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# Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

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Chair: The Honourable Bardish Chagger





## Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

Tuesday, March 28, 2023

• (1100)

[*English*]

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

Welcome to meeting number 59 of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. The committee is meeting today to continue its study of the Quebec electoral boundaries commission report.

Before I get into welcoming our guests, I want to mention a couple of housekeeping items.

There was a letter circulated with regard to adding time to procedure and House affairs so that we can get a bit more work done. We will be allotting 15 minutes at the end of this meeting for that conversation. Therefore, the two panels will move quickly.

I will say to the clerk that perhaps the second panel will be starting about five to 10 minutes earlier. Can we let them have a heads-up? That way, we can get through committee business really quickly.

I'm also going to suggest that you do not have to use all of your time. If you have extra time, you can give it back to the committee so that we can get through everything very quickly. I am confident our guests are going to be very efficient in providing us with their information.

[*Translation*]

The clerk and I will maintain a consolidated list of members wishing to speak.

For our first panel, we have Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe, MP for Lac-Saint-Jean, Marilène Gill, MP for Manicouagan, and Mario Simard, MP for Jonquière, who is joining us by video conference.

We have carried out sound tests and everything seems to be working fine.

Each of you will have four minutes to speak, but don't feel you have to use up the entire time.

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, welcome. The floor is yours.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Hello everyone. Thank you for having us at this important meeting.

It was a shock to us all to find out that the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Quebec 2022 was planning to repeat the historical error of creating the riding of Jonquière—Alma. Let

me read you an excerpt from a letter we received after this news came out. We forwarded it to the committee as well.

No one saw this recommendation coming, and it has caused an uproar among residents and among the elected officials who would be directly affected. Why?

Because it's NOT A GOOD IDEA!

This proposal would make an already thorny situation even more complicated...

Although the name Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean makes it sound like one big region, it's important to bear in mind that it's made up of two separate entities: Saguenay and Lac-Saint-Jean. Each entity has its own communities of interest and its own major cities. Alma is one such city; even I personally refer to it as the capital of Lac-Saint-Jean.

Lumping Alma and Jonquière together would exacerbate a complicated situation that would just make life harder for everyone. Both for local residents and for the MP.

Who do you think wrote that letter? It was Jean-Pierre Blackburn, the former ambassador of Canada to UNESCO, former Conservative minister and, most importantly, former MP for Jonquière—Alma. Mr. Blackburn is the person who represented this short-lived riding the longest in the House of Commons, a riding many describe as a historical error.

Let me read you an excerpt from another letter we received.

Imagine how surprised, how flabbergasted, we were when we found out on February 1 that the Commission is now planning to repeat a historical error and add the town of Alma to the riding of Jonquière. We thought this mistake had been fixed in 2013, which is not so long ago. Imagine how surprised, flabbergasted and above all mystified we were by this news, because we had specifically cited the historical error of Alma—Jonquière as an example in our written submission. The idea of going back to that electoral map defies all logic and was not included in the proposals at the public hearings.

That letter came from the Mayor of Alma, Sylvie Beaumont. At the hearings in September, Ms. Beaumont spoke out against the commission's first proposal. Even without being consulted on the proposal we are faced with today, the City of Alma, as well as several other people who spoke at the September hearings, held up the riding of Jonquière—Alma as an example of a mistake that would affect political representation.

Here is the final nail in the coffin. The commission proposal we are looking at today is based purely on one resident's submission. That submission contained several suggestions for redrawing the electoral boundaries of Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, including one suggestion to resurrect the riding of Jonquière—Alma. I want to read you an excerpt from another letter we got after this news came out.

To whom it may concern:

My name is Marc Perron and I live in the region of Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean.

...

I am deeply disappointed to see which option was selected...and I bitterly regret having suggested it. I would like to officially retract that suggestion.

To recap, the MP who represented that former riding the longest is opposed to bringing it back. The City of Alma, the city that would be most affected by this change, is opposed to bringing it back. Several elected officials who spoke at the hearings in September 2022 cited Jonquière—Alma as an example of a mistake that should never be repeated. Lastly, the suggestion that the commissioners relied on to draft the proposal that brings us here today has been retracted by the person who made it.

In closing, we know that, if all the members approve the commission's proposal, it's more likely to be adopted. Knowing that the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, Mr. Richard Martel, supported the commissioners' first proposal, my colleague from Jonquière and I are reluctantly joining him in endorsing that first proposal, because we know that resurrecting Jonquière—Alma would be even worse.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

• (1105)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

Ms. Gill, the floor is yours.

**Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to thank all of my colleagues for being here today to listen to us.

The issue that brings me here today is not a boundary issue. My riding is called “Manicouagan” right now, but I would like to tell you about the new name we would like it to have. This name goes beyond symbolism, and I will explain why.

First, a little background. The riding got the name “Manicouagan” during the 2015 redistribution. Manicouagan was one of two ridings covering Côte-Nord, which is an administrative region of Quebec. The other was Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, which disappeared. In 2015, when the boundaries were redrawn, the riding was named “Manicouagan”. I was already an MP then, and people pointed out to me that this was the name of a regional county municipality, or RCM. It is in fact one of the six RCMs that make up Côte-Nord. It's also the name of a river, so it's not just the name of a riding.

The name change caused some confusion, especially about the riding boundaries. Some people said they refer to our region as Côte-Nord. It's a separate administrative region, a huge, 350,000-square-kilometre island that you have to take a ferry to reach. We

call ourselves Nord-Côtiers, North Shore residents. This issue of our sense of identity was raised during the Parliament that was in session from 2015 to 2017, because people already wanted the name Manicouagan to be changed.

The Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Quebec recognized the sense in this and agreed to change “Manicouagan” to “Côte-Nord” for reasons relating to our sense of identity and geographic boundaries. It even consulted the residents, who were in agreement. The commission listened to that point of view, and the term “Côte-Nord” has now been incorporated into the proposed name.

However, in the interest of consistency and respect, I want to raise my second topic, namely consultation. The commission is now proposing another name: Manicouagan—Kawawachikamach—Uapishka. I acknowledge the commissioners' good intentions in adding indigenous names to the riding name, even though the origins of the name Manicouagan are unknown. The name is thought to have come from the Jesuits. It wasn't indigenous people themselves who gave it that name, but it's still a name of indigenous origin. So I do salute the commission's good intentions.

My problem is that, despite those good intentions, they didn't consult the public. I am also my party's critic for indigenous affairs, and I know that indigenous people want to be consulted when there are decisions that will affect them. I know that, in this case, the change would be symbolic, but in order for the people to feel like they're really participating and being heard, the riding should be given the name they would like it to have, hence the proposal to include the name “Nitassinan”. Non-indigenous people refer to that area as “Côte-Nord”. The two names don't mean the exact same thing, but the territories of Côte-Nord and Nitassinan roughly overlap. Nitassinan is also the name used by the Innu, who account for about 15% of the population of Côte-Nord. It's their territory.

Our goal is to be consistent, avoid confusion and show respect when it comes to consultation. Those are not empty words, considering the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Given what is supposed to be done soon here, in the House of Commons, to implement that declaration, I have a duty, as an MP and critic for indigenous affairs, to highlight the importance of being consistent and respecting these citizens' identity. They are citizens in their own right who also deserve to feel included in the new riding name. That is why I humbly suggest, on behalf of all affected residents, the name “Côte-Nord—Nitassinan”.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

• (1110)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Gill.

Mr. Simard, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Hello, esteemed colleagues.

I would like to pick up on what my colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean was saying earlier. I think we have serious grounds for opposing the commission's proposal. I will start by saying that the commission's decision involved blatant procedural unfairness.

The commission came up with a proposal that was presented to our constituents on July 29, 2022, but the proposal to merge Jonquière and Alma was never presented to residents. If it had been, the regional backlash would have been much stronger than the one we saw against the first proposal.

There is no community of interest between Jonquière and Alma. The proof is that there is a Facebook page for people who are from Saguenay, not Lac-Saint-Jean, and another Facebook page for people who are from Lac-Saint-Jean, not Saguenay. It's like comparing someone from Montreal to someone from Quebec City, or someone from Toronto to someone from Montreal. These are two fundamentally different communities of interest that this proposal would lump together.

Earlier, my colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean told you about the letter from Jean-Pierre Blackburn, the former MP. He served for a long time as the MP for the riding of Jonquière—Alma, which existed from 2004 to 2015. Claude Patry also represented this riding as a Bloc Québécois MP. I was his political attaché. Mr. Patry got the electoral map amended in 2013 at the request of Alma's business community and elected officials, who did not want to be part of the riding of Jonquière—Alma anymore. At the time of the 2013 redistribution, this was presented as a historical error.

It was even reiterated that this historical error should not be repeated in this redistribution. That is why the member for Lac-Saint-Jean and I were so stunned to see this proposal resurface at the request of a well-meaning resident, Marc Perron, who now says that it was a mistake he wants to retract.

This motive is clearly valid. We have the support of our community. While the riding of Jonquière—Alma wasn't presented to the public, which is obviously extremely unfair from a procedural standpoint, I can confirm that the Jonquière—Alma proposal did come up for discussion in 2013.

During the 2013 redistribution, a number of people said they disliked the riding of Jonquière—Alma, because it created such a hassle for the MP and for socio-economic and political stakeholders. That's why this historical mistake or blunder was fixed. Now the commission is making the same mistake all over again.

Will our proposal have a domino effect on other ridings? I should note that when the commission presented its first proposal, the MP who represents Alma and I opposed it, while the MP for Chicoutimi supported it.

As far the riding of Jonquière—Alma goes, the lesser evil would be to revert to the initial proposal. It has its flaws, to be sure, but at least in that proposal, Alma, which is the cultural and economic hub of Lac-Saint-Jean, wouldn't be tacked on to another region, Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean.

• (1115)

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

At the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, four minutes can go by pretty fast.

Now we'll move to questions and comments and get more information.

Let's start with the six-minute round, starting with Mr. Gourde, followed by Mr. Fergus, Mr. Therrien and then Ms. Blaney.

I will now turn the floor over to Mr. Gourde.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

My first question is for Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe or Mr. Simard, or both.

If I understand you correctly, the first proposal was opposed by certain people in the riding and by the two of you. The commission then came up with a second proposal, which hasn't met with universal approval either.

What led the commissioners to change the first proposal? Did you tell them it was okay, originally?

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I'm not sure I understand your question. Are you asking me what led the commissioners to change their minds?

