of the rapid rate of growth. I know that there are many other urban centres, and we see some rapidly growing population centres in Saskatchewan as well, but they are not growing quite as rapidly as Fort McMurray.

It appears to me that one of the things that the commissioners should be taking a hard look at is that rate of growth, the accelerated growth in some of these faster-growing communities. Rather than waiting for 10 years anticipating it, well before the 10 years the new Fort McMurray would exceed the average population in Alberta anyway.

You're right. It makes no sense to me to deal with it in 10 or 12 years from now. In a situation of a population at 300,000-plus, if the population in the rest of the province is relatively the same, that could be divided into almost three ridings, so why not deal with it now?

**Mr. Brian Jean:** I agree, Mr. Lukiwski.

**The Chair:** We're going to have to stop there.

Mr. Reid, you asked for some information from one of our guests today. Is there anything else that we would require further in reports or answers from our two witnesses?

Go ahead, Mr. Reid.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** One I think we can get right now. I think I know the answer, but I'd like it formalized.

I assume that little sheet on population deviations you passed around is based on the official StatsCan numbers, not the real numbers.

• (1200)

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** That's right, yes.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** If the real numbers were used, the two ridings of Peace River and Fort McMurray—Cold Lake would in fact be over the provincial average.

**Mr. Brian Jean:** Indeed.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** I just want to comment with regard to this.

There was a question in terms of the effects of our proposal for the change. This documents all the proposed changes. It's not as if we're pushing population for other ridings to somehow absorb; that has all been absorbed with the changes to these ridings. You can see the plus-minus figures; it's all been accommodated.

**The Chair:** I'm not really looking for more testimony. Is there more information we need our two guests to give us?

**Mr. Brian Jean:** In answer to the question, I would suggest that on the basis of the current design, about 140,000 people would currently live within that riding of Fort McMurray—Cold Lake.

**The Chair:** All right. Thank you very much to both for coming today and being as clear as you could be with the materials we have. Thank you very much.

We'll suspend for a minute while we allow these two witnesses to leave us and Mr. Calkins to come forward.

• (1200)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1200)

**The Chair:** I'll call us back to order.

We now have Mr. Calkins before us.

Mr. Calkins, thank you for joining us today. We hope you can share your thoughts with us. You have five minutes for an opening statement, and then the members will ask you some questions.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm not sure I'm going to need the entire five minutes. I can assure you, though, that as a member of this place for seven years now, sitting at this end of the committee table gives a completely different perspective.

Mr. Chair, the federal riding of Wetaskiwin is the riding I've had the privilege to represent for the last seven years. I first came here in 2006.

The riding of Wetaskiwin has existed in Alberta since the beginning of Confederation. Wetaskiwin is one of Alberta's original five cities and has been a mainstay in the political scene in Alberta since that time.

The recent changes that have been proposed by the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Alberta basically propose that an electoral district called Wetaskiwin cease to exist for the first time since Confederation.

Based on their deliberations and their judgment, the riding is basically being split into three different pieces. The west country of the Wetaskiwin riding goes to the existing riding of Yellowhead. The northern portion of the Wetaskiwin riding, excluding the first nations band, goes into an Edmonton—Wetaskiwin riding. The southern portion of the riding goes into a Red Deer split riding, with communities like Lacombe and Ponoka and the first nations.

This does pose a lot of questions from my constituents, and it's on their behalf that I'm here. Whether it's been at coffee shops or at town hall meetings put on by chambers of commerce or other interested groups, virtually no one can understand, in the constituency that I currently represent, why the boundary commission is doing what it is doing, so I'm making those representations, as I said, on their behalf.

If we take a look at some of the headlines in the papers that had gone to some of the boundary commission meetings, we see things like "Silencing the rural voice". We see things like "Wetaskiwin won't matter in [the new] riding". We see things like "Federal riding commission's report sparks outrage".

