



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

PROC • NUMBER 072 • 1st SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Thursday, April 25, 2013

—
Chair

Mr. Joe Preston

Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

Thursday, April 25, 2013

• (1100)

[English]

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

I'm trying to start right on time. We have a very busy agenda today.

If I could also beg your indulgence, I wanted to speak to Madame Turmel before we started, but she's not here.

Oh, Madame Turmel is here.

I have to leave a little after noon today. I know we had scheduled the meeting all the way till one p.m., but I have another engagement and I have no co-chairs, so I'm going to ask your indulgence. As we did the other day when members couldn't be here to review the report, I ask that we get as far as we can today and then continue the review of the reports next Thursday, if that is permissible. We have the opening for report review on next Thursday—that's right.

That's where we're at. Thank you very much.

We have great witnesses today to talk about this area of eastern Ontario. We'll have five minutes from each of you and then questions and answers from the members.

Mr. Hsu, would you like to go first?

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): I'd be happy to.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to thank the committee for the opportunity to give testimony.

I want to start out by thanking the commission for producing numerous proposals and allowing public commentary on those proposals. I think that is a very good thing. In my oral testimony, I'm only going to provide a summary of the written testimony that I've already given to the committee, because of the time limitations.

Let me start with the Hamilton area. I would like to go on the record as supporting the second of three proposals put forward by the commission as best reflecting the communities of interest in the city of Hamilton.

Regarding the Algoma area, I would like to go on the record as supporting those who believe the commission's first proposals best reflect the requirement to have manageable geographic size of electoral districts.

I wanted to deal with those two first.

The next one I want to discuss is the proposed Bay of Quinte electoral district, and I would like to support the request from the municipal council of Prince Edward County to appropriately name that electoral district Prince Edward—Quinte. The reason for that is because Bay of Quinte, which is what the commission has proposed so far, does not reflect that only part of the Bay of Quinte is in the proposed riding, named, for now, Bay of Quinte. In fact, a better description of that riding would be Quinte, for the part that is north of the Bay of Quinte—Belleville and Trenton—and Prince Edward for the part of Prince Edward County that's south of the Bay of Quinte. I live near that area and I know that's how people think of that area, so I think it would be a better name. I have a letter of support from the municipal council for that, which I will be happy to give to the committee.

Finally, I would like to address issues with the electoral district of Kingston and the Islands. The commission has proposed that the part of the city of Kingston north of the 401 be moved to a new riding called Lanark—Frontenac. My original submission to the commission last year was to support their initial proposal to leave Kingston and the Islands unchanged. I would like to request that again today, to repeat something I already gave in writing to the commission. I can leave behind a copy of an e-mail and a response from the commission with that request.

The reason for leaving the city of Kingston whole inside the riding of Kingston and the Islands is that I believe the city of Kingston forms a strong community of interest. The people who have come to me believe it should not be broken up. I do have a number of e-mails that people have sent in that I can leave with the committee to pass on to the commission.

People north of the 401 go to school and work south of the 401, and vice versa. There are public services associated with the municipality that are shared. There's also the Little Cataraqui Creek watershed that is shared between the city of Kingston north of the 401 and south of the 401. Historically, the city of Kingston has always been inside one riding, since Sir John A. MacDonald first ran in the riding in the first election after Confederation.

In terms of community support, I will leave with the committee and the commission a letter of support from the member of the provincial parliament, John Gerretsen, but I do understand the municipal councillor for the north of Kingston and for the east of Kingston have another plan that my colleague, Mr. Reid, will discuss. However, the mayor of Kingston is remaining neutral. I would simply acknowledge that.

•(1105)

In terms of the demographic consequences, it is true that Kingston and the Islands would have a lot more people than Lanark—Frontenac. If Kingston were kept whole, Lanark—Frontenac would still have 90,000 people, which is not unusual for a rural riding like that.

I see that my time is running out. I'll be happy to answer any questions to clarify some of these points. Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you. We will get to questions right after we have Mr. Reid's presentation.

Mr. Reid, it's great to see you at that end of the table.

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

Colleagues, I asked the clerk to distribute a presentation, which you have in front of you. There are two copies, one in each official language, and you'll notice that there are handwritten tabs, so that's how you can tell.

Let me go through it and deal with each of the questions that have been raised to each of the presenters.

First of all, what am I proposing? Let us go back to the Kingston map, please. I'm proposing two things. One is that the new Lanark—Frontenac riding will have its name changed to Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, as it's going to include a chunk of Kingston. By geography, it will actually include more than half of the city of Kingston, so it seems appropriate to include that name.