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Yes, exactly.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** There was a backlash against the first proposal, because it would have taken some communities away from the riding of Lac-Saint-Jean and transferred them to the riding of Jonquière.

The proposed riding name of “Jonquière—Alma” never came up. The only reason the commissioners thought of it was that one resident suggested reviving the riding of Jonquière—Alma. But the resident who made the suggestion on which the commissioners based the proposal we're debating today has since retracted his suggestion. The commissioners really have no grounds to pursue this idea of bringing back the riding of Jonquière—Alma. Mr. Perron has retracted his suggestion, so it's as if it had never been made. In my opinion, his suggestion is null and void.

The reason we're fighting so hard against this Jonquière—Alma proposal is that it was never discussed. As Mr. Simard so aptly pointed out, however, it did come up for discussion in 2013. At the time, people from all over Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean spoke out against the creation of the riding of Jonquière—Alma.

In 2013, the commission fixed a historical mistake. So why is that, 10 years later, that same commission is repeating a mistake it fixed itself? I feel like I'm a bad movie right now. The commission needs to do its homework. Unfortunately, we are now forced to support the first proposal, because it couldn't be worse than the one creating the riding of Jonquière—Alma.

We know creating Jonquière—Alma is a bad proposal, and the proof is that the commission itself decided to fix that mistake in 2013. I think consistency is important, especially when it comes to political representation.

Mr. Simard, do you have anything to add?

**Mr. Mario Simard:** I'll be brief.

What happened is that the commission responded to the objections from the public and MPs by presenting a proposal that was worse than the initial proposal. This proposal, which was never discussed with political stakeholders in the region, repeated the historical error of Jonquière—Alma. Today, all of the stakeholders, including a former MP and minister, Jean-Pierre Blackburn, are saying that this prospect is intolerable. Furthermore, Marc Perron, the person who brought up the idea of Jonquière—Alma, has retracted his own suggestion. It's clear that—

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Thank you, Mr. Simard.

My next question is a pretty important one.

You're suggesting going back to the initial proposal, but would it have been possible to come up with a satisfactory proposal, different from the first and second proposals, that all parties could have agreed on?

• (1120)

**Mr. Mario Simard:** For us, the trouble is that the commission didn't present the Jonquière—Alma proposal to the residents. It made it hard for us to create a new proposal that the commission would have to examine from scratch. We're well aware that, at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, fundamental changes are a little harder to achieve.

I think the option most likely to be acceptable to everyone, including residents of our region and the commissioners, is to go back to the first proposal. It may not have been perfect, but it was less harmful to our region.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** I'm done, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Mr. Gourde used four and a half minutes.

Mr. Fergus, it's your turn.

**Hon. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I also want to thank the witnesses, our colleagues from the House of Commons, for their presentations.

Ms. Gill, you canvassed your constituents about the riding name and sent us the petition.

How many people are in favour of the new name you're suggesting, Côte-Nord—Nitassinan?

**Mrs. Marilène Gill:** There's a lot to unpack in what you just said.

We used householders to tell voters about the commissioners' proposal and then explain the name Côte-Nord—Nitassinan, which had already circulated in our riding. Just over 1,100 households in my area responded positively. That's what I sent you all.

From the beginning, we've been talking about representation a lot, so I would add that the name is supported by the Assemblée des préfets de la Côte-Nord, which is made up of all the elected or appointed wardens. Resolutions to that effect have been approved by all the elected officials in Côte-Nord. I'm referring to elected offi-

cial, not chiefs, but there was also a letter in favour of the name Côte-Nord—Nitassinan that was signed by the assembly of Innu chiefs.

Overall, both residents and their indigenous and non-indigenous representatives agree on the name.

**Hon. Greg Fergus:** Great.

Could you tell us about the meaning of this indigenous name?

**Mrs. Marilène Gill:** I'm no linguist, and my Innu is very limited, but Nitassinan refers to the territory, our land, the land. It's a powerful term, obviously, given the relationship that first nations, Inuit and Métis people have with the land. For them, it's meaningful.

Beyond that, the land means the entire territory, which is immense, and it's not just one place. Certain places can be important, but the name "Nitassinan" covers all of it, just as the name "Côte-Nord" covers all of it. I think that's important.

Speaking personally, I think that putting the two territories on an equal footing and connecting them is a wonderful idea. Naturally, they agree and they're behind the proposal.

**Hon. Greg Fergus:** Thank you.

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe and Mr. Simard, I know your area well, and I can imagine how controversial the proposal to create the riding of Jonquière—Alma must have been.

My question is similar to the one Mr. Gourde asked. I would imagine the residents of Alma are not too keen to be merged with Lac-Saint-Jean and that whole region. What can we do? Is there another option you can propose? Do you just want to go back to the initial proposal and say that you'll accept it in spite of all its faults?

• (1125)

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Yes, Alma definitely does not want to get lumped in with a Saguenay riding. One of the reasons for that is that the people of Alma know that their political weight will shrink the second they're incorporated into the riding of Jonquière, given that Alma would go from the most populous city in its current riding of Lac-Saint-Jean to the least populous city in the new riding.

We were told that the stage that the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs is currently at is not the time to propose new maps. We were told that what we could do was support the initial proposal. That proposal caused a backlash, but much less of a backlash than the Jonquière—Alma suggestion would have caused had it been presented. That's what you need to bear in mind.

Since the MP for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord sent a letter expressing support for the commissioners' initial proposal during the September hearings, my colleague from Jonquière and I decided that, in order to avoid repeating the historical error of Jonquière—Alma, we would support that first proposal too. We're doing it reluctantly, of course, but with the goal of avoiding a repeat of the disaster that happened in the past and was eventually fixed. The three MPs from the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region will therefore support the first proposal.

You're all MPs yourselves, so you know exactly what communities of interest mean, and you're in a position to ensure that that mistake is not made again. We beg you to write in your report that this scenario must be avoided at all costs. We have the backing of several highly credible stakeholders, including the MP who represented the former riding of Jonquière—Alma the longest in the House of Commons during the 10 years it existed. He wrote a letter addressed to you, the parliamentarians, saying that bringing back this riding was not a good idea.

We urge you to do your work in a non-partisan way. The person who wrote that letter was a Conservative MP, not a Bloc MP.

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

Mr. Therrien, you have the floor.

**Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Welcome to the witnesses who are here with us in person or by Zoom.

I have lived in Lac-Saint-Jean, Saint-Félicien and Saint-Prime. I know the region well. When I saw this proposal, honestly, I nearly fell off my chair. I cannot fathom this disrespect for Lac-Saint-Jean and its unique characteristics and the Saguenay, which is different in so many ways. To take the capital of Lac-Saint-Jean, Alma, and put it in the Saguenay region is to not understand the region.

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, how are people reacting? I had a strong reaction. I can only imagine the reaction of people who are still there who were not consulted. I would like your thoughts on the reaction of people on the ground. It must be appalling.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you very much for the question.

Indeed, on February 1, my phone battery died rather quickly because everyone was calling me in complete shock. There is a document that we did not have time to table before the committee. It is a resolution by the Alma municipal council, which passed on the deadline for tabling documents. I will read you the most important part.

The resolution is rather long, but the most important part is this passage proposed by councillor Frédéric Tremblay and seconded by councillor Véronique Fortin.

THAT the municipal council call on the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Quebec to ensure that the Town of Alma, the largest town in Lac-Saint-Jean, remains in the riding of Lac-Saint-Jean.

This motion was passed unanimously. That speaks volumes about the fact that we have the community's support and how important it is not to let this happen. We need to do our work as par-

liamentarians and ensure that, in the report, the restructuring of the riding is not approved.

Mr. Simard can speak to this.

**Mr. Mario Simard:** We have all heard reactions from constituents and elected members alike.

The main thing is that any desire to amalgamate Alma and Jonquière is to truly misunderstand Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean. Earlier, some people were wondering why we had not tabled a third proposal. It would absolutely be a disaster if the Commission decided not to listen to our third proposal and moved forward with Jonquière—Alma.

Wanting to ensure that the Jonquière—Alma proposal does not pass, we prefer to turn to the initial proposal, even if it is not ideal. We know that this initial proposal will receive support from the three MPs and some of the population from our region to protect us from a Jonquière—Alma amalgamation.

• (1130)

**Mr. Alain Therrien:** I have a question for the member from Manicouagan.

You talked about consultations earlier. Have you done anything to pursue that? If so, please elaborate.

**Mrs. Marilène Gill:** I have in many ways and several times.

As far as the recent consultations with all elected members from the region are concerned, everyone agrees, without exception. We talked with Innu leaders. They came together and they obviously agree. Everyone, including the public, was consulted to the best of our abilities. That is what I have to say about the consultations.

I would also like to emphasize something I mentioned earlier. I must admit that the commissioner truly showed good will by adding indigenous names to the riding name. However, the chiefs were not consulted on this, nor was the indigenous population. In the current context of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, where the public wants to get closer to indigenous peoples, I think these consultations would have been important. In my opinion, it should not be the other who chooses indigenous names, but rather the indigenous populations. That, in my humble opinion, is what should have been done, hence our proposal.

**Mr. Alain Therrien:** I have one last question for Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe or Mr. Simard.

We know that there is clearly a community of interest in Lac-Saint-Jean, and in Saguenay as well.

Is there one between Alma and Jonquière?

**Mr. Mario Simard:** I have yet to see a community of interest between Alma and Jonquière.

In 2013, it was clear, it was not the MP who approached the public about changing the map, it was the public who approached the MP. I remember hearing a group of businesspeople saying that they were poorly served by Jonquière—Alma because the MP focused more on Jonquière than Alma and did not attend as many events there. Throughout Claude Patry's entire time in office it was very difficult to reconcile the interests of the people of Jonquière with those of the people of Alma.

I was saying earlier that this fracture was quite obvious. The people who come from Lac-Saint-Jean do not consider themselves as being from Saguenay. To someone from outside the region, this may seem insignificant, but back home it is a rather strong identity. Either you come from Saguenay or you come from Lac-Saint-Jean. If we combine these two communities, distortions will be made to the detriment of the public and their representation. There is no doubt about it.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Might I remind you that, again, the 2013 commission corrected that mistake. A decade later, do we want to restore that mistake? I would be surprised because in 10 years, another commission will again correct this mistake.

This is not a game. We are not playing ping-pong here.

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

Mrs. Blaney, you have the floor.

[*English*]

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I thank all the members who are here today and behaving so nicely.

I have one question, so I will be able to give you back some time. Hopefully, that will be helpful later on. on.