A number of individuals and organizations appeared before the commission. I think about 19 from the riding of Wetaskiwin alone made presentations before the boundary commission, all making requests. Examples include a county or a municipality saying that they wanted their entire county within the jurisdictional boundary of at least one riding.

In terms of the difference between the first set of maps and the second set of maps, the commission did come back and make some very minor changes. I did appreciate that, in terms of keeping the County of Wetaskiwin whole, but that still leaves the counties of Ponoka and Lacombe, which were previously in one jurisdiction federally.

Mr. Chair, I know that you represent a rural area as well. If you know what county you live in, you know what riding you live in. That's a big deal when it comes to election time.

There's no way we can do massive changes to the current set of boundaries, but when it comes to sticking up for some of the smaller communities, we have an east-west trading corridor there, along Highway 11 and Highway 53. Communities like Rocky Mountain House and Rimbey have associations with Sylvan Lake and Lacombe and Ponoka. They don't have much to do with communities like Grande Cache, Hinton, and Edson from an economic or political perspective.

The reality is that our province is growing, and changes needed to be made. I'm here basically to ask for some changes in the boundaries, where I want to include....

I believe you've seen a map from the previous presenters; I am in agreement with what's happened. I think these are reasonable changes that are being asked for in terms of the rural areas and the northern part of the province of Alberta. The bands at Hobbema consist of some 16,000 people; if we were to be able to repatriate communities such as Rimbey and so on into the Red Deer north riding, as outlined on the map, we would be able to also share some of the first nations territory with the Edmonton—Wetaskiwin riding.

Both the communities of Ponoka, which would be in the Red Deer north riding, for lack of better words, and the Edmonton—Wetaskiwin riding.... Wetaskiwin, Ponoka, and Hobbema have always been in the same riding together. To share some of that first nations territory in each of those ridings only seems to make sense. It would keep those synergies and activities together where they have commonality.

The bands on the southern part of the reserve would be closer to Ponoka. The bands on the northern part of the reserve block of lands would be dealing more closely with Wetaskiwin, so that seems to make sense.

I believe you guys have seen the map. I'm in agreement with it, and I'm hoping that the commission is as well.

• (1205)

There's only other thing I would ask, given the history in the area, in regard to the term "Wolf Creek". Wolf Creek is a small creek that flows through Lacombe into the Battle River. The Battle River runs for quite a distance throughout Alberta and has been used as a federal riding name before. I'm not suggesting that, but Wolf Creek is very much unknown in terms of its geographic location. It's more commonly known for its association to a school district, and I believe it might cause some confusion if the riding were to be called "Red Deer—Wolf Creek".

Father Albert Lacombe is the namesake of the second city in that riding, which would be made up of the northern half of Red Deer and the City of Lacombe, and he has done extensive work there. There are great historical reasons that I think the riding should not be called Red Deer—Wolf Creek. It should be called Red Deer—Lacombe, reflecting the two largest centres and a great part of our history in that part of central Alberta.

**The Chair:** All right. You're talking to us a bit about some small changes in boundaries, but also about a name change. Is that correct?

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** That's correct.

**The Chair:** That's great.

First up is Mr. Lukiwski.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** On the map that we dealt with earlier today.... I don't know if you have a copy of this in front of you.

Where we see Wetaskiwin, does this map that you have in your hand now accurately reflect the boundaries, as well as you can determine?

• (1210)

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** Notwithstanding the fact that unfortunately it doesn't look like we'll be able to bring Rocky Mountain House into that Red Deer North riding, or the Red Deer—Lacombe riding, which I'd prefer it to be called, I think this is the best we can do, and I hope the commission will accept it. It does create a small variance in populations, but I think it's well within the mandate of the commission to accept it.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Okay.

Even though we can't really tell because there are so many riding names down here, was the coloured portion the map that the commission has proposed? Is this other one the map that you're proposing?

