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Chair: The Honourable Bardish Chagger



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• (1105)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.)): I'm going to call the meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 68 of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. The committee is meeting today to continue its study on the report of the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario 2022.

We have with us today Marie-France Lalonde, MP, Orléans; Anna Roberts, MP, King—Vaughan; Ruby Sahota, MP, Brampton North; and Doug Shipley, MP, Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte.

You will each have up to four minutes for an opening statement, after which we will proceed to questions from committee members.

Mr. Shipley asked whether he could go first, because he said he'll be less than a minute.

Mr. Shipley, the floor is yours.

Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, committee.

I will be short, because it's a very small change. I'm very happy with the small differences in the boundaries themselves. I'm just here today to talk about the name.

Currently, my riding is called “Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte”. It's being proposed to become “Barrie North—Springwater—Oro-Medonte”. I'm looking for the word “North” to be removed. When we brought this forward, a couple of residents pointed out to me that it's a little confusing. Some people think it means “North Springwater” because it falls into.... I understand, due to translation, it can't be called “North Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte”, but I feel the “North” isn't really needed. There's also a cost to having to change and add the word “North” to everything, from letterhead to business cards—even the plaques in the hallway of our offices would have to be changed. As I said, some residents mentioned it's a bit confusing as to which part is north—whether it is “Barrie North” or “North Springwater”.

It's a very simple thing. I appreciate the committee for listening today. I'm just looking for the word “North” to be removed and to keep it as “Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte”, or as we call it locally, “BSOM”.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you for that great presentation.

Go ahead, Madam Lalonde.

[Translation]

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Dear members of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, as the proud elected representative of the community of Orleans since 2014, and as a resident of this great community since 1999, I am here to defend it. I'm opposed to the proposed changes for the riding of Orleans.

Because both my report tabled on 25 September 2022 and my presentation during the commission's public hearing on 20 October 2022 were rejected in their entirety, and because cutting up the riding of Orleans will lead to nothing less than dismantling its identity and that of the citizens in the community, I am here today to make a proposal.

[English]

You have some slides in front of you. I would like to reflect on slide number two.

Today I'm asking the members of PROC to recognize the importance of keeping two key neighbourhoods within the boundaries of the riding of Orléans as the best solution and compromise by recommending this proposition.

Orléans takes great pride in being a suburb community. Orléans is growing because people and businesses are choosing our community for its bilingualism, multiculturalism, relationship with nature, francophone heritage and closeness to the greenbelt. As part of this community, we see ourselves as “one”. Orléans residents have a strong sense of belonging. The Blackburn Hamlet community in the southern part of Orléans is a mature community with no options to grow due to non-existent undeveloped land. I need to remind the members of the committee, as reference, that Orléans lost the Beacon Hill sector to Vanier in 2015. Ten years later, here today we are proposing yet another loss of our community of Orléans, which is Blackburn Hamlet.

Let's talk about about Cardinal Creek, an important development at the eastern boundary of Orléans. It's another neighbourhood that lives and breathes within the Orléans community. They too are looking east for groceries, schools, activities, sports, health care services, community services and political representation. Where does it end? How much more will Orléans be penalized because of its success in attracting people and businesses?

The residents will have to drive further west to Blackburn Hamlet, which is 12 kilometres versus eight kilometres, and further east for Cardinal Creek, which is 20 kilometres versus four kilometres, to see their federal representative. How can they expect their concerns or issues to be understood when they're related to the community they actually live in, which is Orléans?

I want to also highlight the number of landmarks. The sole argument of the commission is based on the population number in terms of the deviation from the quota. The impact of the proposed redistribution is the loss of our landmarks. It's the loss of the heart of the Orléans main street. It's the loss of its identity, institutions and lands that define Orléans and give pride to Orléans. It's truly what our community has worked so hard to build and to attract businesses and people to make Orléans their home. We can't take away what has been the reason for building our community of Orléans.

