



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

PROC • NUMBER 065 • 1st SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Tuesday, March 19, 2013

—
Chair

Mr. Joe Preston

Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

Tuesday, March 19, 2013

•(1105)

[English]

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

We have three witnesses today, all from our study on redistribution in beautiful British Columbia. Welcome, Mr. Rankin, Mr. Lunney, and Mr. Duncan. For many of you this will be your first chance at the end of a table. I'm sure Mr. Duncan has been there before. Get ready for a grilling from your fellow colleagues. You each have five minutes, and then we'll ask questions.

Mr. Duncan, we'll let you go first, please.

Hon. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, CPC): Thank you very much. Not only are we from British Columbia, we're from Vancouver Island and we support each other very well.

I'd like to thank the committee for your study. Just by way of some history, I made presentations to the electoral boundaries commissions prior to the 1997 election, and again for the 2004 election, successfully, I might add.

I'll go through my presentation according to the questions that you presented to me.

What is the rationale for my objection?

According to paragraph 15(1)(b) of the act, the commission is required to consider the community of interest or community of identity or the historical pattern of an electoral district in the province, and a manageable geographic size. The boundary proposed by the commission divides the Comox Valley, keeping the town of Comox with Vancouver Island North and moving the city of Courtenay to Nanaimo—Alberni, renamed Courtenay—Alberni. Courtenay and Comox are highly integrated and virtually seamless communities. Dividing them would be completely contrary to the principles espoused by the act.

Powell River considers itself a Sunshine Coast community and has a much stronger community of interest and identity with the rest of the Sunshine Coast than it does with Vancouver Island. There are no governance structures that tie Powell River to Vancouver Island. I refer you to appendix B of my submission for examples.

Vancouver Island North is about four times as large a riding as West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, with two dozen small communities with some long driving times and small ferries. As well, West Vancouver is reached by one direct flight from Ottawa, which typically takes five hours, while Vancouver Island North typically takes eight hours. Adding the complexity of reaching Powell River

to a riding already as large as Vancouver Island North is not reasonable.

Does my objection have community support? Yes, it does. Included in my submission to the committee are letters from the mayors of Courtenay, Powell River, Comox, and the Comox Valley MLA. I did discuss this with the Sunshine Coast MLA, who was supportive of what I was proposing, but I did not receive a letter. Essentially, at all levels of government, nobody supports the proposed boundaries.

What are the demographic consequences of the changes that I'm proposing? The changes will provide fairer representation for Vancouver Island, moving from an average of 3.1% over the electoral quota to 0.7% over, as well as for the Lower Mainland, moving from an average of 2.2% under the electoral quota to 1.6% under.

Is there a domino effect to the surrounding ridings? The changes I've proposed would affect adjacent ridings, but the effect is manageable and practical to address. I'd be happy to elaborate during Qs and As.

Is my objection a repeated argument made before the commission or a new one? I presented similar arguments to the commission, but at that time the proposal was different and the arguments were made differently. As well, information is available now that was not available prior to the public hearings. In the commission's original proposal the city of Courtenay was split between Vancouver Island North and Nanaimo—Alberni. I made the same arguments at the time with respect to Powell River belonging with the rest of the Sunshine Coast and West Vancouver, and how it was unreasonable to split Courtenay in order to add Powell River. However, much of the public outcry was focused on the splitting of Courtenay. The commission tried to address this complaint by keeping Courtenay whole, but then split it from Comox.

I also argued that population should not be added to Vancouver Island simply to solve a Lower Mainland problem, but what I did not have available to me at the time was the regional population breakdown that was provided in the commission's report. Their own data show that on average, Vancouver Island ridings are over the electoral quota and Lower Mainland ridings are under it.

Finally, the boundary as currently proposed has a significant contiguity issue that was not present in the first proposal. By cutting out the city of Courtenay, the town of Comox is barely connected to the rest of the riding. They had to be inventive to do that.

Have I talked to my colleagues about these proposed changes? Yes, I've spoken with my colleagues and have received support. You'll see that my submission has been signed by MPs James Lunney, John Weston, and Mark Strahl, whose current riding boundaries would be most impacted by my proposal.

There is a final question that I posed myself. One of the things the commission must consider is the historic pattern of an electoral district. Wasn't Powell River historically attached to Vancouver Island? In the past Powell River was attached to Vancouver Island, but at the time the upper and lower Sunshine Coasts were kept together and the Comox Valley was kept intact.