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** Well, there's the second set that the commission has proposed, which is slightly different from the one that's in front of you now. That's right.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** All right.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** I don't know what the source is of the first one, Mr. Lukiwski. I'm sorry.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Okay.

Is Edmonton—Wetaskiwin what we're talking about here, or is it just Wetaskiwin?

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** We're talking about the riding of Wetaskiwin, which ceases to exist.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Right.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** Edmonton—Wetaskiwin would be a portion. It would be a completely new riding. It's a completely new concept in that part of Alberta. The area between Edmonton and Red Deer has always been a rural riding called Wetaskiwin.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Then if your riding in effect is being eliminated—

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** That's correct.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** —what riding would you be seeking the nomination in?

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** Well—

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** I just want to make sure I'm—

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** No, no. I—

**The Chair:** I'd like to thank you very much for that question, Mr. Lukiwski.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** If that is a source of conflict, then I'll withdraw it, but here's what I'm trying to get at. I'm trying to find out exactly... What we're asking you in terms of the riding is if you're dealing with changes to several ridings in the area.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** I'm asking for small changes to each of those

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** All right.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** —based on the demands that I've heard from my constituents.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Okay.

In the ridings you are recommending changes to, based on what you've heard from your constituents, what portion of them would be what you would consider the urban centre of Edmonton?

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** Well, if you look at the riding of Wetaskiwin right now, the two largest centres are Lacombe and Wetaskiwin, plus the four bands at Hobbema, with each in the range of approximately 12,000 to 13,000 in population. What we see now in what is being proposed by the commission is a complete paradigm shift for that area of Alberta. You would have 30,000 to 40,000 people from Edmonton and another 20,000 or so from Leduc. The City of Wetaskiwin goes from being one of the larger centres in a riding to being one of the smaller centres in a riding, which I think is one of the fears the community has, and I can understand that fear.

The other is the northern half of Red Deer, which is a rapidly growing community in what I would prefer to be called Red Deer—Lacombe. Again, Lacombe, being one of the other larger communities in the constituency, goes to being partnered with the third-largest city in Alberta. These are fundamental shifts in what we're used to in central Alberta.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Again—and I apologize, because I'm having trouble getting my head around this—would it be accurate to say that the commission, in their proposal, had a blend between a portion of Edmonton and a portion of the rural area outside Edmonton?

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** That's what they've done, exactly.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Right, and your suggestion is to not have that.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** My preference and the preference of my constituents—if you want to read this—is not to have any of Edmonton in the rural riding. They want the riding of Wetaskiwin, the rural area. I don't think that's a reasonable thing to do, given the domino effect that would happen. All I'm here to do today is to try to get as much back as possible of the rural component for those communities that want to maintain the relationships. There are economic partnerships and all kinds of reasons that these things make sense. Rimbey would come back into a central Alberta riding. Rocky Mountain House considers itself a central Alberta community, and these things were out in the west country.

The partnership between Wetaskiwin, Hobbema, and Ponoka in that particular corridor there, with the relationships they have directly with the first nations, has been completely severed. The relationship between the first nations in Wetaskiwin is much stronger than the relationship between Hobbema and Ponoka, yet the commission put the four bands of Hobbema in the riding with Ponoka and not in the riding with Wetaskiwin. Wetaskiwin is a Cree

word meaning “the hills where peace was made”. The name of the riding and the city come from that relationship with first nations.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** I think I have it figured out now, but I want to ask a question that Mr. Dion asked to our two previous presenters: were the recommendations you're making on behalf of constituents you've talked to made towards the commission, or are these brand new?

● (1215)

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** Mr. Lukiwski, the things I'm telling you today echo exactly what was said, for the most part. I don't want to sound too aggressive, but the boundaries commission basically summarily dismissed them. I have all kinds of submissions here from every county saying that they don't want anything to do with what the boundaries commission has proposed. They came back with a second set of maps, making just some minor alterations on behalf of the County of Wetaskiwin, but they really didn't heed any of the considerations that were made by the central Alberta communities and stakeholders.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Cullen is next.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Calkins.