My one question is for Madame Gill.

It seemed to me, in the letter I read from the nation, that they were hoping that the indigenous name would be first. I don't know whether you answered this already, but I'm wondering why it is not first. As the first people...it just makes sense.

If you could help me understand that, I would appreciate it.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Marilène Gill:** I am not sure why. We will have to look into it. I did not want to get involved in that, just like I did not want to intervene during the Commission's process because I preferred for the people to speak. I preferred to gather their opinions and present them later.

However, usually, riding names are composed in alphabetical order. I am thinking of the riding of one of my colleagues, Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, whose name I can remember simply because the elements of the name are in alphabetical order. I think the decision to go in alphabetical order is an arbitrary one. I do not want to propose anything because I do not think that this needs to come from me. I just want to speak on behalf of the people, so this is what I am passing on.

I talked about consistency, cohesion and respect. If changes need to be made in the order of precedence, then it will be up to all the people concerned to decide. Unfortunately, these are not pictographic signs. The idea does not come across in a single image, but instead in two steps. That might be the topic of another discussion, but that is not for me to say. It is just an observation.

• (1135)

**The Chair:** Perfect, thank you very much.

We will now start the second round of questions, for those who have any. Let's begin with the Conservatives.

Mr. Berthold, you have the floor.

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Madam Speaker, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe and Mr. Simard have done a great job explaining their point of view. We have everything we need to prepare our report.

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

Mrs. Romanado, you have the floor.

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

First, I want to thank you very much for your presentation.

I have a very simple question for the three members before us.

Have you shared your suggestions and objections with your colleagues from the other parties? If so, what do they think?

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you for the question.

We have proof that Mr. Martel supported the Commission's initial proposal since he literally wrote a letter and submitted a brief on this during meetings in September. As such, there was no need to talk to him in preparation for this meeting since he had already officially confirmed his support for the Commission's initial proposal and that is fine with us.

Mr. Simard, do you want to add anything?

**Mr. Mario Simard:** Quickly, I just want to say that I indicated to Mr. Martel, the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, that we would go back to the first proposal to get consensus from the three MPs, since he tabled a letter indicating that he accepted the initial proposal. Us three members accept the initial proposal and I indicated that to Mr. Martel during a discussion.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** Thank you.

Mrs. Gill, do you have anything to add?

**Mrs. Marilène Gill:** In my case it is a bit different. Since there is no redistribution, this does not affect the bordering ridings. There was already Canada-wide approval for adding indigenous names. Every member whose riding borders mine supports this change because the choice of name, Côte-Nord—Nistassinan, belongs to the people who live on the territory, and not the people outside. What is more, with respect to the First Nations, discussions were held between the chiefs, nation to nation.



I do not want to interfere in that either. I am reporting what I was told. Obviously, the Innu nation agrees.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** That is all.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Therrien, you have the floor.

**Mr. Alain Therrien:** Thank you, Chair.

Your position is very clear. Having lived there, I understand that just about everyone agrees on this. I might even say that everyone agrees with your objections.

I would like you to take turns sharing your thoughts on the impact that the last proposal will have specifically on the RCMs.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Alma, which is the largest town in the RCM of Lac-Saint-Jean-Est, ended up uprooted in a federal riding, Saguenay. It became immediately apparent that this made no sense. Provincially, Alma is part of the Lac-Saint-Jean riding. It is only on the federal electoral map that Alma was not part of the territorial entity of Lac-Saint-Jean, since, as far as the RCMs and provincial ridings are concerned, it is part of that territory.

As elected members, as parliamentarians and Quebeckers, I think we all know the difference between Saguenay and Lac-Saint-Jean. We adore the people from Saguenay. The proof is that I am still with my friend from Jonquière. Now, just because we adore them does not mean that—

**Mr. Mario Simard:** We are not the same.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Correct, we are not the same.

Mr. Simard, perhaps you could elaborate.

**Mr. Mario Simard:** I would like to talk about the RCMs.

The town of Saguenay in and of itself may be considered an RCM. It would end up with the largest municipality in the Lac-Saint-Jean-Est RCM, which is totally incongruous. What is more, the Fjord-du-Saguenay RCM would end up joined with Lac-Saint-Jean.

From the point of view of redistributing RCMs, the suggestion of recreating the Jonquière—Alma riding is worse than the first proposal. On a federal level, this redistribution would make it very difficult to coherently plan socio-economic issues.

• (1140)

**Mr. Alain Therrien:** If I could use the speaking time that others did not, that would be great. It would be a good way to close on this.

I will try to sum up your position: the three MPs support the first proposal, the interest communities are quite distinct from one another, the population is behind you and the RCMs would be hampered by the first proposal; accordingly, you are standing behind the first proposal.

Is there anything that was misunderstood that might refute what you said?

**The Chair:** Okay, thank you—

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I would add that the Commission corrected this mistake in 2013—

**The Chair:** Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, you do not have the floor. You are welcome at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, but, here, when I speak, the others do not. I do not know how the other committees work, but, here, that's how it works.

Mr. Therrien, I wanted to allow you to make a comment, but you started asking a question. That does not work either. That being said, I thank you for your summary, which was very good.

Mrs. Blaney, you have the floor.

[*English*]

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** I have no further questions.

**The Chair:** That is excellent. Thank you.

What I'm going to suggest—

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Chair, I would like to intervene.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Berthold.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** I would like to clarify something. I heard my colleagues talk about the position of my colleague, Mr. Martel, concerning the proposal. I just wanted to note that Mr. Martel did not see any problem with the new proposal currently on the table. This was reported very clearly in the media, “Conservative MP from Chicoutimi-Le Fjord, Richard Martel, does not share indignation of his Bloc neighbours on the proposal”.

Just because he is not here does not mean he took a position one way or another. He simply chose not to express himself on the current proposal.

**Mr. Alain Therrien:** Chair, I would just like to say that I would have liked him to be here, precisely so that he could explain why he supports the last proposal. That is his responsibility as an elected member from that region.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Okay, so—

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alain Therrien:** That's a funny way to close the debate when everything was going in the opposite direction.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** All right.

You know, it's interesting because there's a process. People get to have their say. Mr. Berthold used seven seconds of his five minutes, so it made his point. Mr. Therrien has made his point.

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, the committee welcomes any additional comments that you would like to share, as would be the case for Madam Gill and Mr. Simard. You can send them to the clerk, and the clerk will have them shared with all members to consider as we do draft a report back.

I am not going to get into a debate on this because the point is, as per the legislation, for PROC committee members to hear objections that MPs are raising. Then we report them back to the commission. Rest assured that we will take that very seriously.

The insights you have all provided—especially because these are your backyards—are really important to somebody like me because I'm not from that area.

[*Translation*]

We appreciate everything you shared with us today. If you have further comments to make, please share those with the clerk, who will send them to all the members of the committee.

On that, I wish everyone a good day.

[*English*]

PROC committee members, I am going to say that because we have the second panel starting shortly and there are just some scheduling changes, we're now going to have the conversation that we were to have at the end of second hour. We can then pause it and continue it after the second panel. This is just to maximize our time.

To set the stage for this conversation, if I may, I would like to say that, at the end of last meeting, I was asked to work with the clerk to put forward a draft plan so that people could have a better understanding of what is going to take place.

We were in the process of making that plan—I have shared a draft with you, and stuff can move around as we want because members are masters of their domain—but then a letter was sent to me, as the chair, to say that we want additional time. I do want to say that not only was the letter shared with all of you but a motion was also put on notice, and there is a desire to see that conversation advance. Therefore, this would be the time for us to have a sense of where members are at with regard to how we can get all of our work done because I actually do believe that we can.

With that, I am going to... Can I just go to Mr. Fergus first because he had his hand up first, and then I'll come to Mr. Cooper right after? Is that okay? I do believe we can find a way forward.

Mr. Fergus.

• (1145)

**Hon. Greg Fergus:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

It would seem, to me, that the issues raised around the table, from what I understand, probably have wide support. PROC should extend its meetings by an hour each. Rather than having two-hour meetings, we could have three-hour meetings twice a week to make sure we get all the work done, in terms of foreign interference and what we're doing about electoral redistribution.

There's no objection here.

Ms. Blaney's suggestion of calling in the Right Honourable David Johnston is entirely appropriate, as well.

I hope there's wide consensus for us to move forward and make that the work plan, going forward.

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

**Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'd like to move a motion that has been put on notice. Members will have received copies. It reads as follows:

That the committee, in relation to its study of foreign interference in elections, beginning the week this motion is adopted, hold an additional meeting, at least three hours in length, during each House sitting week to accommodate this study, in addition to the regularly scheduled meetings of the committee.

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

Go ahead, Ms. Blaney.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** I always feel as if I'm wrestling with the poor interpreters about who is supposed to push the buttons. I apologize if I disrupt their work.

I've had conversations with the Conservatives on this motion, and I am going to confess that I have a bit of curiosity about, and openness to, discussing having three-hour meetings twice a week, as opposed to two. I think the hours really matter.

I guess, for this particular motion—and to be respectful of the fact that we have many committees trying very hard, sometimes, to get extra time, and that can be a challenge—it might be easier for this place to accommodate two hours, as opposed to three hours. I offer that as what I call a “friendly amendment”. I understand that's not the official title or language, but I hope Mr. Cooper will see that.

I speak as a whip, a little. I understand the hard decisions whips have to make. I think two hours would allow us to move forward in a way that is more harmonious with the system we have here, in Ottawa. I'd love to hear feedback on that.

I also appreciate Mr. Fergus's comments about having the special rapporteur come in. I think that is essential for the study, and it will help us understand the process that's continuing on, so we can talk about that later.

First, I'll leave it to the chair and my friendly amendment. I'm moving this as an amendment to make sure that's clear.

**The Chair:** First of all, are you offering it as a friendly amendment, or are you actually moving an amendment?

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** I'm offering it as a friendly amendment, but I will move it, if it is not accepted.

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

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Ms. Blaney is right. There have been discussions. Although, as Conservatives, we would like to see three-hour meetings, I think it's reasonable to offer two. Therefore, I treat it as a friendly amendment.

Really, what we need is additional time to have at least one meeting a week to get answers with respect to serious revelations of foreign interference by Beijing—revelations that are coming to light, it seems, every few days. It's important that this committee be able to do its work, in terms of the issues we must deal with, with respect to redistribution. It's also important that issues around foreign interference are dealt with now, and not pushed back weeks later, because of that.