Let me share with you some of the landmarks. We have Just Food Farm, Blackburn Hamlet arena and community centre, Louis-Riel school, Lafarge quarry, a golf course, a soccer facility, trails and parks, Orléans Fruit Farm, which is a generational family business, and the RCMP. There's no logistical explanation for the decision of the commission other than the quota. Orléans's downfall has actually been its own success. I would ask the members here why.

Look at the orange boundary lines, please. It's the last map on the slide. If we cannot keep our people, then we at least have to keep our lands and landmarks as the ultimate solution.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Everyone knows I'm persistent with the beep-beep-beep. I asked Madam Lalonde to slow down with regard to translation, and hence that was a good pace.

Thank you for that.

Go ahead, Mrs. Roberts.

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the committee members for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the constituents of King—Vaughan regarding the proposed changes to the federal electoral boundaries.

The proposed boundaries adjustment for the Township of King within the riding of King—Vaughan has divided King Township, thereby isolating a very important community. Currently, ward 6 in the Township of King has not been included in the King—Vaughan redistribution proposal.

Ward 6 follows the Holland Marsh north of Highway 9 until it intersects with Bathurst Street. The Holland Marsh and the historical significance of King Township includes the communities of Ansnorveldt and Glenville.

As stated by the redistribution commission, one part of the criteria used to determine the new federal electoral boundaries is to respect communities of interest or identity, for example, communities based around language or a shared culture and history. Currently, ward 6 falls in the riding of York—Simcoe. It has been proposed that it fall in the riding of New Tecumseth—Bradford.

The Holland Marsh and the communities Ansnorveldt and Glenville within ward 6 have significant historical ties to King Township and, by not including them in the riding of King—Vaughan, will be isolated from the rest of our community. The Holland Marsh has had a significant historical tie to the Township of King since 1925. The community of Ansnorveldt is credited with being home to the first year-round settler in the area since 1934. In the early 1800s, the community of Glenville established the first sector of the industry in the area, and today many residents of King continue to buy their produce from the local farmers' market.

Both the mayor and councillor of the Township of King are supportive of this proposal, which I have included in my written submission. Mrs. Avia Eek, the current councillor of ward 6, and her husband and family, are third-generation Holland Marsh farmers. They have focused on agriculture, environment and economic development for the community. Mrs. Eek represents her community with pride and commitment, ensuring that the continued growth of our agriculture is not jeopardized. This is just one example of the community support for today's proposal.

King Township is known as the community of small communities. It prides itself on the fact that, although each village has its own unique character and charm, collectively each population has a strong sense of community under the umbrella of King—Vaughan. Therefore, I ask PROC to reconsider the redistribution, respect the history of King and keep this community of small communities as one by including ward 6 in the federal riding of King—Vaughan.

Thank you.

• (1110)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mrs. Sahota.

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair and members of PROC, for giving me this opportunity to speak on behalf of the constituents of Brampton North. I'm presenting here today to speak on how the current proposal for redistribution does more harm than good to the communities of Brampton North.

An important and long-standing community within my riding is the community of Springdale. The current redistribution proposal set out by the commission divides Springdale into three separate ridings: Brampton North Caledon, Brampton—Chinguacousy and Brampton East. This is a complete deviation from the commission's first version of the map.

My request is that the Springdale community remain as intact as possible in one singular federal electoral riding. As a community of interest, it is important for the committee to understand the history behind Springdale and its evolution to the present day. In order to do so, I will quote my regional and city councillors, who wrote a very meaningful letter. It wasn't included in my package, but I will have it circulated through the clerk. It reads:

Springdale Community, situated in the North-east portion of Brampton, is truly a crown jewel in our city. Established in the late 90s and early 2000s, this vibrant community is home to a diverse population of immigrants hailing from all corners of the world. It proudly embraces its multiculturalism, evident in the numerous places of worship that bring people together for various celebrations, such as the grand Gujarati Garbas, Muslim Eid prayers, and Sikh Nagar Kirtans (parades). This community exemplifies the essence of Canadian society, a tightly woven fabric where diversity is cherished.