The challenge the commission had is that you folks have grown. In order to insert a brand new seat of some kind into this immediate vicinity, it's Solomon's choice as to where the lines go. They had difficulty and, judging by your constituents, they didn't meet with great success. What this committee has been talking about are communities of interest, places that self-identify as having a connection with another place and people.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** Absolutely.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** I noted a couple of things in your testimony. One is that I can sense a certain amount of passion from you on this. What happens, what the place looks like, and how people connect to one another have strong emotional impacts. Am I overreaching here? It just feels as though you care about this thing in a way that isn't necessarily the way we argue about certain issues in the House.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** I care about this issue the way I care about all the issues that I represent on behalf of my constituents. I was born in the town of Lacombe. I represent the town that I was born in. I grew up on the farm and played hockey with all of these communities. All my friends and family, everybody, is in the central Alberta community that I call home. I can completely relate to and identify with their concerns.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** One of the things that struck me—and I didn't know this—is that there has been a Wetaskiwin, as you said, since—

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** Since Confederation.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** —since Confederation.

I'm looking at the letter you sent to the committee, and in your first point, you said, “Many constituents and municipal leaders feel that the hybrid model will not allow the interests and identities of the riding to be clearly communicated at the federal level.”

Can you tell me a bit more about what you meant there?

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** This is me articulating their concerns, and I think I've already done that in the sense that I've given an example of how a community—one of the founding cities of our province, Wetaskiwin—goes from being one of the prominent communities in the constituency to being well down the list, third or fourth in prominence, yet the riding has shrunk, and their place in it has as well, which is a conundrum.

That's the voice I'm echoing here today. Perhaps that concern can be mitigated through a good representative; perhaps it can and perhaps it can't.

I should note, based on what you started off with, that if the commission left the current riding of Wetaskiwin completely alone, it would fall well within the tolerance that was set out by the commission's own guidelines. I suppose it all depends on where you start drawing lines.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Yes, it does, and on the dominoes that you talked about.

The first point you made was about influencing how the issues of a community like Wetaskiwin are pushed forward at the federal level. The perception from your constituents, particularly in that community, is that their influence diminishes. This is because they go from being a leading voice within that riding—meaning that the issues they are presenting to the MP get promoted—to a third place position. There's an implication by what you're saying that their issues are different from those of the suburbs around Edmonton, the southern suburbs.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** I would wager that the answer to your question is self-evident.

Mr. Cullen, you represent a rural area. What folks want to see is their MP. In a rural area, a rural MP has a different approach, I think, in dealing with constituents, because it's a very personal, very face-to-face approach.

I'm not trying to diminish by any means the role that an MP plays in a larger urban centre. Everybody has something to contribute, but when you're part of a larger city, you're one of many MPs representing maybe the entire interests of a city. The reality is I'm the only MP Wetaskiwin has. I'm the only MP that Thorsby has. I'm the only MP that Calmar, Breton, Warburg, Lacombe, Ponoka, Hobbema, Blackfalds, Alix, Mirror, Clive have. I'm the only MP they have. When you go through—

• (1220)

**The Chair:** There's a song there.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** I was going to say “Stompin' Tom” for better reference.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** It's actually Hank Snow, singing “I've been everywhere, man”.

That requires an approach different from the approach in a larger urban centre. The concerns I've heard are that if the MP comes from a larger urban centre, they're going to focus on where the votes are, and if the votes are all in the larger urban centre....

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** That's the hybrid.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** Whether or not that's well-founded—

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** It's the perception.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** That's the perception. You're right.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** It sounds as though the people you represent would actually prefer something different from what you proposed. You said at some point in your testimony that it might not be possible and you recognized the realities, so what you've offered here is a version that would be more acceptable at least to the people you represent currently—not perfect, but better than what is offered up by the commission.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** Mr. Cullen, I'm a realist. Given the fact that the commission has heard from 19 different parties or interest groups in the hearings process and made very minor modifications at this point in time, I think it would be foolhardy for me to come here and think that they're going to look at a complete redraw because I asked them to.