This is a very reasonable motion, in the circumstances.

• (1150)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Fergus, you have the floor.

[*English*]

**Hon. Greg Fergus:** Well, thank you.

I'm glad that Mr. Cooper accepted that friendly change offered by Ms. Blaney.

I'm going to ask him if he would also accept a friendly change that, rather than having an additional meeting.... We'd have to find another spot in the hours of meetings that we have during the week, and we know that Ms. Blaney made reference to how difficult it is to carve out that extra time. Maybe it's just easier to add an hour to our regularly scheduled meetings. We always have time to go a little bit over, so I don't think we'd be pushing off other committees. That would probably be easier, and it comes to the same number of hours.

Mr. Cooper, just to make sure that you understand the good-faith nature of this, we can leave it to the chair to say that we're going to do two hours on electoral redistribution and, following that, one hour on foreign interference. It also could be the inverse. We could do two hours on foreign interference followed by one hour on redistribution, depending on how the panels work out, so that we can get both things done.

It's the same six hours per week that he just agreed to, and it's the same issues we could get distributed. I want to make sure he understands that there is no intention to push this off or to bring other things forward. It's just to leave it to the subcommittee to determine the schedule so that the committee can determine which is the right way to go forward.

I think that's the least complex way forward, and we can get the work done.

**The Chair:** Mr. Cooper, do you see that as a friendly amendment?

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** No.

**The Chair:** Okay, I just want members to know that when we did receive the letter signed by a majority of members on this, the clerk and I did action that because that is a majority of the committee, and we did ask the House of Commons for not only resources for an extra meeting. I've said that moving forward.... Basically, we

would like to be in the race for those extra slots moving forward because that's the intention of the committee.

We've also asked for that extra hour at the beginning of each meeting because if you look at the work plan we're suggesting to you, sometimes instead of using two meetings from a report, it is that extra half hour or hour that could help us save a meeting.

I do think there might be an opportunity to actually do a little bit of it all because we will also have to make sure we have witnesses appearing for those extra committees, and we can't mandate their schedules. I do think that the concept of a little bit of flexibility should just be noted for the work that is done on this side of the room.

I'm going to continue with Madam Romanado and Madam Gaudreau. I think Mr. Cooper is on the list again and then Ms. Blaney.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I believe our guests are outside, so I don't know if we want to take a pause.

The procedural person in me just wants to reiterate that there is no such thing as a friendly amendment because it takes out of the hands of the full committee the decision on whether or not something is acceptable, and the original question is before the full committee.

Originally, the letter asked to hold an additional two-hour meeting, whereas Mr. Cooper's motion speaks to now an additional one three hours in length, so I'm not sure what changed between the time that he submitted the letter, jointly signed by the members of the opposition to say that they would like a two-hour meeting, and then his proposal for a three-hour meeting. Ms. Blaney then comes back with the two-hour original, and I like the idea that Mr. Fergus brought forward.

In terms of resources available in the House, we know that we're going to be going into an intensive session coming back after the break. We have a lot of work to do on every committee. If there's a way that we can maximize our time and our efficiency in terms of adding on, perhaps, an extra hour to each of our meetings, that would not impact the full committee schedule of all the other committees that are meeting, as well as the House, so I agree. The total hours are the same, and I just think it's a question of making sure that we don't bump other committees.

Thank you.

• (1155)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Mrs. Gaudreau, you have the floor.

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Good morning, Chair.

I am concerned about two things. First, there is the efficiency of our work. We could not have known what was on the drawing board a few months ago. I understand that we also need to meet certain deadlines.

Then, when we look at the hours available for a supplementary committee meeting, regardless the committee, we see that there are only two possibilities, Madam Clerk. My concern is the same as that of Mrs. Romanado. Our committee is just as important as any other. Certainly we have an advantage, we have room to manoeuvre based on the support that we have.

You now know my position. I am in favour of what is being proposed, provided it is not to the detriment of other committees.

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Cooper is next.

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I appreciate the comments by Madame Gaudreau and would note with respect to House resources that resources are available on Monday evening, and Friday morning and afternoon, so it's not a resource issue to schedule a stand-alone additional two-hour meeting per week.

With respect to the work plan that has been put forward that proposes an additional hour with respect to currently scheduled meetings, I think that should also be considered if we need additional time, in addition to a two-hour stand-alone meeting to deal with issues of foreign interference or redistribution.

It's not a resource issue. This motion does not impact House resources.

**The Chair:** I think, Mr. Cooper, that what I find fascinating with you—and I'm going to say it today—is that conversation and discussion are okay as long as you're having it, but when other people are also just throwing it out.... That's what we're doing here; hence, why we're having this conversation.

I will also say to you that this is now a repetitive instance where you suggest that there are resources and the people who are here to provide me support, such as the clerk...and I'll give a shout-out to Sophia, who is the head clerk today and is accompanied by Christine. Both of them had the same reaction: where's this information coming from? As you're obtaining information, and if you're receiving it from the Table, it would be really good for the people who work really hard to keep this committee on its tracks to know this.

Once again, I'm going to repeat that I received a letter and the first thing I did was respond to the clerk and say, "Can we find out what resources are available?" I actually went beyond what was asked in that letter and said, "Can we even just start our meetings earlier to make sure we can accommodate this request, because it's really important work that we're doing?"

I'm not sure how much more I can demonstrate that when members want extra time, and the intention is clear that the majority of members are asking for that, I take this role very seriously.

I have Madam Blaney.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Thank you for that, Madam Chair.

I know we're going to have to get to our next panel fairly soon, here, and I appreciate that we had extra time to talk about this, and will have...at the end.

You know, I said it, and I'll say it again: I'm willing to explore the idea of adding an extra hour per committee. I'm willing to explore that, because one of the things that are very important to me is continuing to do what we can to build trust. There's definitely a fear around this table about losing, one way or the other. What would help me understand and feel more faith in the process...because I agree with Mr. Cooper, quite frankly. It's disheartening, to me, to open up...online and see so many newspaper articles exposing yet another thing, and to feel like the transparency is not there.

I understand that, again, we can go into the whole, complex conversation about national security, but it feels.... It's hard. Then, I have to go back and talk to my constituents. I feel a real obligation to get some of this work done. Everybody knows how I feel about a public inquiry, so my recommendation is that we need the subcommittee meeting, where we can look at the options and make a plan. If there's a plan all of us can get behind—or the majority of us can get behind—that allows us to continue to look at foreign interference, there will be an ability for us to test the waters, then decide whether we have faith, after that.

I think, to me.... Again, I'm a planner by nature. Anyone who knows me will tell you that. I appreciate the hard work that went into this plan, but there are some gaps in this plan that should be addressed. If we could build something we can agree on, maybe we could then, at least, take a period of time to check it out and see whether it works with that extra hour. I recognize.... I get asked, all the time, about committees extending time. It's not very easy. There are a lot of frustrations, and we have to honour not our political world but the people who actually do the work to make those committees happen. I want us all to be very careful, because we're asking people to do more work, and there are challenges to that, which we're still working through, on that level.

I'll leave it at that, Madam Chair.

● (1200)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I have a list that continues. We will come back. We will go through this panel fairly quickly, do this work—it's also important work—then return to this conversation, as we planned, before the end of the second hour.

[Translation]

Now we are welcoming a second group of witnesses.

We have Mr. Alexandre Boulerice, the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, Mrs. Anju Dhillon, the member for Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Mrs. Soraya Martinez Ferrada, the member for Hochelaga, the Hon. David Lametti, the member for LaSalle—Émard—Verdun and the Hon. Marc Miller, the member for Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs.

Welcome all of you. You each have four minutes to present your opening speech. If you do not want to use all of your speaking time, that is not a problem.

Mr. Boulerice, you have the floor.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Thank you very much, Chair.

Hello colleagues.

It is a bit odd to be here with you testifying before a parliamentary committee. This is a first for me. I hope I do a good job.

I have some important things to put on the table because we were quite surprised, in the bad sense of the word, by the final report on the electoral redistribution in Montreal.

You might think that Montreal is a big city, but in fact it is a collection of neighbourhoods that each have their own identity, their own life, their own history. The electoral redistribution that we have just seen seems artificial and could somewhat disrupt the organic aspect of the neighbourhoods' life, people's identity. It brings in artificial boundaries that will cause a lot of confusion.

Today I will focus on two examples: Plateau Mont-Royal, Petit Laurier, and Saint-Henri—Sainte-Anne.

Taking part of Plateau Mont-Royal and adding it to the riding of Outremont, when part of Old Montreal is being added to Laurier—Sainte-Marie, creates something artificial that people will not be able to identify with. This also breaks up the Saint-Henri neighbourhood. It is not true that the people of Saint-Henri will feel like they belong to Westmount. That is unrealistic.

The people in my office and I have talked with people from the offices of other elected members at the federal, provincial and municipal levels. Everyone shares the same concerns. In a single day, Plateau-Mont-Royal received 200 signatures from citizens who are against the new redistribution. What is more, all the elected members from the Sud-Ouest borough also signed a letter very clearly and officially opposing the new redistribution.

We believe that this will break up neighbourhood life, challenge people's identity and cause a great deal of confusion. I think we are able to respect the demographic evolution of the Island of Montreal by maintaining the current boundaries and number of ridings and avoid this type of artificial mosaic. We were really surprised because this truly did not correspond to what people were saying during the public consultations. I think we should maintain the status quo.

Before concluding, I would like to note that I approve the proposal of my colleague from Hochelaga, which seeks to change the name of the riding because a part of Rosemont is in Hochelaga. This also causes confusion. I think a name change would clarify things.

• (1205)

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

You have the floor, Mrs. Dhillon.

[*English*]

**Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair

Thank you to the whole committee for having us here today.

I have a situation that's also overlapping with Minister Lametti's riding. We both have "LaSalle" in our riding name.

Removing it from my riding, Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, would be absolutely unacceptable. It makes no sense whatsoever. Half the population in my riding of Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle lives in LaSalle. Of that population, more than half is ethnically diverse. They're visible minorities with different religions, ethnic backgrounds and languages. They will not see themselves represented at the federal level. This will be very harmful.

I was born and raised in LaSalle. I'm here as an MP, and right now I don't see myself in that riding representation with this removal of the word "LaSalle" from the riding. I will not see myself in that riding representation, so I can just imagine what other people who have less of a voice than I do will feel. It will be denying their existence, denying that they are part of the riding and part of the federal landscape. My population in LaSalle that is contained within the boundaries of Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle is approximately 60,000. Minister Lametti has about 17,000 people in his section of LaSalle that is contained in the electoral boundary of LaSalle—Émard—Verdun.