At the heart of Springdale lies our city's only hospital, a crucial lifeline for the residents. Additionally, the Soccer Centre, one of Brampton's largest recreation facilities, has nurtured Canadian international players who have proudly represented our country at the World Cup. The development of this community is anchored by the Springdale Library and the Komagata Maru Park. Furthermore, Springdale benefits from excellent connectivity, supported by the Transit Terminal located at the Trinity Commons Mall.

This new version would divide all of these landmarks. It continues:

The residents of Springdale are deeply interconnected and rely on the comprehensive range of services available in this area. In fact, Springdale serves as an exemplary model of community-building that should be emulated across Canada. Regrettably, the proposed riding boundaries would split our community into three separate ridings, leaving its residents unfairly underserved. It is disheartening to imagine a large, marginalized population struggling to navigate their way through three distinct ridings and engage with their elected representatives effectively.

I have included in my package many letters of support that have been written by leaders of these community centres, places of worship and the recreation centre, not to mention that other members of Parliament have signed my proposal as well.

I want to make it clear that dividing the voice of the Springdale community means dividing the representation it deserves and its long-standing history of being intact as one community.

I would ask the members of this committee to take into consideration keeping this community of interest together. It is something that the commission has made clear is an important factor when coming to these decisions, and I'm confident that the commission, if they take a closer look, can come up with a proposal that will be within the deviation limits that would keep this community intact.

Thank you so much for hearing me out today.

• (1115)

The Chair: Thank you.

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): I raise a point of order, Madam Chair.

I just wanted to mention that the sound quality of interpretation services is fluctuating a lot.

Depending on the interpreter who is speaking, the sound volume varies. We want to avoid an acoustic shock, and do so in both official languages.

I just want to make sure that speakers place their microphones correctly and their cadence is appropriate, of course.

The Chair: I am very grateful for your intervention.

We will do everything in our power to make sure the volume is appropriate.

[English]

The clerk is on it.

We're going to enter into six-minute rounds starting with Ms. Gladu followed by Mrs. Romanado.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to all of our witnesses for being here today.

By way of background—the rest of the committee knows this—just so you know, as the lead for the Conservatives on the redistribution effort, I did sit through nearly every one of the almost 40 public hearings listening to all the testimony and reading through what people have written.

As an opener, I would say that in general I think the commission did a good job of listening to the many people who attended the public hearings and of redrawing the maps, but let's start with Mr. Shipley.

With respect to name changes, we did see a flexibility on the part of the commission to allow name changes. Penetanguishene was greatly objected to, for example, and they were allowed to go back to Simcoe North and Simcoe South. South Huron Shores was another one that was objected to and was changed.

I don't imagine that there will be huge differences, but as I understand it, you and the MP in the riding below you, which was Barrie—Innisfil, wanted to correct the confusion people were having about which office they should go to. That's why originally you wanted “South Barrie” and “North Barrie”, with all the rest of the places on the names, but because of the French syntax they had to reverse them, and now it's confusing. Is that correct?

Mr. Doug Shipley: That is also what I have been told,

Originally, when MP Brassard and I put it forward, because he is for Barrie—Innisfil, we were thinking of putting “North Barrie—Innisfil” and “North Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte”, but we were told that's not doable. When we did look through the rest of the names, it appears that it is not: “North” is always second.

It just gets a little confusing. That's what I've heard from some of my residents.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: I know that to the south your colleague is going to not object to the Barrie South—Innisfil, because Innisfil is all there, so he thinks the clarification still works. Do you see any conflict with that?

• (1120)

Mr. Doug Shipley: No, I don't at this point in time. For MP Brassard, that name is a lot shorter, too. Mine is already one of the longer names with Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte. Adding in another one is just going to make it even longer. I don't think there will be any confusion with that. Up until now even, I had part of Oro-Medonte, and we didn't differentiate between north and south, so I think adding it makes it a little cumbersome.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Okay. Very good.