That concludes my submission. I think I'm just over five minutes.

Thank you.

• (1110)

The Chair: You're just over five minutes by a bit. Thank you, Mr. Duncan.

Mr. Lunney, for five minutes, and then we'll go to Mr. Rankin.

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Chair, I appreciate the opportunity to be here today to discuss the issues related to our ridings. My presentation will be brief, but it will complement what Mr. Duncan is saying.

Vancouver Island has the population to manage seven ridings. We have three-quarters of a million people on Vancouver Island. The way I've explained it to people is that with six ridings, we have an elevation at the south end called the Malahat which divides the capital region, which has three ridings, from the rest of Vancouver Island. So you have three ridings in a concurrent pattern below that area in the capital region where half the population of the island has traditionally been, and then you have the three in the northern part of the island. When we were receiving the extra riding, it pretty well had to straddle the Malahat somehow, which is what the current configuration does.

What really complicates things for Vancouver Island is the inclusion of Powell River, as my colleague John Duncan has just pointed out, because in addition to pushing north, displacing the existing representation and what's been in place for quite a while, is the poll to the north.... Basically, my riding just south of Vancouver Island North and Nanaimo—Alberni would be reconfigured. It would take me right out of Nanaimo, or the riding that I represent would no longer include Nanaimo or Lantzville. That would displace about 50,000 voters between the 45,000 that I currently represent in Nanaimo, the larger half, and the Lantzville region, so about 50,000 people at that end, and would add about 25,000 at the north end of the riding. About 75,000 people would have a significant change in their representation or their typical alignment.

I would agree with my colleague that separating Courtenay and Comox which are really twin cities is an unnatural thing to do. The mid-island area, Nanaimo, is the second largest city on the island. It is the hub city. It's also been rebranded as the harbour city, but for

years it was known as the hub city, a transportation centre with 86,000 people.

For most of the area north all the way to Deep Bay, which is about 30 kilometres south of Courtenay boundary, all that regional governance is already in the Regional District of Nanaimo on the east side of the island, and therefore the flow of governance to Deep Bay—area H it's called—all the way down is to Nanaimo. The business flow is toward Nanaimo, with the exception of the northern communities.

My recommendation for Nanaimo—Alberni would follow that of John Duncan, which would leave the city of Courtenay intact as part of Courtenay—Comox, and it would roughly follow the southern boundary of the city of Courtenay. Outside the city boundaries would be part of Nanaimo—Alberni. This proposal requires that the solution for Powell River be found on the Lower Mainland. That would allow us to retain a smaller portion of Nanaimo, but at least you would be able to justify calling it Nanaimo—Alberni.

I have a proposal on the map before you that would take the first east-west major thoroughfare off the Nanaimo Parkway, which is the exit called Aulds Road. It becomes Hammond Bay Road, and if you look at the map I have provided, it follows that to a natural pinch point where Pipers Lagoon and the road are very close together. It's a natural choke point for population. There's a high elevation, so you could separate that piece of population.

I've included up to Mostar Road, which is the second road. It cuts across to Hammond Bay Road, and according to my calculation, you'd come out with a population of about 110,000. It would shrink the neighbouring riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith, from about 114,000 to 105,000 to the target level, but it would be a shift that brings them both within the targets of the commission.

I would argue, frankly, that Nanaimo has had one MP's office primarily for the last 12 years in the north part of the city, inasmuch as the other one—and prior to my representing the area, there was no MP's office in a city with 80,000 people, because one was up in Qualicum Beach and the other was down in Duncan. People are used to coming to north Nanaimo for their services.

The current configuration would displace 75,000 people, as I have indicated there.

•(1115)

The advantages, the net effect would be...I mentioned the population numbers of about 110,000 for Nanaimo—Alberni. In Nanaimo—Ladysmith, we'd have about 105,000. We'd respect the wishes of Courtenay and Comox to remain together, creating a defined boundary outside the city of Courtenay. It would maintain the natural flow of business and government for most of the residents on the east side of Nanaimo—Alberni, which is towards Nanaimo.

I'll be glad to take any questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lunney.

Mr. Rankin.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Thank you, Chair.

I am the rookie MP for Victoria, also with my colleague—

The Chair: That's slowly rubbing off. You know that, don't you?

Mr. Murray Rankin: I can continue to say it until the next byelection.