The other thing is that there is already much confusion between our offices. Constituents reach out to Minister Lametti's office as well. With the removal of the word "LaSalle", his staff is going to be so overburdened when people think that he represents all of LaSalle. Already... If 65,000 people start calling the office or at least half of them need help, we're going to have a big problem. There's an overlapping problem.

I'm not speaking for you, Minister Lametti, but it's a huge issue.

These are some of the things we have to keep in mind. Added together, the amount of people in Dorval and Lachine is the amount of people who are in the part of LaSalle that is part of my riding. This is something that is very important to look at. It makes no sense to remove the word "LaSalle". Like I said, it will deny the existence of half the population of the riding and of all those visible minorities and ethnic and religious minorities who exist in the riding.

That's about it. Thank you so much.

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

Madame Martinez Ferrada, you have the floor.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Hochelaga, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair.

This is also my first time appearing as a witness before a committee.

Following representations we made in 2022 during consultations held by the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Quebec, the latter published its report in February 2023. It refers to a consolidation by the commissioners of the identity and territorial boundaries of Rosemont-Est in the federal representation of Hochelaga. However, no name change was made and no explanation was provided. As my colleague said, Rosemont-Est has been part of the riding of Hochelaga since 1988, but half the population in that riding is not represented by that name, hence the confusion with my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

The argument used for not changing the names is the need to avoid repetition. However, let me share some examples of name changes found in the rest of the country. Take for example Edmonton-Centre, Edmonton—Manning and Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont. There is also Burnaby-North—Seymour and Burnaby-South, as well as Winnipeg-Centre and Winnipeg-North. I think that respect for the identity of the name also refers to the people it represents. This is extremely important to us.

Like the good student I was in school — it is not true, I was not a good student — I would like to go over the questions you sent us and answer them in a structured way.

You asked us for the reason behind our opposition. As I said, it is the name of the riding of Hochelaga. It is truly a big win for people's identity to see the name Rosemont-Est become part of the name of the riding. This name received the support of the community, including of the Rosemont Community Development Corporation, an umbrella organization representing all the community organizations in the neighbourhood, as well as of the mayor of the Rosemont—La Petite Patrie borough, François Limoges. The name will not have demographic consequences other than the boundary and consolidation of the neighbourhood on which the commissioners have already made their statement in their reports. There will be no domino effect on the surrounding ridings. I have no other argument to make than the one I already presented to the commissioner, to which no one objected.

I think we need to strengthen the sense of belonging. Only the boundary is at play here. There is also the identity question of the name of the riding. Half the territory that is represented is not represented by its name. Again, this causes confusion among the constituents in the neighbouring sector, that of my colleague.

Our letter of objection is supported by some of my colleagues. Several MPs signed it, including, of course, the member for the neighbouring riding. Our logic is not partisan and seeks to ensure that the entire territory and the people who are represented are also represented by the name of their riding.

Thank you, Chair.

Honourable colleagues, I thank you for your attention.

• (1210)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Lametti, you have the floor.

**Hon. David Lametti (LaSalle—Émard—Verdun, Lib.):** Madam Chair, honourable colleagues, thank you.

Above all, I want to say that I support Mrs. Dhillon's proposal concerning the word “LaSalle”, which designates a territory shared between our two ridings without this causing any confusion. This represents a reality on the ground, a bit like in Edmonton or in other parts of Canada where a name is shared.

As far as I am concerned, I would like to put the work “Émard” back in the name of the riding LaSalle—Émard—Verdun. The recent Report of the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Quebec proposes removing this word, but Ville-Émard represents a significant part of my riding. In fact, 35% of my electors live there. What is more, Ville-Émard is distinct in several ways, including historically, since it has an industrial history, which is not really the case for Verdun or LaSalle. It also has a distinct history with respect to immigration, especially when it comes to the Italian population, but also other populations.

[*English*]

It's physically distinct, too. It's an enclave created by the Lachine Canal, by the aqueduct in Montreal and by a major highway, so it's always been physically distinct as well from the other three parts of the riding.

I have the support, as you will have noted in my letter, from l'arrondissement du Sud-Ouest, and in particular Mayor Benoit Dorais, who also outlines the historic and distinct difference that Ville-Émard has always had from other parts of the Sud-Ouest, including Verdun, as well as the Mayor of Verdun, Marie-Andrée Mauger.

I note that it was part of the name of the riding from 1988 to 2015 when it was LaSalle—Émard, and I note that, in 2015, there was an attempt to remove Émard from the name. At that point, the charge was led by an NDP member of Parliament, Hélène LeBlanc, to reinsert Émard back in the name, and I'm trying to do the same thing. Briefly, it represents the reality. There are three distinct parts of the riding. People see the three distinct parts of the riding, and they understand the three distinct parts of the riding. It's not confusing. It's not too long, and it should stay.

[*Translation*]

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

Mr. Miller, the floor is yours.

**Hon. Marc Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs, Lib.):** Madam Chair, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to the proposed boundaries for my riding, Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs, in the Commission's report.

Just as Mr. Boulerice did, I would like to express my concerns about moving the boundary north of the riding in the Saint-Henri neighbourhood. Its current position goes from the Ville-Marie Expressway to Rue Notre-Dame. In fact, we are splitting an historic neighbourhood in two.

Saint-Henri is a unique and dynamic community whose history precedes that of Canada by several centuries. Recognized in Quebec literature and music, Saint-Henri has survived urbanization, industrial transformations and the evolution of economic forces, while conserving its unique identity. Dividing this community between two federal ridings would make it more difficult and more confusing for residents, and the countless community organizations that serve them, to access federal programs.

The residents of Saint-Henri are currently served by one member at the provincial National Assembly, by one municipal councillor in the Sud-Ouest borough of the City of Montreal, and by a single federal member of Parliament. Although Saint-Henri has been part of various federal ridings over the years, this neighbourhood has remained intact in a single federal riding for at least the past 40 years. Moving the boundary north to Rue Notre-Dame would divide this community along the heart of its socio-economic core. What is more, the Ville-Marie Expressway, which is elevated, would create a significant physical barrier that would diminish participation in elections. In the wake of the reorganization of Montreal, Westmount has a different municipal government than the City of Montreal. This means that the northern part of Saint-Henri would be part of a separate and distinct municipality.

This request not to change the northern boundary of the riding has the support of municipal representatives, including Mayor Dorais. In fact, the clerk should have received a letter from the mayor indicating his objection.

Saint-Henri is a community with a strong and unique identity. Not only should the community be fully maintained, but its residents deserve to have easy access to federal services and programs. Even if maintaining the northern border increases the number of residents in the riding, it is important to note that the population of the riding of Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Îles-des-Sœurs would still be well below the quota for ridings in the Province of Quebec.

My friends, I note that during the reference period my riding underwent the highest population increase in Quebec at 35%. Sacrifices certainly need to be made. I would like to close my speech on a non-partisan note. I did the intellectual exercise of looking at this northern section, which would be separated and added to the riding of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount. The people in this northern section do not usually vote for the Liberal Party of Canada compared to the people in the rest of my riding. I will let you guess who they vote for and I assure you that it is not the Conservatives. No matter, this is not a partisan effort. We want to strive to fully maintain the integrity of Saint-Henri.

• (1215)

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

Everyone stayed within their speaking time.

We will now begin the round of questions.

Mr. Berthold, you have six minutes.

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Thank you very much, Chair.

I thank my colleagues for being here today.

I must admit that the entire Conservative caucus of Montreal spent a lot of time studying the changes proposed by the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Quebec. We arrived at some conclusions.

First, we do not object to the various requests for name changes. We think the members and constituents of each riding are in the best position to determine the name of their riding. I, myself, come from a rural region and I will be in your position on Thursday, since 14 municipalities of my riding are going to be transferred to other administrative regions.

To me, the idea of maintaining the status quo does not hold water because the population of Quebec is changing.

Mr. Boulerice, I would like to know what you propose for redoing the map of Montreal while respecting the Commission's mandate, which is to ensure equitable representation to many people. Many members in numerous regions of Quebec and Canada will have to make sacrifices. Some ridings will get bigger and communities with no ties to one another will be grouped together. Unfortunately, your proposal of doing nothing and leaving things be, is hard to understand. I think that the commissioners will also have a hard time accepting that.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Thank you for that good question. I must admit, it is a key question.

What we are seeing is that on the Island of Montreal, one riding in particular has experienced a significant demographic increase, which has a domino effect on many ridings where it would be easy to keep things the way they are without a problem. It is this domino effect that concerns us and we think the current situation is manageable.

I am talking only about the proposed changes for Montreal. I cannot talk about the proposed changes for your riding or certain rural regions that I have not looked at. In Montreal, however, these changes will have many adverse effects and would stem from a single riding.

What is more, the demographic weight of Montreal compared to the rest of Quebec has remained identical since 2012. The demographic rapport between Montreal and the regions has therefore remained the same, as has the number of ridings. I think the current situation is manageable.

It is not just the number of inhabitants that needs to be considered. It is the notion of community of interest, mentioned in the legislation, that is not being respected and that is what we are emphasizing. For example, the people from Plateau-Mont-Royal, who live east of Boulevard Saint-Denis to Parc Laurier will never say that they live in Outremont. They would be quite surprised to hear that. This will cause a great deal of confusion among the population when it comes to federal services and the services provided at federal riding offices. That is what we absolutely want to avoid.

● (1220)

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Mr. Miller, is there anything you wanted to add?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Yes.

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** That is an important question, actually. We know that Montreal is a vibrant city. People move from one area to another. Some ridings are changing because of immigration. There is no partisanship in my questions and comments today. I just want to understand.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I understand that your reality is very different from mine, particularly when it comes to the people you represent and the distances, obviously. Perhaps moving a border by a hundred metres or so doesn't change much for you, but, as Mr. Boulerice was saying, it does for communities of interest.

When I looked at the revised version of the map proposed by the commission, I saw that my riding would lose Old Montreal and the Old Port, which is not what I want. However, I am prepared to accept that decision because there is a community of interest there. Given that the population of my riding grew by 35% during the reference period, sacrifices need to be made. However, this still needs to be done properly. I do not like to lose voters, but I am prepared to make a sacrifice for the reasons you set out.