Secondly, I'm asking for an additional boundary change. You can take a look at the maps that are up on the overhead. You can see that on the right-hand side is the present boundary of Kingston and the Islands. The yellow line going through there is Highway 401. Under the boundaries proposal put forward by the commission, that area is being moved into the Lanark—Frontenac riding.

I am proposing that an additional area, which I'll use the laser pointer to indicate, also be moved into the Lanark—Frontenac riding. You can see the Cataraqui River there. That's a significant divide. I'm suggesting that everything east of that point be moved.

The demographic consequences of making that change are the following: 11,900 people would be moved, which would have the effect of bringing both of the ridings much closer to the provincial median than they currently are. The exact numbers are on the handout to you.

There's a next question that you always ask: is there a domino effect on the surrounding ridings? The answer is no.

You ask next if we have spoken to our colleagues about these proposed changes. Mr. Hsu and I have been working closely, so closely, in fact, that you'll notice we are using the same format and fonts in our presentations, because we both submitted our presentations to each other ahead of time.

The next question is as follows: is your objection a repeated argument made before the boundaries commission or is it new? The answer is that this is new. I made a different presentation last November to the boundaries commission. The areas to the north and

west of Kingston were dramatically different under the initial proposals. I protested that. The commission listened to my proposal.

One of the things I suggested was that in order to solve problems elsewhere in Frontenac County, additional population be obtained from the north of Kingston and the boundary be pushed down to Highway 401. The commission accepted that proposal, but at the time I made the proposal I was very careful to make the following note in my presentation, which you can read for yourself. What I said was—and I'm quoting myself here—"I won't pretend that this arrangement is ideal from the point of view of Kingston's rural north end." In fact, I had no idea what they would think was best.

Once the boundaries were made public in February, I then contacted the municipal councillor, a man named Jeff Scott, who represents the ward district that covers the entire area north of Highway 401 that is being transferred. I asked, "What do you think?" His response to me is contained in a letter that is at tab B of the presentation. Essentially, he said that people there were enthusiastic about this, but he had some concerns. He said that the best way to respond to the concerns was to add the areas that I'm suggesting, south and east of Highway 401.

I note that you have a really good map now. They've just blown it up and made it a little closer. That's excellent.

What he said was, first of all, that his boundaries in his district are going to be changed. Right now, its southern boundary is Highway 401. After the municipal redistricting, it will take in everything east of Abbey Dawn Road. He said he'd like to have all of his district contained in a single riding and asked if I could make the change to incorporate that.

He also said to contact Brian Reitzel, who is the councillor for Pittsburgh ward. Pittsburgh ward currently is the entire area that I'm asking to have transferred. Following the municipal redistricting, it will be everything west of Abbey Dawn, south of Highway 401, and east of the Cataraqui.

I contacted Brian Reitzel, who told me that he would like to see his ward or his district transferred as well and have it become part of the new riding. His rationale is that Pittsburgh is an historic entity. Before 1998, Pittsburgh was a separate municipality. It was traditionally split between ridings over and over again in order to allow the city of Kingston, which in those days was much smaller, to be in a single riding.

He said that finally they got it right and put all of Pittsburgh into one riding in 2004, after the municipality had actually ceased to exist, and now it would be split up again, and they would not like to see that happen. I want to accommodate that rationale as well. He feels there is a strong community of interest in the entire area east of Highway 401, not merely for historical reasons but for some other interests as well.

•(1110)

Finally, I contacted the mayor of Frontenac Islands and asked if they wanted to be included. The rest of Frontenac County is in the riding I represent, although they are not contiguous with the part of the county, and his letter saying that they would prefer to remain with Kingston and the Islands is also included in the report I've submitted to you at tab C.

All I'm doing, Mr. Chair, in conclusion, is trying to reflect the interests of the local communities as represented to me by their elected representatives.

Thank you.

The Chair: Super. Thank you very much.

Thank you both for good presentations and on time.

Mr. Menegakis, I believe you're leading off today. Five minutes, please.

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Richmond Hill, CPC): Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to our colleagues for being here with us today.

Mr. Hsu, I hope I'm pronouncing that correctly?

Mr. Ted Hsu: Yes.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Thank you. I'd like to begin with you.

First, I want to make a comment on your weighing in on Hamilton, Algoma, the Bay of Quinte. Clearly these are not your riding or areas, or I don't think even adjacent to your riding.