I was recently elected in the byelection which took place on November 26. I really appreciate the opportunity to speak to your committee and also acknowledge the very important work that it does as part of our system of democratic governance.

I don't mean for a moment to minimize the challenge you face in trying to finalize new boundaries for electoral districts. I acknowledge the challenge of adding six new ridings to British Columbia, adapting to new demographic changes, yet respecting the historic traditions and long-standing geographic loyalties and affiliations of the areas in question.

Specifically, for my part of Vancouver Island, the Victoria area, I am very gratified that the redistribution committee listened to the concerns expressed by the vast majority of residents who appeared before it. I attended the commission's hearings—I was not yet sworn in; I was simply in the race at the time—but I heard the concerns first-hand, and the commission did too. The point is that the draft proposal for our Victoria federal riding was changed and has reverted to the boundaries that have been in place for almost 90 years, since 1924. We in Victoria like our traditions. We would like to keep things the way they are. We've been around with these boundaries since 1924. It works, and we like it that way.

There was a specific recommendation that had been rejected by the commission, which was that they remove an area of our city called Vic West, Victoria West, and put it in another riding.

The basic reason we succeeded in keeping it the way it is, is that it's inextricably linked to the rest of the city of Victoria. It shares the same working harbour, the same Gorge Waterway, etc. There's a commonality of interest, in other words, that justifies keeping Vic West in the riding. Vic West residents pay taxes to the city, rapid transit. There's a new bridge that's being replaced called the Johnson Street Bridge. Federal government investment in those projects is key to keeping taxes affordable for local residents while ensuring that our infrastructure is renewed. The issues that voters are concerned about in Vic West, such as the Johnson Street Bridge, and the mega marina, the federal harbour, are directly linked to our city. To have taken it and put it in a suburban riding in my judgment

would have been a mistake, and I'm so pleased that the redistribution committee accepted that fundamental point.

Mr. Chair, my key point is that Victoria has spoken with one voice on the federal scene. Federal ministers, MLAs, mayors, councillors, have a single point of view, a single contact, with the federal issues that impact all of Victoria.

To sum up, the area is called Vic West, not Esquimalt East, and the boundaries have reflected that reality. In short, we believe this process has worked very well. It's a testament to our democracy. I'm so pleased that the residents of Victoria were successful in being heard and that Vic West remains in the constituency. We accept that no change was warranted and are pleased with the result.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We have time for some questions for our guests.

Mr. Lukiwski, you're going first. Mr. Reid, I'll put you down.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, CPC): Thank you very much.

Thank you all for attending today.

My first couple of questions will be for John and James. Both of you mentioned in your presentations that you thought Powell River was kind of key to this thing. It also impacts upon a neighbouring riding, and I think that would be Mr. Weston's, who has yet to appear before the committee.

With your arguments and your recommendations as to where Powell River should be located, was I correct in hearing that Mr. Weston is also in agreement with that? You have sign-off from all of the MPs involved. Is that correct?

The Chair: Mr. Lunney first, and then Mr. Duncan.

Mr. James Lunney: We've had some discussions among us. I think Mr. Weston will be here on Thursday. It's our view that Powell River can be accommodated on the Lower Mainland. I think Mr. Weston will express that as long as the integrity of the city of West Vancouver is maintained it can be accommodated in the Lower Mainland.

I'm sure he'll be in a position to elaborate on that.

•(1120)

The Chair: Mr. Duncan on that point.

Hon. John Duncan: That's my understanding also.

What they've done, actually, is taken away Powell River, but put Pemberton into the West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast riding. There's an opportunity to take Pemberton, which is currently in Mark Strahl's riding, and expand, and take Whistler away and possibly a part of the Squamish area, which would retain West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast as basically a coastal riding, as opposed to a coastal and interior riding.

I've had discussions with Mark Strahl, who's affected because Pemberton is part of his riding, with John Weston, and with Andrew Saxton. They all are in concurrence that Powell River doesn't belong on Vancouver Island, and they're all prepared to work with whomever they can work with in terms of adjusting the boundaries. We think it's quite doable without any further domino effect.