The first proposal drew a jagged line through Ville-Marie in downtown Montreal. That did not make any sense and the commission actually decided to change its decision. However, the commission split Saint-Henri in two, which no one is happy about. That doesn't make any sense either, particularly because the deviation between the population of the riding and the electoral quota does not exceed the established quota of 25%.

The reality in downtown Montreal and Montreal in general is quite different. There is a lot of turnover. There are a lot of people who move on July 1. Accessibility is not about geography in downtown Montreal. It is about communication. People need to know where their polling station is in order to vote, for example. It is not at the church where people have been going to vote after dinner for the past 40 years without even looking at the card. People in Montreal need to look at the card because things change and there is a lot of confusion. It is therefore very important to maintain the integrity of the ridings for a certain length of time given the circumstances.

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mrs. Romanado, the floor is yours.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I would like to thank my colleagues for being here today.

With regard to the comment made by Mr. Berthold, who said that he agreed with all the name changes, I hope that it will be the same for all of the name changes in all of the provinces. That would make our job easier.

I would also like to make another comment about the name changes.

[*English*]

Ms. Dhillon, you mentioned something about the fact that they were moving LaSalle from your riding. I read the report with great interest. It says that the commission decided to slightly modify the names of both electoral districts and remove LaSalle from your riding. The argument was, "We don't want to confuse people, because it's in Minister Lametti's riding."

My riding is a perfect example. It's Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne, and we have Longueuil—Saint-Hubert. With all due respect to the commission, there's an inconsistency about the name changes, because it doesn't make sense. Why doesn't Madame Ferrada's riding not include "Rosemont-Est"?

I'm in agreement with your suggestions. I think the question of identity is an important one in Quebec, and removing LaSalle from your riding's name.... After 10 years, people know which riding they're in, and you don't need to remove their name.

I agree with you, Madame Ferrada, that it is important.

[*Translation*]

I will give the rest of my time to my colleague, Mr. Fergus, who also has some questions.

● (1225)

**Hon. Greg Fergus:** Thank you to all of you. I completely agree with what you are proposing.

I am very familiar with Ville-Émard. As you said, Minister Lametti, it is an area that is physically distinct and historically important.

The same is true of Saint-Henri in your riding, Minister Miller. I know that, like many Black families, the Ferguses who came from the Caribbean settled in Saint-Henri. It is a historic place for the many people of diverse backgrounds who were welcomed there and who live there. Splitting Saint-Henri in two, would really break up that community of interest.

I would like you both to comment briefly on the importance of maintaining these communities of interest in your respective ridings.

**Hon. David Lametti:** Thank you for the question.



I completely agree that Ville-Émard has welcomed a number of waves of immigrants. It is home to community organizations, churches, parishes and the steel industry in Montreal's downtown, an industrial tradition. It is tied to immigration because Italian immigrants, among others, settled there to work in the factories and in the steel industry.

It is therefore very important. It is physically distinct, but it is also distinct from other parts of Montreal in terms of how members of that community see themselves. People are proud to come from Ville-Émard, like Mario Lemieux, who is one of our most well-known residents.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** In the past, in the riding of Saint-Henri—Westmount, as it was called when I was young, there was a lot of economic disparity between Saint-Henri and Westmount, and the people of Saint-Henri felt as though they were not as well represented by their MP because of that.

In the new riding established in 2015, there is a great rapport and a closer connection between La Petite-Bourgogne, Pointe-Saint-Charles and Saint-Henri. Historically, when we talk about the Black anglophone community that settled in La Petite-Bourgogne and Saint-Henri, this maintains that great dynamic. These people are used to going to see just one MP. If, instead, they have to go see a national hero, Marc Garneau, it would be confusing, even though I am sure he would serve them well.

The newly established community of people from Bangladesh, many of whom are Muslim, also needs to be represented. In my riding office, we are always dealing with immigration applications and intake requests. It would be unfortunate if this community was divided again just to meet statistical requirements. I think there is a human face on all of this. For now, for the reference period, it would be good to maintain that balance taking into account the existing quota.

**Hon. Greg Fergus:** Do I have a little bit of time left, Madam Chair?

**The Chair:** Not this time, but maybe next time.

Ms. Gaudreau, the floor is yours.

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

I would like to commend my colleagues for their work. They have shown that they are very familiar with their ridings. After 12 minutes of questions and their opening remarks, they have presented most of their arguments. However, there are a few small things that I would like to take a more detailed look at.

I lived in La Petite-Patrie for a few years and in Ahuntsic in the late 1990s and early 2000s. I know that Montreal has changed, and I no longer recognize the city. I am therefore relying on your knowledge of your community and the people you represent.

The Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs is gathering information. The goal here is for you to give us as many documents in support of your arguments as you can so that we can continue to study the report of the federal electoral boundaries commission for Quebec. We hope that the commission will make the necessary corrections following our study.

Mr. Boulerice, in your opening remarks, I believe you mentioned 200 signatures and said that elected officials had given their support, but I didn't see any of that in the documents. Would it be possible for us to get that information for the commissioners and the parliamentarians who are examining the report?

• (1230)

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Thank you very much for the question.

We are going to send the clerk all of the necessary documentation, including the letter from Le Sud-Ouest borough, the letters from citizens who have expressed their support for this and the petition, which was signed by 200 people in one day. All of this shows that the public and elected officials at all levels are concerned. It also shows that people were taken by surprise. It was not a good surprise. There is a lack of public support for this electoral redistribution. People do not identify with it in their everyday lives and in their community life.

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** We are here to help you. Without that information, the only thing I can look at is the numbers from the last election and the analyses that can be done, which I want to avoid. When I look at the overall pictures, I want to see something other than analyses.

You tabled the objection documents. The committee noted that the witnesses sometimes had differences of opinion or different views. Consultation could change that. I can already hear the commissioners saying that, if we want to keep the community of interest and we do not want to divide the boroughs, then we will have to take a co-operative approach. Could consultation be a first step? Would it help?

I experienced the same thing in my riding, which includes three regions and six regional county municipalities. Imagine if the small municipalities were divided in two. The changes that you proposed are important to you. You want to maintain your boroughs and communities of interest.

The report is not done yet. On one hand, the commissioners have a quota to meet. On the other, they must taken into account the population growth. We cannot predict demographic shifts, but we know that people can move around a lot.

Mr. Miller, the commission did its work and is prepared to negotiate on certain things. What can we do to help the commission take into account your proposals and act on them?

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I spoke to Mr. Boulerice two or three times about the challenges and what I was going to propose, and I believe we were on the same wavelength. That being said, we did not talk about the fact that I was prepared to accept the changes proposed by the commission with regard to the Old Port. The purpose of those changes is to try to meet the established standards.

As for my other colleagues, I know that Mr. Garneau signed my letter of support regarding Saint-Henri. I do not necessarily want to speak on behalf of my other colleagues with regard to the redistribution, but I can say this.

I believe that Mr. Guilbeault would be willing to serve the people of the Old Port and Old Montreal in his riding, and I'm sure he would do a really good job.

However, you are right. The MPs who represent the ridings of Montreal and its boroughs and suburbs have not met to discuss a master plan for Montreal. We came to advocate on behalf of our constituents, and that is why I am here today.

I think the highlights are fairly clear. I do not know whether Mr. Boulerice wanted to take over the part of my riding that is going to be taken away from me against my volition. If he wants to leave everything in Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs, then that is okay because I like everyone. The reality, though, is that we need to do something.

• (1235)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Blaney, you have the floor.

[*English*]

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, everyone, for being here to talk about these important issues.

Mr. Boulerice, if I could start with you first, as this is a surprise to all of us, could you explain how the redistribution impacts community representation in the ridings in question? You mentioned that there were discrepancies. I'm just wondering if you could explain that a bit more.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** As my colleagues have explained, these historic districts have their own identity and their own organizations. There is an established neighbourhood life and people have a sense of belonging that we must respect. People who live in Outremont, a well-known name, are proud to live there. The residents of Plateau-Mont-Royal, another well-known neighbourhood, are proud to live there too.

People who currently live on the Plateau-Mont-Royal will now be part of another riding, which will be very confusing for them.

People are also confused about the process itself. During the public consultations, no one proposed what is in the commission's report. The redistribution was completely unpredictable. People are faced with a done deal, and they are not happy about it. In fact, they are concerned and worried.

As MPs for Montreal ridings, my colleagues and I have a responsibility to bring you our constituents' concerns. They feel that this process is essentially an unpredictable grab bag and that the identity of their neighbourhood will end up changing almost immediately after the process is completed.

Is there room for accommodation and some flexibility? Nothing is set in stone. Although it would be easier for us to advise keeping everything as it is because people are happy enough to live with the situation, we are prepared to make small changes to our proposals, if needed. Things are always changing, cities are dynamic.

The proposal now on the table will harm the life of neighbourhoods and communities and confuse people. We don't see the need for that.

[*English*]

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** I guess what I'm trying to get clarity on is this: It sounds as if you're just asking for the status quo. Is that what you're asking? Can you explain why you think that's the best way to move forward?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** The Island of Montreal has several electoral districts, but only one that has seen a significant population increase that would justify making certain changes. However, the proposed redistribution also has an impact on Outremont and Laurier—Sainte-Marie, when these ridings should not be affected at this point. The impact is just too great and not commensurate with the demographic changes.

I don't think it's my place to take a map and draw boundaries, but what we are saying is that the consequences or the perverse effects of this redistribution are too significant for us to ignore. People don't want this change. They are worried. They have come to us and they have said it to all levels of government. That's why we are here today to say that this redistribution must be redone, because it just doesn't make sense.

[*English*]

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Thank you for that.

I'll continue on to Ms. Dhillon, unless there's anything Mr. Boulerice would like to add, of course.

Can you talk about whether you feel the proposed changes to the boundaries or riding names on the Island of Montreal are confusing for citizens and voters?

Perhaps I'll ask that of all of you, as I have two and a half minutes left.

**Ms. Anju Dhillon:** Thank you for your question.

They can be confusing. They don't make sense, in a lot of cases.

I'm not going to take up too much time, in order to give a chance for my colleagues....

As I explained, especially in my riding, it's a question of identity and denying the existence of these different identities who live together, work together and see themselves represented and as part of society—part of the population. As I mentioned, adding Dorval and Lachine brings us to the same number of people who live solely in LaSalle. Therefore, keeping LaSalle in the title “Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle” is very important not just in terms of electoral representation but also in terms of identity, humanity and letting people feel.... Especially...as we know from statistics and everything we've seen coming out, these communities already don't have much of a voice. To wipe out that existence—that name—is very hurtful to them.