Mr. Ted Hsu: Yes.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: It has been a practice of this committee to listen to witnesses, members of Parliament, speak specifically as it relates to their riding and how they're affected.

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): It is the right of the witness to speak about whatever he wants.

The Chair: So does the member have the right to ask questions. Let's not kill time today.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: This is an answer for my colleague.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: I'm not asking you the question, Mr. Dion.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: I have the right to make a point of order.

The Chair: If it is one. May we carry on?

Mr. Menegakis, please.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Yes. My point is this, Mr. Hsu. Clearly we are going to be hearing from members of Parliament affected by those ridings. I hope you understand that their commentary on how they're affected and the knowledge they would have, an intricate knowledge of what they would have from their ridings, would have a lot more impact on certainly how this committee looks at it and I'm sure how the commission would look at it. That's the point I wanted to make before I was interrupted by Mr. Dion.

I want to ask a question in regard to community support. Mr. Jeff Scott is a councillor. We don't know...the mayor is not weighing in on the discussion. Are you aware of representations that were made to the commission by members from the community supporting what you're asking us here today?

•(1115)

Mr. Ted Hsu: It turns out that because of the way the process is structured, because the initial proposal of the commission was to not change Kingston and the Islands, people thought they did not

particularly need to go and convince the commission that their initial proposal was a good one.

If there weren't representations made at the very first meeting, that's what I would attribute it to. But I do have letters of support that I will be submitting to the committee today from the member of the provincial parliament, who is also a former mayor and city councillor, and also people who live in the area—in support of the idea of keeping the city of Kingston whole inside the riding of Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Thank you. Certainly anything you provide would be helpful.

I have a question—and I didn't see this in your presentation—on how it impacts the actual population of the riding, how your change would impact that. What would the numbers be?

Mr. Ted Hsu: If you have my presentation, on the second page under number 3, "What are the demographic consequences of the changes...", you will see that the area of the city north of the 401 has a population of 8,231 residents officially. If that were not in the riding of Lanark—Frontenac, the population of Lanark—Frontenac would be 90,178.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Your riding is Kingston. What would the population of Kingston and the Islands be with your proposal?

Mr. Ted Hsu: It would be about 125,000, which is the latest census figure.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Okay. It would be 125,000.

Mr. Ted Hsu: That's right.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: You would agree that that's considerably higher than 106,000, which the commission has sort of set for the province. Right?

Mr. Ted Hsu: Yes, and my argument today—I acknowledge that—is that there is a community of interest that we need to balance.

In terms of representation, what I've also said in here, and the commission may or may not take this as a relevant point, is that I think the people in the northern part of the city of Kingston would have a bigger say because I think elections in Kingston and the Islands are expected to be much closer than in Lanark—Frontenac. So they would have a larger voice in the next election.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Yes. We don't know whether the commission considers what will happen on election day.

Mr. Ted Hsu: Yes. I put it up there, and I understand the commission will decide what they decide.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: They're looking at a fair representation, which is what's behind these changes in the first place.

Am I done?

The Chair: No, you have half a minute.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: So that would place it at about 19,000.

Mr. Ted Hsu: Right. But let me add this point: the commission was willing to do that in their first proposal. So it's certainly not out of the question, because the commission already was willing to do that in its first proposal.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Yes, in the initial proposal, the commission had Kingston and the Islands at 116,996.

Mr. Ted Hsu: No, the initial proposal was to leave the boundaries of Kingston and the Islands unchanged, which is what I'm arguing for today. So the commission was willing to tolerate that higher population of 125,000 in its initial proposal.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: You're saying that in this round they're taking it down to 116,000.

Mr. Ted Hsu: Right. What they reported to the House of Commons was 116,000.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Okay, that's fair enough. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Menegakis.

Mr. Christopherson, welcome to the committee.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Thank you very much, Chair. It's always a pleasure to be back here with you and colleagues.

Mr. Hsu, with regard to Hamilton, one of the questions you're asked before making a presentation here is: have you talked to your colleagues about these proposed changes, and if so, do they agree?

Did you talk to the members of Hamilton?

Mr. Ted Hsu: What I'm doing today is reflecting the testimony, information the committee has already gathered. I'm not offering any new information. I am simply taking advantage of this opportunity to tell the committee that people who have been in contact with me support the second of three proposals. I want to go on the record with that. I'm not making any new arguments, and I'm not bringing in any new organizations or groups to support that proposal. I'm just stating that I want to be on the record supporting what the commission has on its existing record.