If I may, in terms of the domino effect to James Lunney and to the next riding south, it's minimal. The way it's configured right now, James loses where his office is and I lose where my office is. It doesn't make a lot of sense. They are there strategically because it was the place to represent a broad population. So in order to accommodate a Lower Mainland problem, they've created significant issues on Vancouver Island.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Lukiwski.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: With regard to the arguments you have presented here, have you both, James and John, presented them to the commission? If so, why did they come forward with the map that we see, which obviously is one you would like to see altered? Did they give you any specific reasons for rejecting your arguments?

Hon. John Duncan: I think I explained that their first proposal actually split Courtenay, which really made no sense. They said there was a diversity of opinion on this. In actual fact, there wasn't a diversity of opinion. There was one presenter from West Vancouver who suggested Powell River didn't belong in the West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast riding. Other than that, everybody was solidified. All of their commentary in the report had to do with basically trying to accommodate the too large population in the West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast riding. The configuration they've come back with is still, I think, about 7% or 8% above the target. There will be a need to make some adjustments to West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country; there's no question.

The Chair: There are about 30 seconds left.

Mr. James Lunney: My experience in this is that the last time there was a change in British Columbia, it didn't involve Vancouver Island. So I had a buy on that. Maybe I was a little naive. I was led to believe the MP participation was not a public process, so I didn't make a presentation to the commission; we were busy with other things. Perhaps that was naive on my part. Also, I couldn't see a solution for Powell River. There were still some discussions on how best to manage the Powell River issue. Having had some time to reflect on that, we're hopeful the solutions that are being put forward now are ones which, with the assistance of the committee, the commission will be pleased to reconsider.

The Chair: Mr. Cullen.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Thanks, Chair.

Thanks to your witnesses.

I'm struggling a bit with this one. We had a similar case in northern Alberta, where there was a new riding being put in and there were implications. What helped the committee was that the MPs came with a pretty comprehensive domino map, saying this is what the commission proposed, and this is what we see as a better alternative, and they justified it with a lot of the arguments that you're making.

I know the area well and I have sympathies, John, in terms of that Powell River hub. There are ferries and connections, but it would be awkward, certainly, to try to represent and go back and forth.

Here's my challenge. I'm looking at the domino effects that you're now talking about going into other ridings. If Powell River comes out and then goes into West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, you're talking now about maybe moving Pemberton. You also mentioned Squamish maybe then leaving that riding and going into Chilliwack.

● (1125)

Hon. John Duncan: The regional district part of it would go with the new riding of Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: This is where I'm going to have trouble. I'm not questioning what you're saying; I'm having trouble understanding what you're saying.

Hon. John Duncan: There's the new riding there that no one currently represents.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Yes. Maybe if we could bring up in the map on the left, this Mission.... I want to understand what the domino effects are of what you're suggesting, all in the effort to get Powell River out of the riding. Is that possible?

Hon. John Duncan: Here's one take on it. You don't have this map, but this is Vancouver Island North. There's West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast. There's Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon. Here is the Chilliwack riding down here.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Yes. So now I look into this and say that Chilliwack riding dips down south. Is it almost to the border?

Hon. John Duncan: It's to the border.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: You're proposing including maybe all the way up to Pemberton, which would require that MP.... How would they get there? They would have to go up highway 1 and then cut across and go way up and then cut down after Ashcroft. Is that right?

Mr. James Lunney: It's currently represented by Mark Strahl.

Hon. John Duncan: Pemberton's currently in Chilliwack.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: And you're suggesting including deeper down into Squamish regional district. Is that what you said? You mentioned Squamish at one time.

Hon. John Duncan: Yes, but that's only me talking, just to get the population numbers.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I know, and this is where it's going to be tricky for the committee, it's to make the recommendation of what the carry-on effects are going to be to the maps.

We can simply say we reflect your testimony and you don't want the inclusion of Powell River, but then in the implication of what that means is where my concern lies.

Hon. John Duncan: The implication is that Weston, Saxton, and Strahl have all said if they are asked to work together to come up with boundaries that would work, they'd be happy to do it in order to accomplish keeping Powell River on the mainland.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Okay. Maybe when they come and testify there will be some of what we saw with northern Alberta, which was, "Here is the map that we suggest and this is why we think it will work."

My other question is for James. In terms of going down island, you talked about splitting Courtenay and Comox as not being a natural thing to do because they're so connected. Did I hear you right?

Mr. James Lunney: Yes.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Nanaimo is split right now and has been for years; the city itself is cut in half. Is that right? How's Nanaimo split?