Therefore, I'm doing the best I can to keep the rural component of the Edmonton—Wetaskiwin and the hopefully Red Deer—Lacombe ridings as balanced as possible and as inclusive as possible to those communities in central Alberta that want to be in a central Alberta riding.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** You've made a good case. Thank you, Blaine.

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

Mr. Dion is next.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** Mr. Chair, Mr. Reid wanted to interject if he's not taking my time.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** No, I didn't want to interject. I wanted to ask a question, but I can wait until you're done.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** The first thing, Mr. Calkins, is that I love the wording of “Red Deer—Lacombe”. I'm with you.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** Of course.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** It shows the French history of Alberta. That's good.

Second, how many ridings exactly will be affected by what you're proposing?

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** The ridings I'm talking about would simply involve the proposed Edmonton—Wetaskiwin riding, the proposed Red Deer—Wolf Creek riding, and to a certain degree the Yellowhead riding.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** Do you mean none have an MP now?

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** Two of these ridings don't exist currently, Mr. Dion, because the Edmonton—Wetaskiwin and Red Deer—Wolf Creek ridings and a portion of what is going to be the proposed Yellowhead riding are now in the Wetaskiwin riding, and they have an excellent MP.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** So you don't need to speak to a colleague to be sure that the colleague is...?

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** We've had a discussion as colleagues, and again, this goes back to the realistic approach of what we can do. I've spoken with those colleagues in that particular area, and everyone is fine with the tolerances and variances and the community inclusiveness.



**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** Am I right to understand that the number of inhabitants you would have in your riding would be 111,602? That's the figure I have here.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** For which proposed riding is that, Mr. Dion? Is that Red Deer—Wolf Creek?

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** Yes, but is it after the proposed change or before?

**The Chair:** I would assume it has to be after, because it doesn't exist in the current standard.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** That's right.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** That's true, and it's only 4% above.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** It's only 4% of the variance. That is an area that will grow.

I don't want to use up your time, Mr. Dion, because I know how valuable it is, but that would be a similar variance with Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, which I think is 1% more. Both of those ridings would grow at a population rate approximately the same. As Red Deer grows, it grows in its perimeters, and it would be growing northwards.

Blackfalds, when I was in high school and living in Lacombe, had less than 1,000 people. It's now over 7,000 in that short time; I'm still pretty young.

If we put two bands, Ermineskin and Louis Bull, in the Edmonton—Wetaskiwin riding, and put Samson and Montana.... Those are also two communities that are growing very rapidly. To make that split along there keeps their ties to their respective communities in each riding, but also evens out those high-growth-rate areas between those two ridings. At the end of 10 years, they'd probably have similar populations.

• (1225)

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** What, among everything you are saying to us today, would be new for the commission? Do you have additional arguments to make? I'm asking because I understand the commission considered your proposal and rejected it.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** I did not make a proposal to the commission, Mr. Dion.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** I read in French—I have that in French—that the commission discussed different options for your riding in its report.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** It might have. I know that a number of organizations made representations to the commission.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** It would be good for you to read the commission report.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** They have made representations, but the things we're discussing now, such as the inclusion of Rimbey and so on into the central Alberta ridings, were dismissed by the commission, and I'm here to make the case.

They don't need to be dismissed. The commission, in my estimation, wanted to stick to the 107,000 within a tighter tolerance and appeared to be unwilling to budge from that particular number.

What I'm suggesting to you is—

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** There is that, but there is also the sense that the commission seems to value having hybrid ridings. The commission seems to think it's good to have part rural and part urban together, which is the opposite of what you are proposing.

They make the point that—

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** Well, that's the word of three people who haven't been elected, Mr. Dion.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** Yes, I understand, but it seems that in other provinces we have commissions that argue your point against some of your colleagues. It's interesting how complex our country is.