• (1120)

Mr. David Christopherson: Okay, but you're also not answering my question.

Mr. Ted Hsu: Okay.

Mr. David Christopherson: The question is, did you consult with the area MPs? I happen to be one.

Mr. Ted Hsu: No, I did not.

Mr. David Christopherson: And why not?

Mr. Ted Hsu: I'm not bringing in any new groups and I'm not bringing in any new information. I'm simply going on the record supporting one of the previous proposals of the commission.

Mr. David Christopherson: Okay. Let me just run something by you. For the information of members, there are five MPs in the Hamilton area: three NDP, two Conservatives. We have had a united position on the boundaries from the beginning. We sent in letters on the first submission, which is the one that Mr. Hsu doesn't agree with, and we concluded that the commission got it right. It wasn't perfect, but it was the closest we were going to get. We thought it was in the best interests of Hamilton. We took that position, and when the commission held the public hearing, we made the mistake of thinking everybody agreed with us. Of course, you know what happens when you assume, and a few people came out and complained, had an objection. The commission then completely revised everything. It was radical. That's the way I put it. I went to the next hearing when they put that second proposal out there. My colleagues sent in a second round of letters saying we were in favour

of the first one. I personally went. I spent a lot of time on the presentation and made the case to the commissioners of how the first proposal reflected the best interests of Hamilton, our community of interest.

The commission agreed with us and in fact they said afterwards:

The Commission learned that the parts of the electoral districts of Hamilton Centre and Hamilton Mountain originally assigned to the proposed electoral district of Ancaster in fact do have a significant community of interest and identity with the communities of Ancaster, Dundas and Westdale. The Commission concluded that the approach it set out in its initial Proposal, with a few minor adjustments, was the best solution for the City of Hamilton.

So here is my question. The commission had two goes at it, two full-fledged goes at it. The first one was accepted by all of us who are elected and most of the community. The second one caused a huge uproar. We made the case. We pleaded with them to go back to the original proposal. They did.

Can you now give me a reason why all of us MPs, Hamiltonians, the commission, and this committee should overturn what looks to be as close to a community consensus as you can get?

Mr. Ted Hsu: People came to testify to the commission and the commission revised it. Did you call it "drastic" or "radical"? I can't remember the exact word.

Mr. David Christopherson: Radical.

Mr. Ted Hsu: So some people came to the commission and gave their arguments. The commission listened to them, and I understand it did get changed back, but at first they made these radical changes. I'm here simply to go on the record as being in support of the second proposal and the testimony that caused the commission to change its first proposal and accept the second one.

Mr. David Christopherson: If I may conclude, Mr. Chair, I would just point out to colleagues that with the greatest of respect, I think there's a mountain of evidence. We've now got it as close as we're going to get it, in terms of right, in Hamilton.

I respect the member's point of view. I'm not sure why he's here as a caucus or party representative as opposed to someone who has an immediate impact or interest in it. However, notwithstanding that, I think most would agree that there has not been any kind of evidence, let alone a strong case, that suggests that the current proposal, as proposed and adopted by the community, should be in any way changed. I urge members to stand by the commission's work, stand by the local members of both parties who agree that we have the best proposal we're going to get for the people of Hamilton right now.

Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Ted Hsu: With all respect to my colleague, I would simply say that some argument did cause the commission to change its mind between the first proposal and the second.

Mr. David Christopherson: With respect, we pointed out to them that they made a little mistake, and they agreed.

The Chair: Time.

Monsieur Dion, five minutes, please.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: I'll split my time.

A point of order, again. This is the first time that a colleague is a member of the committee and arguing for his riding. That's not proper to the way this committee should work.

The Chair: The expertise is at the table and it's answering questions.

It's your time, Mr. Dion, if you'd like to use it—

• (1125)

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): A point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: A point of order for Mr. Scott.

This is new today, folks. We've had a couple.

Go ahead.

Mr. Craig Scott: Very quickly, we had at least one in New Brunswick.

Thank you.

The Chair: We had a member at the table who spoke about his home province. Thank you.

It's not precedent-setting, and I think we're getting good information out for the committee, so I'll take it.

Mr. Dion, five minutes.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: I respect you, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

I want to welcome my two colleagues. Thank you very much for being here.

[*English*]

I will speak in English because it is your language, although you both speak very good French.