Mr. James Lunney: Currently, I have the larger half with about 45,000 of a population of 86,000.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Okay.

Mr. James Lunney: It's 55-45, but of course it's been that way for 12 years. It's a bigger city and they were quite happy to have two MPs actually.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Your concern earlier was about splitting communities in half. What I'm trying to understand from your suggestion is what would be the carry-on effects. Have you spoken to Jean Crowder or anyone down south on the island on what the impacts would be on their ridings and if they had agreement with what you're suggesting?

Mr. James Lunney: Frankly, Jean, whose office is currently in Duncan, probably wouldn't be affected at all with the riding where her office is situated, which is now called Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, which includes Duncan.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Has she signed off? One of the things the committee looks for is whether MPs who are affected by what you're suggesting—

Mr. James Lunney: Currently, the city of Nanaimo would have about 30,000. At least the proposal I've had would leave me with about 10,000 to 15,000 left of that population, of the 45,000 I currently represent. That would be added to a chunk of what she used to represent. Neither one of us would...well, unless one of us chose to run in that riding. There would be an extra riding there looking for someone to represent it.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: That's the new riding on the island.

Mr. James Lunney: Technically, there's been such a reconfiguration you can argue about which one is the new one. Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, I guess, technically is the new one, isn't it?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: That's the new one.

Mr. James Lunney: Everything else, except Victoria, has had significant shifts. So, in essence, you could say Nanaimo is the one that currently doesn't have representation, other than what I currently

represent, the whole city, basically...well, in terms of mine is the only MP's full-time office that's in Nanaimo.

• (1130)

The Chair: Mr. Duncan.

Hon. John Duncan: I have a further point to that very quickly. The Nanaimo—Ladysmith riding is currently 10,000 people above the electoral quota, which is pretty significant, so adding some of north Nanaimo would actually....You could stop the dominoes very quickly, because....

The Chair: Thank you.

Monsieur Dion.

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Perhaps he could finish his sentence, just to hear why the domino effect will not be huge.

Hon. John Duncan: Okay. I'll read a paragraph to you.

By taking in Courtenay and losing Powell River, the population of Vancouver Island North, which is my riding, would increase from—

Hon. Stéphane Dion: You're reading from what?

Hon. John Duncan: My own notes.

The population of Vancouver Island North would increase from 103,458, which is 1.3% below the electoral quota, to 108,087, which is 3.2% above the electoral quota.

Courtenay—Alberni, the renamed Nanaimo—Alberni, which is James Lunney's riding, would lose Courtenay, and so would go from 110,391, which is 5.4% above the electoral quota, to about 86,292, or 18,000 below the electoral quota. The adjacent riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith is currently 10,235 above the electoral quota. Both of these ridings could be equalized without having any further impact on other ridings on Vancouver Island. If it were possible to split the difference evenly, both would have about 100,000 people, or 4% below the electoral quota.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Is there no domino effect for other ridings? Did you give the full picture in this comment?

Hon. John Duncan: It's the full picture on Vancouver Island. The mainland is a different question, which we were discussing earlier.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: On the mainland, what must this committee understand of the consequences of your proposition? Will some other colleagues come here and say they disagree with you?

Hon. John Duncan: I know that John Weston is planning on attending. I'm not sure about Andrew Saxton, and I'm not sure about Mark Strahl. They would both appear if they were pressed, I think.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Would they say the same as you? Do you know?

Hon. John Duncan: No, they're in concurrence with Powell River staying with the mainland—

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Okay. Do I still have some time, Chair?

The Chair: Yes.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: I'd like to ask my colleagues to react to some of what the commission has said.

First, for Mr. Duncan, the commission observes that “reasonable access between the North Island area and Powell River is available via BC Ferries...”. As well, with regard to the Sunshine Coast, the commission views the inclusion with Powell River as unfeasible. We'd ask you to react to that.

For Mr. Lunney, the sentence from the commission that I'd like to hear more about is, “The first was the very strong view of Cowichan Valley residents that Cowichan Lake ought properly to be linked to Duncan, not Nanaimo.” They also said that their goal was to keep Nanaimo together, to not split it, which is why “all parts of Nanaimo are now transferred to the reconfigured electoral district of Nanaimo—Ladysmith, which includes Lantzville”. It's the view they have.

And for Mr. Rankin, as I need a question for you, I'd like to hear your views on what your colleagues are saying, since you know a lot more than I do about Vancouver Island.