Thank you so much. I'll pass it to my colleague.

● (1240)

**Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada:** Quickly, to your question....

I want to support my colleague Mr. Boulerice in his request.

When we presented to the commission...or the impact on our riding.... They were actually giving a part of Steven Guilbeault's riding to my riding, which is...there's a CN Rail...separating both of these ridings. We went to the commission and said, “Did you look at this other option? If what you're looking for is that representation, in terms of numbers, you can do both: consolidate the riding neighbourhoods and not give me another totally, completely...neighbourhood.”

I think the commission, for the Island of Montreal, went too hard and strong on the domino effect on the other ridings. For my colleague Mr. Miller's riding, for instance—which is the biggest one in Montreal—I think we could have other options without having such a big impact on other ridings.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[*Translation*]

We're moving on to the second round of questions.

Mr. Berthold.

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

After discussion with the Conservative caucus of MPs from the Island of Montreal, we've decided we got all the answers we needed today. Therefore, I would like to give up my time and thank you.

**The Chair:** Very well, Mr. Berthold.

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Enjoy, this won't happen very often.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I was obviously listening very intently to that comment.

Go ahead, Mr. Turnbull.

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

Thanks to all the members for being here today, and for their testimony and voicing their concerns within this process. I appreciate that.

Minister Miller, perhaps I'll ask you a couple of short questions in relation to the objection you're raising, which, I think, is to preserve the integrity of the community of interest in your riding.

I wonder whether you have any community support for that, and whether any of the other members of the ridings that would be impacted have also shown any support for what you've proposed today.

**Hon. Marc Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Turnbull.

I just want to take a step back and say that we should be really honest with each another. I don't think the people who vote for us go around saying, “I'm a proud resident of”—insert the riding—“Vimy”, or of Ville-Marie. When we say it in public, we're kind of off our communications sometimes when we're saying “as a proud MP for” this thing that anyone outside this, unless they're a keen observer of federal politics, has no reference. I am an MP for downtown Montreal.

However, the names can't be so off kilter or, importantly, misleading. I don't have the legal text for this, but in the case of my colleagues, it seems that residents, at election time, which can be quite stressful, would be misled, and I think that is worth due consideration. Let's also be clear that those boundaries that are put in are inherently artificial, but they can't be hideous. I think that in the case of decisions that just look big visually, and for the communities that are affected that look that way, that also plays into the matter of confusion and then people not being able to get out to the ballot box, wherever it happens to be situated. Heaven knows, in Montreal, those ballot boxes move quickly. I think that looking at that reference point is important for this team's consideration.

I have spoken to Marc Garneau, and he was supportive of this and signed the application I submitted. I have briefly talked to Minister Guilbeault and told him about that addition and he seemed positive as well. In terms of the support at the federal level, that's what I've seen, and I understand that MP Boulerice is supporting at least the park portion with respect to Saint-Henri.

I don't think there's a single person who wants to see Saint-Henri split in two. Mayor Dorais of the borough has written a letter to that effect, and the local councillors have supported it as well. We could absolutely provide written documentation if required. Some of it is already in your hands, but there is more if you need it.

● (1245)

**Hon. David Lametti:** Ryan, could I also add to that with respect to that riding?

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** Please do, Mr. Lametti. I was going to extend that to you as well.

**Hon. David Lametti:** My riding is contiguous with Marc's riding as well in a small way, former minister Garneau's riding. What the current situation simplifies is the ability of municipal politicians to deal with only two MPs. They have Minister Miller for the Saint-Henri—Sainte-Anne part of their municipal boundary, and then they have Saint-Paul-Émard, which is mine, so they're dealing with only two MPs.

You're going to add a third MP for a very small portion, and that unnecessarily complicates it. You can understand why Mayor Dorais and the rest of the municipal government of that particular part of the arrondissement in Montreal clearly don't want this to happen.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** It's very compelling.

Thank you, Madam Chair. I think my time is up. I appreciate that.

**The Chair:** Thank you. I appreciate it.

Next is Madame Gaudreau.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** We fully understand the domino effect that would impact the Island of Montreal. I hope that this will be properly explained in the report, for the benefit of the commissioners.

Mr. Boulerice, it's one thing to say that people disagree, but as Mr. Miller and other colleagues have suggested, I wonder if this proposal could be improved. What do you think?

That's the only question I have.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Thank you for the question.

Certainly, the proposal can be improved. However, as I was saying earlier, I don't think it's our place to sit at the drawing board and draw boundaries.

There really could be more flexibility to the process. I think Minister Miller's proposal for Old Montreal could be considered. However, the idea of taking a portion of Plateau Mont-Royal, namely "petit" Laurier-Ouest, and bringing it into Outremont does not make any sense, nor does the idea of splitting Saint-Henri in two. What we're pushing for today includes things that are really important to protecting the interests of our constituents.

We also have a problem with the process. Considering the initial proposals and the public consultations, the final report really comes as a surprise. How did we end up with this report, when it proposes things that were neither in the initial proposals nor in the proposals of those who were consulted? It's as if it was pulled out of thin air. Given this lack of transparency, people may feel they are being ambushed, since no one called for this.

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** That explains what may have happened in other ridings, as mentioned by the witnesses who came to committee.

Thank you for your clarifications.

Thank you, Madam Chair. That's it for me.

**The Chair:** That's great. You said you would take the entire two and a half minutes but you gave me 35 seconds. That's a great gift.

Ms. Blaney, the floor is yours.

[*English*]

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Wow. This is very exciting. Everybody's working together to get it done.

I'll ask Minister Lametti and Minister Miller the same question again. If you need me to repeat it, I will repeat it.

Do you feel the proposed changes to the boundaries of the riding names on the Island of Montreal are confusing to citizens and voters?

**Hon. David Lametti:** I don't think they are. In fact, we're lowering the confusion level by maintaining what we currently have. Over 10 years now, people have come to understand the riding names. There's a slight boundary change between Madame Dhillon's and my ridings. We're not opposing that. That's fine. People generally understand. It allows us to work together. Municipal administrations understand which MP they're going to, and I think that's helpful.

My point was that there's a difference in attitude. Verdun and Ville-Émard are both arrondissements of Montreal. They're both on the metro. LaSalle is at the beginning of the suburbs, in a way. It's more car oriented, and off that part of public transit.

There's a difference, and people understand it. We serve our constituents well, and the current names help us to do that.

• (1250)

**Hon. Marc Miller:** I wouldn't have said anything different.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Excellent. I'm done.

Thank you.

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

Josh Oliverio is joining us here from the Waterloo region. He's a young person who has a podcast on political decision-making and youth. It was really interesting for him to be able to see this discourse take place as to how politics also functions, aside from what sometimes makes the headlines. The tone of the conversation and the important work we're doing with redistribution is an experience he will enjoy.

I'm really grateful to all of you for the work today.

On behalf of PROC members, we appreciate the work done by Mr. Boulerice, Madame Dhillon, Madame Martinez Ferrada, Minister Lametti and Minister Miller. If you have anything else to add, please send it to the clerk, and it will be circulated around.

With that, we wish you a great day.

To PROC members, we're going to continue our earlier conversation regarding the motion.

I don't have a speaking list, but I have Mrs. Romanado, who is the person on my list, followed by Mr. Cooper.

Mrs. Romanado.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'd like to move an amendment to Mr. Cooper's motion. I drafted it in English. I'll do it in English, and then in French—

**The Chair:** Do you have it in both official languages?

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** I have it written. I don't have an email that I can send you, but I will read it slowly. I will read the English, and then the French.

Is that okay, Madam Chair?

**The Chair:** I just want to confirm.

I understand Mr. Cooper moved a motion. Mrs. Blaney offered a friendly amendment to change it from three hours to two hours. Mr. Cooper accepted that. I understand that Mr. Fergus offered a friendly amendment to have one hour and one hour instead of two hours. Mr. Cooper did not accept that, but you did not move an amendment.

There was confusion in saying we already have an amendment, which we do not. We have a motion that has a friendly amendment on the floor, and now Mrs. Romanado is offering an amendment.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'd like to propose that, the committee, in relation to its study of foreign interference in elections, beginning the week this motion is adopted, “add an additional hour to its regularly scheduled meetings, during each House sitting week to accommodate this study.”

The request by Mr. Cooper was to add an additional two hours every sitting week to this study. I am proposing two hours every week for this study, but I'm prescribing that it be added to the currently scheduled meetings we have. The rationale to that is, as you all know, we are going into the end of the session and we have a lot of legislation that comes in. We have a lot of issues that every committee is going to want to finish before the end of June.

I do not want to take up all the leftover available spots every week, because.... I'm not saying our work is not important, but all of the work that the House does is important. To minimize impact, my suggestion is we add an additional hour to all of our current scheduled meetings. I think that is something that can be accommodated. We get the two hours that Mr. Cooper is asking for, which is great, and we also make sure that we're not impacting the rest of the committees.

Madam Chair, I know how competent you are in terms of scheduling. I will leave it to the chair, who is responsible for the agenda, to then schedule our meetings accordingly, based on the will of the committee to see witnesses and so on.

That is my proposal.

● (1255)

**The Chair:** I have an amendment on the floor.

Mr. Cooper is on my list. Did you want to speak to the amendment?

Go ahead, Mr. Cooper.

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Yes, thank you, Madam Chair.

I appreciate Ms. Romanado's submission. However, I believe that we need stand-alone meetings. I think it works better from a scheduling standpoint. It's cleaner.

I want to confirm, based upon my previous submission, that my whip's office conferred with the head clerk and, in the normal course, there are two slots that are available. One is on Tuesday evening and another is on Friday afternoon. Those were slots that had been previously designated to the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying.

There's also another slot on Thursday evening that is mostly available, but would not be available when the Board of Internal Economy meets on Thursday at another point of the week, resulting in the need to move that committee to that Thursday evening slot.

Again, I underscore, based upon the information I have, that there are the resources to have a stand-alone meeting.

**The Chair:** I'll say I take information from the clerk and the analysts, and when they tell me that, I will believe them. I have confidence that they know how to obtain resources.

I try not to meddle in their work in that sense, but thank you for that clarification, Mr. Cooper.

Go ahead, Mrs. Blaney.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** I'm torn by this. I think, again, I will talk about the fact that we would need to put together a schedule that makes sense.

We have to ask questions like, if we extend by an hour twice a week, do we want committee meetings to be focused for the three hours on one subject? Are we okay with mixing those? The committee needs to have a bit more say on that for me to be open to this discussion.