Mr. Hsu, I would like to give you the opportunity to react to the very detailed and informed proposal from Mr. Reid, because his proposal will, as a consequence, split the city of Kingston.

Mr. Ted Hsu: Yes. My reaction is the following. Mr. Reid wants to add the Pittsburgh ward of Kingston to the northern riding proposed to be called Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, but it really is a community of interest with the city of Kingston.

Let me just give you one example. The sewage from the city of Kingston goes across the Cataraqui River and is treated at the Ravensview plant in the Pittsburgh district, so it's a major piece of Kingston infrastructure that crosses the river and goes into Pittsburgh.

Bus routes go from the city of Kingston. Public transit doesn't go into the rural areas of Kingston, but it does go into Pittsburgh, at least the parts of Pittsburgh that one would reasonably consider urban.

The other argument is that there are other parts of Kingston that are not urban, but rural. Those are to be found in the northwest of the city.

Let me just take some time to say that one really good thing that's come out of this process is my getting to know Mr. Reid, and that's great.

An hon. member: Are you sure?

The Chair: Most people wouldn't think of it that way.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Ted Hsu: But let me just say that...now I've lost my train of thought.

Mr. Reid mentioned Kingston's rural north end. The 401 is not the boundary of the rural north end. The rural north end really includes the part of Kingston in the northwest and the northeast. There are rural parts of Kingston south of the 401. There are urban parts in the Pittsburgh ward that Mr. Reid is proposing to include in Lanark—Frontenac, and I think that should be a consideration of the commission in deciding the riding boundaries, if it is favourable to Mr. Reid's proposal.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Okay. Mr. Reid, can you react to Mr. Hsu?

Mr. Scott Reid: Well, first of all, thank you very much for those kind words. Mr. Armstrong's opinion evidently is that you don't know me as well as you think you do, or you'd like me less. This is the kind of collegiality that we all seek to have in every caucus.

With regard to community of interest, Ted is right; if you're looking at community of interest, there's no doubt that the city of Kingston...the status quo ante achieves the community of interest in keeping a political unit together. It keeps the old Pittsburgh Township together as well. It fulfills all those goals. The trouble is that I think the population is beyond what the commission is likely to accept at this point. The problem is not so much that Kingston is too large—although clearly it was at the absolute maximum that the commission was willing to accept, 17% over. Before they changed the proposal, it was the second-largest riding in the province in population. The problem is really that Lanark—Frontenac becomes too small. At 90,000 it's way under anything else in the region. I think for that reason they're unlikely to accept it.

This would reflect my own point of view. I think what I'm proposing is the best way of reflecting community of interest, and I base that on the fact that the local officials have been telling me that. If you don't endorse what I'm proposing, I think it would make sense for you to endorse what Mr. Hsu is proposing. It is actually better than the status quo, as far as community of interest goes. Now, the commission might look at it and say they just can't go for this, that they have to think of population, which overrides community of interest concerns. But I think he is accurately reflecting a legitimate way of handling the issue. If I were in his position and I were the MP for Kingston and the Islands, I'd probably be saying the same thing.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: So you're saying if the commission is ready to accept plus 17% and minus 15% for the two ridings, you like Mr. Hsu's proposal. If they're not, you prefer your proposal.

Mr. Scott Reid: Ultimately I'm arguing for my proposal. I'm aware that the rules of the committee don't allow you to endorse two proposals. If you say both Mr. Hsu and Mr. Reid have presented and we're not picking sides, I think the commission is more or less required to stick with the status quo. So I'm asking you to choose either my proposal or Mr. Hsu's proposal. I do think mine is better or I wouldn't be making it, but I do think his is better than the status quo with regard to the community of interest in Kingston.

If I might make one final note, Mr. Chair, I just want to say that I am not saying this to criticize what the commission did. They have a very difficult job, which is to try to figure things out based on the objections they hear. They heard lots of objections from Frontenac County—which I represent—and Lennox and Addington, Hastings County, and so on. In trying to deal with that, in the absence of any input defending the status quo, they were simply unaware of any communities of interest that exist in the city of Kingston, including the fact that, for example, the city wards will be redrawn so that one ward will in the future include areas on both sides of Highway 401.

• (1130)

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Mr. Hsu, regarding the same point of view, would you say that you—

The Chair: Thank you. We're well past time.

We are finished with this panel. We thank you for your input today.

We will suspend for a moment while we change the panel.

• (1130)

_____ (Pause) _____

• (1130)

The Chair: We'll start the next part of our meeting.