• (1135)

The Chair: You have about a minute left of Mr. Dion's time.

Mr. Rankin, would you like to go first?

Mr. Murray Rankin: Yes, I would.

I appreciate what Mr. Dion did in reading from the commission's justification. I am very loath to tear apart the work they've done. I think shuffling the deck is difficult.

Mr. Lunney referred to the three ridings up island and the three in the south straddling the mountain called the Malahat, which I think is a very fair way of putting it.

I am very concerned about this committee revisiting the work that was done. I mean, he said it was unnatural to separate Courtenay and Comox, but according to the committee that heard testimony and studied it, they said it was just fine. So there was a diversity of opinion and they came down where they did. I'm concerned about the domino effect. I must be all over the island; it's a small place.

Also, it wasn't clear from Mr. Lunney whether he did confer with my colleague, Ms. Crowder. I wasn't clear on his answer. I've not been consulted as one member on the island.

I'm worried about this teasing out in order to do the Powell River stuff, for which I'm sympathetic, but the consequences, I think, for the rest of us are pretty significant.

The Chair: All right. We're well over Mr. Dion's time, but a question was asked, so very quickly, Mr. Lunney, and then Mr. Duncan.

Mr. James Lunney: Mr. Chair, I think the commission responded to those concerns about the Cowichan Valley by including it. The first incarnation separated Cowichan Valley from Duncan and appended them in an unnatural way. I think the commission did accommodate that by coming up with Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

To the question about the domino effect on the north island with moving Powell River, that 20,000 simply allows a closer realignment for the two north island ridings with the new one, Nanaimo—Ladysmith. There's an adjustment there, but it does not go beyond Ladysmith, so it wouldn't affect the four southern ridings at all, according to our calculations. It wouldn't be necessary to make any

adjustment beyond the Nanaimo one, which is just adjusting that, keeping it closer to the historic representation.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Duncan.

Hon. John Duncan: From 1993 to 1997 I represented North Island—Powell River, a very difficult riding. I'm very familiar with the ferry. The ferry goes the wrong way. It goes from Powell River to Comox, rather than from Comox to Powell River. Any visit to Powell River usually means an overnigher. It is weather dependent; that ferry gets weathered out. It does four round trips a day. The ferry that connects the Sunshine Coast does eight round trips a day and does not get weathered out.

Every presentation said the feasibility of connecting the Sunshine Coast.... The way they think, their culture, all their government apparatus, all their tourism strategies, everything is north-south Sunshine Coast, not east-west Powell River to Vancouver Island.

This is a historical artifact we thought we got rid of in 1997 and it's back, but it's back only because they were trying to address a Lower Mainland problem and Vancouver Island took second fiddle, unfortunately.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Reid.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think what might be helpful to us, in fact, what would be essential to us is for you guys—Mr. Duncan and Mr. Lunney—to sit down.... It's my understanding Mr. Rankin is here just to say how much he likes things. We're glad to have you say that. I'm hoping other people who like what they got will not come before this committee, or we will be here until this time next year.

With regard to the two of you, you have quite specific instructions. I have, for example, Mr. Lunney's map. I was trying to trace it on the Elections Canada map. I think what we really want to have is a version of what Elections Canada does when it provides the legal description of ridings—that the boundary will follow this road to that point, will stop, go there—and then lay it out for all the boundaries that are relevant to your ridings, that divide the two of you—you have it there, good—and also, all other ridings that are affected through whatever dominoes might exist. I think this would cause Mr. Rankin peace of mind. The reason he wasn't consulted is that nobody's proposing changing the boundaries of his riding. I am proposing changes to my riding boundaries. I intend to consult only with the one riding it affects. I will not consult anybody else. The same thing, I'm sure, applies here.

Something like that allows us to sit down...and in addition to giving a general description we can say these are the exact consequences we are either endorsing or not endorsing. That would be enormously helpful to us, and obviously for you guys and for any other riding that is affected, a boundary that is not touching between you two, but between Chuck Strahl's riding and John Weston's riding, or whatever.

I have one last thought before I turn the mike over. Regarding ferries, you have my empathy. I don't know if I have as bad a problem as you do, but a year and a half ago, during the all-candidates debate, we had a debate on Amherst Island in Lake Ontario in my riding. I had booked to stay overnight; the rest of the candidates hadn't. There was a question as to whether the weather would cause the ferry to be cancelled. Things like that go on when you have islands. We should all be sensitive to that.