Now, Ms. Roberts, one of the other things we saw was that there were complaints in the public hearings about trying to keep municipalities together.

For example, in Chatham—Kent, two of their wards were put into Sarnia—Lambton. Bkejwanong and the other ones were all in Chatham—Kent. In the redraw, they made those whole. It was the same thing for Kingsville and Essex. I think Leeds was another one where they could see that there were objections. I think that when it comes to trying to keep King whole, that argument would be consistent with what the commission has done.

Are there a lot of people impacted by this? How many are there?

Mrs. Anna Roberts: Thank you for your question.

There are about 1,165 residents in the small community. King Township consists of 28,000 residents. It's a very small, growing municipality, but it's a very close-knit municipality. A lot of King Township is aware of ward 6 because Holland Marsh, as many people know, is the richest soil in the world, where we grow all our vegetables. The councillor is currently involved with agriculture to ensure we continue to grow our vegetables for the community, so it would impact a lot of the community if that weren't included. Right now, she feels that every time she goes to a meeting she's not part of it. Ward 6 is a small part of a smaller community.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Right, and they pay taxes to King.

Mrs. Anna Roberts: That's right.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: That's very good. All right. I don't have any issue with that.

Ms. Sahota, in the Brampton area, I could see at the beginning in looking at the population growth that it has the highest growth, so I knew that they were going to put the new riding in that area. Is Springdale a municipality or a neighbourhood?

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Springdale is a neighbourhood. The redistribution, however, does go over a municipal border into Dufferin—Caledon, but that wasn't my purpose in coming here today. As you have just said, the area is growing immensely, and I imagine that in the next 10 years Brampton itself will have a complete six ridings. Springdale is a neighbourhood, and it has always been situated within a federal riding.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: If you put Springdale back into your riding, what does that do to your quota?

Ms. Ruby Sahota: I'm not sure which riding I would run from in the next election. My riding has been completely split in many different ways.

It allows me the opportunity to make that decision afterwards. My whole purpose in coming here today is in the interest of the residents of Springdale: to keep them intact as much as possible within either riding.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Thank you.

I'll move on to Mrs. Lalonde. I know that Orléans already had a 20% population growth, which was one of the highest in the province. To give you perspective, Toronto is growing at 6% and the rest of rural Ontario is growing at 13%, so definitely people are moving into Orléans.

When I look at the growth that you have and the growth that's going to continue—you're already on the plus-9% of the quota—I think the commission may have a concern there that, if they add more communities back into you, it's just going to result in changing the future iteration.

How different is Blackburn Hamlet from the other communities that are there in the community that they got put into?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: When you think about Blackburn Hamlet, for instance, they don't even at this point refer to themselves as Ottawa or Orléans. They consider themselves as one entity: Blackburn, the Hamlet. I have to say to the members of this committee that, if you look in your packages, this was the community that had positioned themselves most strongly in opposition to what the current commission is proposing.

We had city councillors and letters of local associations coming to us and sharing with us and at the commission report and audit the fact that they would like to keep their boundaries within the Orléans community.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Thank you.

The Chair: Go ahead, Madam Romanado.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Through you, I'd like to thank the witnesses for being here with us today.

I have a few questions for MP Roberts.

I was looking at your original submission of objection to the commission and that of the mayor of the Township of King. In the mayor's original submission, he mentioned, "I strongly encourage the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario to reconsider the boundary adjustment and retain the riding's current boundary of King—Vaughan at Highway 9 to best serve the constituents of this community."

In your submission, you do not mention going further north of Highway 9. However, in the new objection to PROC—I'm looking at it—it goes above, so you're having ward 6 in its entirety but going above the line of Highway 9. In the letter of support from your mayor, he also starts talking about going north of Highway 9. I'm a little confused about what changed between the initial submission and your submission to PROC, because from what I understand Highway 9 is a natural boundary and the communities north of Highway 9 have more of an affinity with the Holland Marsh farming community than with the ones below Highway 9.

I just wanted to ask you what changed between the time of your initial submission and that of the mayor's and your presentation today?