Thank you, Minister Van Loan, for coming. You'll notice you're on a panel by yourself so we'd like you not to argue with each other.

Hon. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): I'll try not to.

At the outset, I want to make it clear that I'm not here as Minister Van Loan; I'm here as MP Van Loan. I'm technically the minister who oversees this process, so I wanted to make everybody aware that I did clear my participation in the process here with the Ethics Commissioner, and that is subject to my appearing solely as the member of Parliament for York—Simcoe, which I am doing.

I do want to say I support the commission's work generally all across the province of Ontario. I think they did a very good job on a very challenging project. They should be commended on that.

I am proposing a very minor change to the northern boundary on the Simcoe County side of the York—Simcoe riding. It might be easier for you to actually look at the map I've circulated that shows an overlay of the options here. That is to move the proposed northern boundary of the riding, which is the red line, to my suggested amendment line, the blue line. The affected area, obviously, is the hatched area in between.

The reason for this is that it would better reflect the way that communities exist and operate and how people live their lives in this area. People in the hatched area are generally oriented towards the south in their day-to-day lives. That would be their community of

interest. They shop in the town of Bradford, to the south, and they've traditionally gone to school in Bradford West Gwillimbury to the south. They get their health care in that direction, and they tend to be involved in sports and community groups in that direction.

In fact, I can give you an example. At a recent meeting of the Bradford West Gwillimbury Local History Association, a good chunk of the people in attendance came from that hatched area, even though it's technically part of the town of Innisfil.

There's a reason so many from this area, which is technically in the town of Innisfil, are oriented to the south. That's because historically much of this area was not in Innisfil. In fact, it wasn't there until a series of amalgamations in 1991. This included the overwhelming majority of the population in question, including the village of Cookstown, which is at the west end of that area.

• (1135)

Only a municipal boundary change at that time, which was a kind of compensation for a series of amalgamations that happened at the other end with Barrie, brought part of these lands into the town of Innisfil—not all of them but part of them.

The clear sentiment of the active community leaders in that hatched area, the affected area, is that they would like to be associated with the area to the south and be part of that constituency. I should tell you there is really no partisan consequence from a change like this. You can transpose the numbers any time you want through any of the past several elections; the results come out essentially the same. It is a very minor change. This is being done on behalf of the people who live in this area, a request that I make on their behalf, because it is in their interest.

A little on the numbers. Right now, York—Simcoe, if you look at the numbers on the maps I have there, is significantly below the provincial quotient. When the commission initially came out with its first set of maps, they had taken all of Innisfil out of what they're proposing now. But they saw that the number for the new York—Simcoe was perhaps too low, so they tried to compensate by adding that—you can almost picture it on the bottom right, a square where you see Durham in the middle, that piece of land that is largely rural—and that would bring the numbers to a more reasonable level.

The local reaction in that area was quite strong: they wanted to remain in a Durham riding. It would have been odd; you would have had Simcoe County, part of old York County, and part of old Ontario County, now Durham region, all in one riding across three counties. They thought that was too much of a spread, so the commission carved that off in the second set of maps, but they didn't do anything else to correct the population, so York—Simcoe ends up down at 94,000. On the proposed changes, you can see York—Simcoe comes up to about 99,000, and Barrie—Innisfil, which would be the riding to the north, the south end of Barrie and the remainder of Innisfil, would be about 97,000.

Why did the commission choose the boundary it chose? I believe simply because it was a municipal boundary. It seemed a sensible thing to do from that perspective. We already have a number of exceptions in this riding where municipal boundaries have been ignored where it makes sense to do that. There are three polls in the south end that are part of King Township, but they are part of the Holland Marsh. With that community of interest, it makes sense to keep them all together in the riding. The same is the case for a chunk of land at the south end of East Gwillimbury, which is being carved out and put into Newmarket—Aurora because that's where they're more oriented. As I pointed out, this particular municipal boundary has a fairly recent date and doesn't really reflect the community of interest, so I don't believe it has the significance that would cause one to want to maintain that.

That's what I would put to you, and that simply on that basis you approve the request I have for you.

I might add one further comment, which is that it is supported by all the adjacent members of Parliament, including Patrick Brown, whose interest is in the Barrie—Innisfil riding in particular. He agrees that this is an appropriate boundary, based on his familiarity with the community.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Lukiwski, are you up for this?

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, CPC): I wasn't, but I can.