● (1140)

Hon. John Duncan: As a matter of interest, I already have five ferries in my riding. I have a community at the end of 63 kilometres of gravel road and a community at the end of 42 kilometres of gravel road. I'm dealing with isolation, long distances, travel, ferry schedules. Adding this on top is unrealistic.

I have some pretty detailed maps. The only way they've connected Comox to the rest of the riding is with one little road along the waterfront here. This whole area is the future expansion of Courtenay, which would cut Comox off from the rest of my riding. This is the growth area. This is where they're going. It's coming up. They had to be very inventive to do this.

Mr. Scott Reid: That looks like one of those congressional maps from the States that they gerrymander, to be honest.

Hon. John Duncan: It does. Yes.

The Chair: Mr. Lunney.

Mr. James Lunney: Mr. Chair, in my written proposal, I actually describe the southern border.

The northern one is quite simple. It simply follows the outline of the current municipal boundary for the City of Courtenay, and Nanaimo—Alberni could still keep its configuration. It would expand somewhat to the north, taking in the outlying communities of Courtenay. For those, it would be a displacement from their traditional representation, from a huge distortion of current representation and natural governance at the municipal and regional levels, but it would minimize that impact significantly, with the proposal recommended.

I have specified in point four the southern boundary of Nanaimo—Alberni with the roads, following Rutherford to Hammond Bay Road, following Hammond Bay Road, etc., to a natural boundary. It's all described there.

With the tools Elections Canada has, you could probably come up with the exact numbers. I would hope they have better tools available to them than perhaps we did in trying to determine the exact population numbers. That boundary could be adjusted a little bit, by a block or two, in order to accommodate numbers, if that were required.

Mr. Scott Reid: Do I have enough time for one last thing?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Scott Reid: Very briefly, John, you probably don't remember this, but back in 2005 when I was in the process of trying to find out best practices for running riding offices—I did this in my first few years as an MP—I visited a number of ridings. I went to yours, and it was a heck of a drive up the island, because I was at a conference in Victoria. What I recall about that and what I realized at that time was while it didn't look central to your riding on a map, that riding office

was the ideal spot for being central in terms of the various spokes coming into a hub, and the hub is where your office is currently located.

Hon. John Duncan: I drove for eight hours on Friday to get to the northern three communities in my riding. That's eight hours of driving, plus three community visits. It's a rather lengthy day, but at least I know I can do it, because I'm not reliant on a ferry.

The Chair: Thank you very much. Your time is up.

Mr. Scott, you have five minutes.

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks, everybody, for appearing.

It may well be that the specific proposal to change Nanaimo back won't necessarily create any domino effect south. I understand you're suggesting that it just takes away population from Jean Crowder's riding. It takes her down to 105,000, or something like that.

Mr. James Lunney: Nanaimo—Cowichan, as it's currently configured, is going to lose a big chunk of population as we're reducing, so all of Nanaimo would have a significant change.

I haven't talked to Jean about what her intentions would be in terms of running, but since her office and the main focus of, shall we say, her activities have been in the Duncan area, I'm sure she would be more likely to stay in that Cowichan—Malahat—Langford riding. I'm sure our colleagues would check. You could check with your own colleague.

The adjustment would be in the area that we're both being displaced from. It would just be a modest adjustment on that boundary, which wouldn't impact her in any significant way.

● (1145)

Mr. Craig Scott: I have a more specific question. In terms of the map you've given us, how much population does that take back from the commission's proposal to put into your riding?

Mr. James Lunney: Currently, as I said, my riding is a huge distortion. Although it doesn't look big on the map—

Mr. Craig Scott: I need a number. I'm asking for a number.

Mr. James Lunney: The proposal to Courtenay—Alberni would remove 50,000 people on the southern part of my riding. What I would be adding back is probably about 10,000 of those.

Mr. Craig Scott: Okay. That's kind of what I—

Mr. James Lunney: I'm sorry. It might be closer to 15,000, because there are about 5,000 in the Lantzville area, so it's about 15,000. Then, of course, in the Courtenay part, about 25,000 people would remain with Vancouver Island North. That minimizes the number of people displaced from the traditional representation.

Mr. Craig Scott: That was the clarity I was looking for, which is the 10,000 to 15,000. It's possible the domino effect will stop, because you just take some population from what is the new riding. That's just clarifying.