The other part that would be helpful for me is to understand from the clerk what is easier. Is it easier for us to extend twice a week by an hour? Is it easier to get resources? Will the resources be more reliable?

I heard what Mr. Cooper said, and I understand quite clearly what he's saying. I just want to have a better awareness. Is it easier to extend by an hour, or is it the same amount of complexity to have an extra meeting that's two hours long? We're making some assumptions here, and I want to know clearly if one way is easier.

I have to be honest. In my life, for scheduling, an extra hour twice a week would be easier for me, personally, to put in my schedule. However, I think that we have to have a discussion about how we would schedule it and what would work. If we were going to move in that direction, what would make it feel more accessible or friendly to members of the opposition?

Those are my thoughts.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mrs. Blaney.

Mrs. Blaney, do you have a preference as to whether we would keep it by theme? Would you prefer that it not be mixed from one to the other, or would you want it to be the buffet?

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** I would prefer that it not be mixed. I think it's a lot easier if we have the time exclusively for one subject. But I also recognize that if we have a witness who can only make it on this, I would prioritize the issue over the discrepancy of whether or not to have three hours fulsomely on one subject or another.

I hope that makes sense. I do think I would like the clarity of knowing that we are there to work on just that issue.

Again, speaking as one member of one party in opposition, it comes back to this issue that has been brought up that I think the opposition feels: We don't want to feel like we're being tossed around. We want to know that there's accountability. We don't want to see this study on foreign interference pushed to the back when it's something that is incredibly important. There needs to be a little bit of support for us—for me, anyway—to have faith that this will be the case.

**The Chair:** Before I go to Mr. Fergus, and I do want to try to get this to a vote, I do want to say, Mrs. Blaney, that I actually do believe, based also on the work that the analysts do to support the committee, that it would be better to be on one study or another study unless there's an exception, and then to do what we've done in the past with scheduling—see where members are at and see if there are some adjustments.

That's why, even in the draft with reports, it wasn't just about foreign election interference and extra time, but really about how we can get that work done, maximize the time and then be able to have more functional meetings.

I have Mr. Fergus, followed by Mr. Cooper.

• (1300)

**Hon. Greg Fergus:** I'm wondering, Madam Chair, if it would be helpful to my colleague Mrs. Blaney if we made it a clear preference that the priority would be foreign interference, and then, subject to the subcommittee booking of witnesses, we would have the recognition that this would be the priority and that our preference would be for a single-issue meeting. If the situation arises, however, where there are either not enough witnesses or...

You know, let's not make perfection the enemy of the good. Let's allow for some flexibility from the chair and the subcommittee to determine what the agenda would be.

**The Chair:** Before I go to Mr. Cooper, I think that's what would allow us to have more functional meetings. Is the one hour added going to be of benefit for us to get through the work, or would it be better to have a stand-alone two-hour meeting based on witnesses and so forth? I feel like that's where it would be nice if we could actually get it to a spot of “and” instead of “or”, based on what is needed, and be able to do it with the intention of having the extra time every week to get through this work.

Go ahead, Mr. Cooper.

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Thank you very much.

I get your point about “and” versus “or”, but again, to emphasize why I think it makes more sense to proceed with a stand-alone meeting, upon passing this motion, we then know that those resources are guaranteed. When we request an extra hour, or general-

ly we understand that when we request an extra hour, it's a request. It's not guaranteed.

Second of all, generally speaking, having a two-hour committee meeting, as opposed to adding an extra hour at the end of our two meetings, I think from a witness scheduling standpoint actually provides more flexibility, not less.

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

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Here's how I see it. First, we need these two extra hours. Then we have to check to see about the House resources. Earlier I suggested Tuesday night as a possibility. The Board of Internal Economy sometimes meets on Thursday, so maybe we could exclude that day.

That being said, depending on the witnesses, the first option would be to separate out the topic. The second option is to accommodate the availability of witnesses and the resources of the House from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. I don't think that 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. is a viable time.

I think we've completed this round, but my colleague would also like to speak.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Gaudreau.

Mr. Berthold, you have the floor.

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Another good reason to add a third meeting, Madam Chair, is that it would give you and the clerk another option in the following week should witnesses be available only in the evenings. That would give us three opportunities to accommodate the witnesses we want to hear from in the study on foreign interference.

That's why I think it is important to ensure we have a separate two-hour meeting and, as you just said, that's easier. The final solution would be to have an extra hour per meeting, but I don't think that's the best option. That's why I would stick with the original proposal. I understand that some latitude might be helpful, so I think we should make sure we have that additional two-hour meeting and then decide on something else if that doesn't work.

Madam Chair, you have the option of talking to each of the parties. Since you do that on a regular basis, you could discuss this with them.

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

[*English*]

Before I go to Ms. Blaney, I just want to make sure it's noted on the record that our regular meetings that take place on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11 to 1.... I have the full intention of having foreign election interference be part of those regular meetings as well. Therefore, depending on who's coming and their availability, it might be worthwhile to be able to have a three-hour meeting, or it might not be. If we're looking at a redistribution report, it would be nice to have the window.

For me, as the chair, working with the clerk and the analysts, we're trying to manage all of the things to satisfy the intentions of what the committee's asking, but nowhere in my world is this additional meeting the only spot where foreign election interference would happen. Foreign election interference was asked to be on the front burner. I have kept it on the front burner. I would like to also satisfy our legislative requests because there is a law in front of us and we are lawmakers, so we should look at that legislation.

How do we get it all done? I actually do believe we can.

Ms. Blaney.

• (1305)

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** This is an interesting conversation.

The first thing I'll say is.... Again, I did ask this, and maybe we can't get it now, but I need clarity on it: Is it easier to add an hour, or is it the same difficulty? I'm just trying to understand that. That would be helpful for me in my decision-making process.

The other part that would be helpful for me to have clarity on is this: If we do this motion, accept the amendment, and have a vote and the amendment is selected for the extra hour, then that means we have an extra hour. It's just like if we voted to have an extra meeting; we would have an extra meeting. There seems to be.... This isn't just a gentle recommendation. This would be a motion from the committee to add an hour to each meeting in a week, resulting in two extra hours of committee for PROC.

Those things would help me.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Because there are a couple of extra slots, if we can get those slots, then obviously we would take the slots because the House functions in slots.

At the end of the day, whatever the committee asks, the House is going to do whatever it can to accommodate that ask because that's what it does. That's where having a little bit of a game plan as to what we want to do, providing us with a little bit of flexibility...because the motion also does say "at least". It could be that in one week we have four extra hours based on availability and the next week we don't have two hours.

That's where we just want some flexibility to be able to say, "We want to understand what the committee wants, and we will do whatever we can to deliver it." I think that's where.... I'm not hearing anyone who is opposing the extra time. I'm not hearing anyone opposing the desire to do all of the things, including keeping foreign election interference as the priority focus, and I think that's where we're just trying to get to it.

I hope that answers your question.

I'm going to call the question on Mrs. Romanado's amendment.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5)

**The Chair:** Now, we'll vote on Mr. Cooper's main motion as amended.

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Could we just have the motion read?

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Sophia Nickel):** It reads: "That, the committee, in relation to its study of foreign interference in elections, beginning the week this motion is adopted, add an additional hour to its regularly scheduled meetings, during each House sitting week to accommodate this study."

**The Chair:** I'll call the question.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

**The Chair:** I'm just going to take 30 more seconds before the next committee sets up to say that I hear what members are asking for.

Miriam is not here this week. When she returns, we are going to get a consolidated list of all of the witnesses who have been invited, those who have already come, and those who are yet to come, as well as information as to when they were invited and if they have responded or not responded.

We did have two panels on foreign election interference that had confirmed, and then we postponed them. We'll look at what their availability is and then adjust, perhaps, the redistribution stuff around that so that we get to the right number of hours in meetings on that.

I see your hands, Mr. Cooper and Mrs. Blaney, but I just want to let you know.

Then, based on this motion, the intention of it for me is the added hours, so where we need to do what the House has, either a stand-alone meeting or one hour and one hour.... I understand that it was passed for one hour and one hour, but there will be times where we will need to do a stand-alone meeting based on who can come. I am going to take that leniency for the chair and the clerk and the analysts. That, based on what the intention is, is what we will be advancing.

This week, although we will not be able to secure witnesses and probably have the extra meeting, I will ensure that these two hours that should have been in this meeting are in another week.

Also for the record, during the two constituency weeks we know that Ms. Telford will be appearing. We are doing our best to have a date confirmed to you by the end of this week so that we can plan accordingly.

I also have heard back from Minister Mendicino's office that it is the second week we return where he is trying to come. As we know, he was at the funeral yesterday. There's been a lot going on, and it's important that the government be represented. However, he has been in communication with the committee to secure a time to come, and we will make sure that everyone's invited and has responded, and we'll keep you in the loop.

Mr. Cooper.

• (1310)

**Mr. Michael Cooper:** Thank you very much. I'll be very brief.

There is one matter that I do want to raise. It's the third time that I have raised it, and it is with respect to the consolidated response.

It was on March 1 that the Prime Minister's national security adviser committed to provide responses to questions that had been put respecting dates on which the Prime Minister and PMO staff had been briefed about Beijing's election interference. On March 2, the director of CSIS committed to working with the PCO to provide a consolidated response, including the dates on which the Prime Minister, ministers, PMO staff, ministerial staff, and senior Liberal party staff were briefed about Beijing's election interference.

Respectfully, these are questions that the witnesses could reasonably have anticipated. They are not complicated. They require checking the calendars of those individuals the question was put with respect to when they were briefed.

Given that it has been nearly a month, let me say that this is really unacceptable, especially given the fact that we are going to be hearing from the Prime Minister's chief of staff within the next couple of weeks. It's imperative that we have that consolidated response within a reasonable time before Ms. Telford appears.

I would submit that the time that has lapsed has not been reasonable. This is a straightforward undertaking, and I would certainly

hope that the Prime Minister's office isn't obstructing the work of this committee once again with respect to providing this information that the Prime Minister's national security adviser has undertaken to provide to this committee.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mrs. Blaney.

● (1315)

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** I wanted to add that I hope one of the meetings we have soon is set aside for a bit more planning. Now that we know there are going to be three-hour-long meetings, it would behoove us.... Again, what you've given us today as a draft is a good start, but I think it would be helpful for us to take an hour of one of those days to sit and do that work.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** I've noted that.

With that, the meeting is adjourned.

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