Not being an Ontarian, it seems to me, Mr. Van Loan, that the changes you're making are modest, as you quite correctly pointed out. The main concern we have at the committee is to ensure that the domino effect has been addressed. Could you expand a little? You said you've talked to Patrick Brown, who is affected by this, and you can assure the committee that he has agreed; he believes this would be an appropriate boundary change.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: He has, and he signed my letter to the procedure and House affairs committee reflecting his support for that.

As well, in terms of the domino effect, you can see in the numbers there that you go from one riding that's going to be 94,000, the other one 101,000, to one that's 99,000 and one that's 97,000. So the ridings are more equal, and they are both big. You get something that's less out of whack with the provincial quotient.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Had you made this proposal at the public hearings the commission conducted?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: An individual in the local community made it, and for whatever reason the committee didn't make that change.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: I guess that was my follow-up question, if they gave any rationale for not...

Hon. Peter Van Loan: I have not seen a rationale for it. I hypothesize that it's simply that they thought they would stick with the municipal boundary. As I said, in this case this was a very odd municipal boundary. Innisfil has been through a series of very traumatic municipal amalgamation fights with Barrie—in 1967, 1982, and 2013. Several of them resulted in court fights.

If you look at the submission from the Town of Innisfil itself, it was done by the mayor. It's almost an agonizing submission in itself, which expresses concern about Innisfil losing touch with the rest of Simcoe County and other rural areas, and that being put together with Barrie is difficult. But then they say they recognize the needs of the population, but whatever you do, please put the name "Innisfil" in the Barrie riding. It reflects that traumatized position. But I think when you put together the whole history of it, the character of how people have lived their lives, regardless of where those constantly moving municipal boundaries have been, the people in this area are oriented to the south. I think that line there to the Fourth Line of Innisfil roughly reflects the change, or, if you will, the watershed, in people's behaviour.

• (1140)

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: This is my last question, if I may, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Van Loan, to your knowledge, has anyone—any community association, any individual, or any municipal official—expressed objection, whether it be a community of interest argument or other argument, to your suggestion of moving the boundary as such?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: I'm not aware of anyone who objects to this proposal.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Okay.

That's all, Chair.

The Chair: Super.

Madame Turmel, five minutes—or less.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Van Loan, I understand that this affects Barrie, but it does not affect anyone in the east or the west. You said that a consultation was held with the MP for Barrie, and that there was no problem with this.

Mr. Lukiwski raised the issue of public support. We have no information about the kind of consultations you have held. We don't know if you have received letters, emails or any other information indicating whether or not your presentation received support.

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Van Loan: I have not put together a formal set of submissions. This is largely the result of ordinary, everyday consultation with people in the community.

As I said, the municipality took a position; it's reflected in the statement on the municipality of Innisfil website. That was their submission to the commission. While it more expresses agony about being put together with Barrie, it doesn't object to it because of the real population; it does express concern about some of the rural character area being amalgamated with the urban area to the north.

That's the closest you're going to get. The councillors I spoke with who support the change said that because the council took a position in that letter, which is actually no position, they are not permitted to write a separate letter themselves, they said.

[Translation]

Ms. Nycole Turmel: Did you make a presentation at the commission?

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan: I did not make a presentation at the commission, no. I did write a letter after the fact, but I did not make a presentation.

[Translation]

Ms. Nycole Turmel: Was the first submission like the one that was presented, or were changes made between the first and the second reports?

To your knowledge, have any members of your community made presentations?

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan: As I said, one individual made a presentation on behalf of a number of other individuals. They met, they prepared it, and one spokesman, a local community leader, went and made a presentation.

[Translation]

Ms. Nycole Turmel: What kind of a presentation was it? Did those individuals agree with the commission's report?

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan: No, it was a presentation that reflected the submission that I'm presenting here today. In fact, it is with the encouragement of those individuals that I am here today.

[Translation]

Ms. Nycole Turmel: Okay.

That's it for me.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Monsieur Dion.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Mr. Chair, I have no questions for Mr. Van Loan. I think my colleagues, Mr. Lukiwski and Madame Turmel, asked the questions I had in mind, and he answered them very well. It's a modest change.

I don't blame you, but it's a bit sad that we scheduled 30 minutes for something that was not contentious and only 30 minutes for two colleagues who disagree but who are seemingly willing to find an agreement: we didn't have the time to allow them to find a solution to their disagreement.