You don't have anything new to tell us that we may put in our report to help the commission to think twice about what the commission is proposing.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** Well, I do believe I did bring a couple of new perspectives here when it comes to dealing with the first nations. I don't know if that argument was heard before.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** The first nations perspective is one.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** Also, the renaming of the Red Deer—Wolf Creek riding only makes sense.

As I said, I think the boundary commission, in its deliberations, could have done more, which is what I am proposing now: a little bit more. I am not proposing wholesale changes, but a little bit more towards respecting the wishes of those central Alberta residents.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** Thank you.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Reid.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** For what it's worth, in the English edition of the Alberta commission's report, page 15 is all about the whole hub and spoke, partly urban and partly rural riding concept, along with some alternatives—including the doughnut, which has been used in at least one place in Ontario—and then just attempting to divide up purely urban, purely rural areas. Everybody can read it and see what the philosophy was.

One of the things it mentioned, and it's a thought that was crossing my mind anyway, is that the nature of a partly urban, partly rural riding is different when it is a riding that is, say, half urban, half rural on the one hand.... I have some personal experience with this situation. I used to represent a riding, Lanark—Carleton, which was half urban and half rural population, although geographically it was 90% rural. Then after the riding was split in the last redistribution, I went to the rural component and a riding was created, Carleton—Mississippi Mills, which is about 80% urban but has a rural component.

I would say there is a distinction between the status quo before and the status quo afterward, given that it's easier to get to events in urban areas, and the money—the donations and so on—tends to come from urban areas. Your riding association meetings and so on tend to be held in the urban area, depending on where your directors are. There is a tendency for the interest to shift to the urban area, and then the rural area may be neglected. When you have that kind of split, rural is a minority.

All of this is by way of asking what percentage of the population is rural versus urban in what they've proposed.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** The population of the City of Red Deer is approximately 85,000, so there we go to a shift whereby, as I said, the largest community before that was 12,000. That's just one riding, and I believe 30-some thousand—

**The Chair:** What portion of Red Deer is in this?

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** This is Red Deer—Wolf Creek.

**The Chair:** So is that most of Red Deer?

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** It's half. It's right down Ross Street.

**The Chair:** Okay, so it's 50% of that 80,000.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** Yes, that's right, roughly.

That's nothing I've ever dealt with before as an MP. It's going to be something new, if that's where I intend to run. The same would be said for the new northern riding, Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, where you'd have 30,000 to 40,000 people having that effect from right at the cusp of the City of Edmonton, which is a much bigger fish than Red Deer, and I'll give you an example.

There has been a lot of talk in Edmonton about tax dollars potentially being used to build an NHL hockey arena. That might sound appealing to an Edmonton MP, but it certainly doesn't sound appealing to a Wetaskiwin MP. These are the kinds of conundrums that MPs will be facing when they're dealing with these kinds of issues. MPs sometimes have to deal with difficult issues, and I understand that, but this will be the difference. The lifestyle choices that people make reflect where they live and where they work and where they play, and they're different worlds.

•(1230)

**Mr. Scott Reid:** Sorry; I didn't get the number answer I was looking for. I'm really talking about two new ridings. In the two new ridings, what percentage of each one is rural?

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** It would go up drastically. The amount of urban versus rural would change. Right now, in the current Wetaskiwin riding, which is 15,000 square kilometres, I would say probably 65% live in small towns or cities and the rest live in the country or in villages or hamlets. That would probably change to more of an 85%-15% split.

Is that what you were looking for, Mr. Reid?

**Mr. Scott Reid:** That was what I was looking for, yes.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** That's just off the top of my head.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Go ahead, Madame Latendresse.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse:** Actually, the commission studied two different proposals with regard to Red Deer. The first was to maintain the current status, and the second was to create one riding for Red Deer and one rural riding in a doughnut around the city.