• (1125)

Mrs. Anna Roberts: When I had conversations with the councillor—Avia Eck—and the mayor.... When they excluded her ward, the community was a little resentful. She presented to me the fact that every time there's a meeting, she's separated from King Township. The community pays taxes to King Township. They don't pay taxes to York—Simcoe or New Tecumseth. They pay taxes to King Township.

A lot of the residents who work in ward 6 also live there, but some of them live within, for instance, ward 5 or ward 4. They always feel like, who's my MP? Do I go to York—Simcoe? Do I go to King—Vaughan? They always felt separated. By adding them back into King Township.... King Township is a very exclusive township within the municipality of Toronto. It's a very slow-growing municipality. There are only 28,000 people in the whole Township of King. That ward 6 represents a lot of what King Township stands for, because the agriculture extends below Highway 9 as well as north of Highway 9.

A lot of interactions—the councillor's and the community's—also communicate with farmers just south of it. It has caused a bit of friction.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: To that, did the councillor actually submit that in the initial proposals? Did she bring that forward as a submission?

Mrs. Anna Roberts: She brought that forward to me personally with my meeting—

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: During the time that it was open to the public to voice their opinions, did that councillor present to the commission?

Mrs. Anna Roberts: I don't believe so.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Okay.

With respect to the change you're proposing, would that not push the variances even further out of balance? What would be the change? If we were to include that, what would be the change?

Mrs. Anna Roberts: The change would be 1,165 people, which would mean that the new boundary of New Tecumseth would lose 1,165 people, and we would gain 1,165 people. The amount for them is 119,000 to our 118,000.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Okay. Thank you.

My colleague has some questions as well.

[Translation]

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): My question is for Mrs. Lalonde. I won't ask any questions about the eastern border of the riding, because our ridings share a border. However, I'd like to talk about the proposal listed on the fourth slide.

What's proposed seems reasonable to me. I don't consider myself to be in Ottawa—Vanier when I'm at the White Sands golf course. I sometimes go there to work on my golf swing, which I haven't perfected yet.

Why did you redraw the orange line this way? Which aspects are significant for your community?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Thank you very much.

I thoroughly understand the committee's position, which is somewhat hesitant to let my riding keep the same population density. However, there are very important points to highlight regarding what my colleague just said, such as the meaning of the green line on the slide. That's St-Joseph Boulevard, which is at the heart of the riding. I propose that you let us keep at least some aspects of our heritage. I'm not talking about people, but about historical plaques

set up to commemorate certain things like the Orleans Fruit Farm. It's been a family farm for many generations, it's always been there and it's the only farm in Orleans.

If the committee is not ready to let us at least keep the neighbourhood of Blackburn Hamlet and the Cardinal Creek Village within the community of Orleans, it should at least let us keep what represents us and what we are proud to share, such as the St-Joseph Boulevard Corridor. I invite you, dear colleagues, to consider it. It's about green spaces, and not people. It's about a green belt.

• (1130)

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Gaudreau, you have the floor.

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

I won't ask my question right away. I'll start with a preamble.

I see that what you're experiencing, Mrs. Lalonde, is not what I experienced. During the consultation in Sainte-Adèle, the proposed map was completely hacked up. Three administrative regions and six RCMs were split up, not to mention the municipalities cut in half. During the consultations, of course, there were elected officials, like you, and they received support, like you. The report we received was aligned with the logical proposals put forward, and it respected communities of interest.

I'm happy for me, but saddened for you. Why make things complicated when they can be simple? As we said, it's about knowing which office to go to for paying one's taxes and meeting one's provincial MP, for instance. At the same time, doing it that way means it's not necessary to hold more meetings. This moves me, because I'm not in the same position as you. I'd like to hear your comments on that.

Was there a step skipped in the process, for you? Currently, you would need a consultation to get another proposal and prepare a preliminary report for it.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Thank you very much for the question.