The Chair: I agree, Monsieur Dion, but my clairvoyance meter is just not working as well as you might think.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: I cannot always predict what will happen at the end of the table. I can only schedule the amount of time we've been using throughout the whole study.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: I understand, Mr. Chair, but my point is this. When a colleague comes and he has agreement with his neighbouring colleague about the changes, we likely don't need to

have 30 minutes to argue about that. But when two colleagues come and clearly...

We knew in advance that they had radically different views, but similarly, they were very positive and very willing to find a solution, so it would have been good to have 45 minutes with them and 15 minutes with Mr. Van Loan.

• (1145)

The Chair: Sure. And it would be great if I had 50 hours in a day. I just don't.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: My point is that we knew in advance that they were in disagreement and that Mr. Van Loan didn't have a disagreement with his colleague. This is my point.

The Chair: Up until yesterday, I believe, or the day before, Mr. Van Loan had another member at the table with him, the member for Newmarket. She decided at the last minute not to attend. So we would have had two members for this half-hour.

I apologize for any inconvenience that's been made to you, Mr. Dion.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Not to me—to Mr. Scott and Mr. Hsu.

The Chair: Mr. MacKenzie.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Van Loan, looking at your map, there is a new riding immediately to the north. That new riding would include the south end of Barrie.

When I look at your population numbers...and my recollection of Barrie is that it is a fairly fast-growing part of this area of Ontario.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Correct.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Likely—we can't say for sure, but likely—the population of Barrie will increase to the south?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Barrie has been identified by the Province of Ontario as one of its growth centres in their provincial planning documents, so it is an area targeted for growth. Alcona is the fast growing area of Innisfil. It would also be included in the Barrie—Innisfil riding.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: All I'm saying, to go along with your argument, is that the population numbers here are what they are today, but the likelihood is that Barrie—Innisfil will be a fast-growing population area. Those numbers will go up from what you have here, and there's room to grow, where if it's left the way it is, it adds another 3,000 to start with.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: It's dangerous to ask a municipal lawyer and planner these questions. But as I said, Barrie and Innisfil are identified as a growth priority for the province.

Much of the York region side of this riding, which is on the other side, is actually identified as greenbelt, and it's frozen from development.

If the province's objectives are properly met, Barrie and Innisfil will be experiencing very significant growth.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: My point was that I agree with what you're saying, and I think it falls into those numbers even more so as we go forward.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: I think the commission actually did a fair bit of that, if you look at their work across the province. They did a fair bit of projecting that, but I think you're right, my proposed change will reflect that even more. We'll do a better job of accommodating that.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Scott.

Mr. Craig Scott: Mr. Van Loan, I want to clarify a couple of points to make sure that when we come to write the report we have the facts. The MPs who are affected, the current MPs of the ridings that are affected.... What does that entail? That includes Simcoe—Grey, right?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: No. Simcoe—Grey is unaffected. It is bordering it and supports it.

Mr. Craig Scott: The north-south limits?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: But the land swap.... Right now, everything you see in white is the existing York—Simcoe, entirely my constituency, and everything you see in Barrie is Barrie.

Under the new proposals, Barrie gets carved into a Barrie South and a Barrie North, or Barrie—Innisfil and Barrie North, and takes up part of my riding.

Patrick Brown represents all of Barrie right now. His intentions or interests—I don't want to give away any secrets, but that's Barrie—Innisfil, the neighbouring one—will be affected, and certainly he sees it as his future interest too.

Mr. Craig Scott: The only reason I ask is that you need to talk to all MPs affected, including Patrick Brown. I want to make sure that there is nobody else that you needed to talk to?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: No, nobody else is affected.

Mr. Craig Scott: That's really the source of my confusion.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: There are other changes to the boundary, as I said, at the south end with Newmarket—Aurora, but we are both in accord with what the commission has proposed there.

Mr. Craig Scott: That sounds good.

You mentioned that although you hadn't had a chance to make this proposal, because you didn't yourself appear at the hearings, some citizens did.

I was wondering if it would be at all possible to have the transcripts of the hearings, just to....

The Chair: No idea.

Mr. Craig Scott: If it would be easy for you to actually.... If they did make a submission and it's in writing, could you provide that to the committee?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: I don't believe it was in writing. I believe it was a verbal submission by one individual on behalf of some others at the hearings that were held. I have not seen transcripts.

Mr. Craig Scott: Thank you.

The Chair: Seeing no other questioners, Minister, thank you for coming today, and thank you for being very informative.

We will suspend and go in camera to start taking a quick look at our reports until the chair has to leave at about a quarter after or twenty after twelve.

[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>