My real concern is on the mainland. I know we don't have the maps, but is this Mark Strahl's riding?

My sense is that the proposals you're loosely putting mean that, going back to old configurations, somewhere along the line he would reach, if he were to run here, all the way up to Pemberton.

Hon. John Duncan: He currently represents—

Mr. Craig Scott: The point is that in relation to the commission's proposal, that's a huge change. My concern, simply to put it on the record, is that I would need to see something like what the Alberta MPs did. I would like to see how it is that all of this fits together. Otherwise I don't think we have any expectation of making a reasonable request to the commission to start playing all around the Lower Mainland in order to accommodate these.... I understand these problems. They are reasonable concerns that you have, but the knock-on effect on the mainland is huge in relation to the commission's proposal.

The Chair: Mr. Cullen, you wanted a little bit of time. Take the rest of Mr. Scott's.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I wanted to follow up. The proposal would be that Chilliwack—Hope would revert to its older configuration and then have Pemberton and maybe some other parts included. What then is the implication on the Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon riding? That would take out a big chunk of that riding.

Hon. John Duncan: Well, it's currently under the quotient by quite a bit, so I'm suggesting that it would take Pemberton and Whistler—

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Are you talking about for Chilliwack?

Hon. John Duncan: —into Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: You're not suggesting that go into Chilliwack.

Hon. John Duncan: No.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I thought you were. I thought that was the riding Mark represents.

Hon. John Duncan: He currently represents Pemberton but not Whistler. That's what his riding currently does.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: You're suggesting including Whistler.

Hon. John Duncan: I am. If you take Powell River out, you kind of have to add Whistler and Pemberton, which wish to be together, by the way—

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I understand that....

Hon. John Duncan: —in the Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon riding.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Then you would have the person who represents Squamish not representing Whistler.

Hon. John Duncan: That's right.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Okay. Chilliwack—Hope would stay the same. Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon would enlarge to take in all of those communities. West Vancouver.... Then I want to see if there are any implications on Kamloops. I think in your letter you said the commission has a tough job, which is to add seats in these places. This is how it works. You add a seat and you move.... It's

funny, because you start over here on the coast with Powell River, and you end up talking about Kamloops, which is strange, but it's what happens.

Hon. John Duncan: You understand British Columbia. Right now the 26 Lower Mainland ridings on average are under the quotient. Those on Vancouver Island are over. In the interior of the province they're over. The singular exception for the interior is your riding. To me, they've put a priority on the Lower Mainland and....

• (1150)

Mr. Nathan Cullen: The direct implication of what both of you are saying is that this is a Vancouver problem, but you're bearing the brunt of it, essentially.

Hon. John Duncan: Yes.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: This map, which Scott and Craig have talked about, would be very helpful, because otherwise I'm left drawing squiggly lines on a map, and I don't feel confirmed in what I'm understanding, and I have to take your word for the domino.... I think I have got it more or less, James, with you in terms of what you're suggesting for Nanaimo. You think the domino stops at the bottom of that riding. These implications going into the interior—and I do sympathize, John, because I've been on that ferry to Powell River a bunch of times. I'm just trying to figure out the implications going back into the Lower Mainland if this committee is going to then say to get out the pens and start really rejigging. It will be tricky, and we're trying to make it not tricky.

The Chair: Are there any further questions? There's time for one or two one-offs if you need them. If not, we'll finish with this panel and move on to the New Brunswick report.

Mr. Lunney.

Mr. James Lunney: I have a last comment. At the end of the day, we're talking about roughly 25,000 people in Powell River who have an affinity...they're part of the Sunshine Coast, and no one wants to be attached to Vancouver Island. We have the population on Vancouver Island to sustain seven ridings within the commission's target. There has to be a solution on the Lower Mainland. That would be the brunt of our presentation on behalf of Vancouver Island.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Vancouver Island, for coming to visit us today. I feel like I've spent a sunny morning there instead of a snowy day in Ottawa.

Hon. John Duncan: I golfed on Saturday.

The Chair: I don't want to hear. Okay, he gets none of what he wants.

An hon. member: You're just blowing it. You're losing ground, my friend.

The Chair: We will suspend for a minute while we go in camera.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the *Copyright Act*. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a Committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the *Copyright Act*.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its Committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address: <http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante : <http://www.parl.gc.ca>