Are you in favour of this second proposal?

[*English*]

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** The folks in Red Deer have always had their own riding, so this is new for them as well. I can't speak for them; however, my indications from the media in the City of Red Deer are that they would prefer to maintain a riding in which the entire city would be within the boundaries of one riding.

I reject the premise of the boundary commission that those are the only two options. As I said earlier to Mr. Cullen, it all depends on where you start drawing lines. The current riding of Wetaskiwin has exactly the right number of people, give or take 2% or 3%, and you can start drawing your lines from there. It becomes an exercise in where you start drawing the lines.

I think the proposal I brought forward today, while it certainly accommodates some of the communities in the western part of the County of Ponoka and the western part of the County of Lacombe and brings them back into a central Alberta riding, is better than the doughnut option.

**The Chair:** Madame Turmel is next.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Nicole Turmel:** There is one thing I find interesting.

You mentioned that you chose not to make any representations to the commission and that you preferred to come meet with us.

You know what powers this committee has. We can make recommendations, but they may not listen to everything we have to say.

I'm trying to understand. If I've understood correctly, 19 groups made representations against the commission's recommendation. Don't you think that, by adding your voice and with the support of your fellow citizens, that you might have been able to convince the commission to make a change?

[*English*]

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** I don't understand the point of the question, Madame Turmel.

The reality is this is my domain as a member of Parliament on behalf of the folks I represent. Knowing all along that the process would allow me this opportunity, I in good faith did want to maintain my distance from the boundary process. I maintained in good faith that the commission would listen to the residents who were affected and would act accordingly. It would have been my wish, Ms. Turmel, to not have even come here today. My wish would have been that the boundary commission would have taken the advice of my constituents and the stakeholders who made those testimonies, and I could have removed myself from the process altogether, in a truly transparent process.

•(1235)

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Lukiwski, to hopefully finish this off.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** I have a comment to add to what Madame Turmel was saying.

Blaine, I made a submission in Saskatchewan. I originally thought I might not, because I thought it would be better if the constituents themselves did so. Nonetheless, I did, and I can assure Madame Turmel that my voice didn't change the commission's viewpoint one iota.

I'm not trying to be unfair here, but I believe that many commissions have an almost predisposed view of what a map should look like after they do their preliminary work, and many of them, I believe, go in thinking that's the best map possible. While they take advice and sometimes act upon it, many times they do not, so I am just saying, Blaine, that I don't know if you would have had any impact anyway, had you appeared.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** Perhaps I'm out of line for suggesting this to the committee, but this is the first time I have experienced this process. This is basically changing the colour of the car. That's all we're talking about.

If we're going to do this, I think a useful exercise might be to have commissions do consultations before the first set of boundaries are even drawn. In that way, advice could be taken.

I think it's a very difficult thing for a commission to draw a set of maps, put them out there, receive criticism, and go into a full retreat mode. Nobody wants to be put in that situation. I think in future

iterations of this review process, as legislators we might want to look at perhaps getting input from the constituencies and stakeholders first, before the first set of maps comes out, and then have hearings to see if it worked according to people's wishes and go from there.

Maybe it's naive of me to think that's a better process, but as I say, at this point all I'm trying to do is capture some of the wishes the constituents have expressed to me about this, and put it into a map that makes better sense for those who live in the areas between Red Deer and Edmonton.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Calkins, for coming today and for sharing with us your thoughts and the changes you would like to see. You mentioned more than once that you're a realist and that you recognize your ultimate wish may not be possible, but you've done a good job of representing your constituents on some of the movements of boundaries for smaller issues and certainly on name change.

Thank you for your information. If you have any other information that you would like to leave with us or share with us that we could use for our report, it would be great. If any of the members have any other information they would like from Mr. Calkins, now is the time to ask for it.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** Thank you, Chair, and thank you, members of the committee, for taking the time to hear me.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We will suspend for a moment or two while Mr. Calkins leaves.

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