I don't want to be too critical of the process, but I sent proposals twice. Furthermore, the report refers to the strong opposition voiced during public consultations. In spite of that, the commission made no compromises.

It upheld its decision, in spite of the fact that a municipal elected official also came forward. There were countless letters. An Ottawa-Vanier school trustee even shared their profound wish not to include Blackburn Hamlet in Ottawa-Vanier. The commissioner mentioned it in the report. Nonetheless, strong community opposition and mobilization were not taken into account.

What I'm proposing today is to recognize that people took action. I'm here to represent them. In the decision, at least let us keep what belongs to us, such as the farm and the Greenbelt. Leave us the spaces that represent Orleans. It's really important to us.

Opposition from all those people who mobilized during the entirety of the commission's process fell on deaf ears, in spite of it all. That's what bothers me a little.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Thank you.

I'd like to remind everyone that the purpose of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs is to compile information from your surroundings. That said, we can always hope there will be redefinitions. As I say at every meeting, if you have supporting documents pertaining to the initial consultation, it's important to attach them to the report.

Since I still have a bit of time left, I'd like to talk about the criteria for electoral redistribution, which are at the heart of the matter. If we grant very high priority to the electoral quota, we dismiss communities. The same applies to demographic shifts.

I'm focusing a lot on you, Mrs. Lalonde, but I can tell you about a similar situation in the riding of Blainville-Mirabel. People wondered why a very agricultural area and an urban area would be split up, even though they have a feeling of belonging.

Ms. Sahota, since you also sit on the Standing Committee of Procedure and House Affairs, I ask you to make your voice heard and help us reflect on our criteria, not just the steps to go through, and avoid having this happen again in 10 years.

• (1135)

[English]

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Thank you.

We definitely had other witnesses come before this committee throughout this process and mention a feeling of disenfranchisement with the second step of this process. The first step allowed the public to come before the commission to make statements. However, if the second version ends up deviating so far from what the first version is, you couldn't possibly predict that outcome in order to proactively come in during the first stage to make your points heard. That's definitely happened in my scenario, and I know that's happened for many members who have come before PROC.

I believe there should be some form of public consultation that takes place after the second version comes out, in addition to this process here at PROC. We have seen that this process here at PROC—no offence to the committee—is not often yielding successful results. There should be something else.

Plus, the public should be made more aware of the process to begin with. Even in the first step, there were many people in my community—a highly immigrant population—who had no idea the consultations even took place.

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

[English]

Ms. Blaney, we'll go to you.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Hello, Chair.

I will not take up a lot of time today. I have only one question for Ms. Sahota.

I appreciate your bringing forward the concern of the community of Springdale.

I guess maybe I missed something. I do know there is an additional seat that will be added to Brampton. Are you recommending that Springdale belong to a particular riding, or are you saying it shouldn't be broken up and you're leaving it to the commission to make the decision?

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Thank you, Ms. Blaney.

I went back and forth with this, but I decided in the end that I didn't want to be overly prescriptive to the commission, because I know they have a lot of heavy lifting to do. I am, at this point, regardless of what my personal preference may be, just advocating for the constituents in the neighbourhood of Springdale so that they remain together as a united voice.

They do have particular concerns and political interests, and I think it is easier for them to navigate the system if they know they have one member of Parliament. Currently, as it is situated, there is one city councillor, one regional councillor and one provincial representative as well. They have always had one member of Parliament, so I think that should continue to be the case, and that's what I'm arguing here today.

There is a new riding being formed in the area. It would not just belong to Brampton. It would be shared with Dufferin—Caledon, so it would straddle two different municipalities.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Thank you.

That's the only question I have, Chair. I have no problems with any one of the other MPs' interventions.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go for a second round, because I know there are questions that remain.

Ms. Gladu.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Thank you, Chair.

I'll go back to Ms. Sahota. How many people live in Springdale?

Ms. Ruby Sahota: A little over 70,000 people live in just the community of Springdale. I believe it's 70,646. It would make up about 56% of my current riding.

• (1140)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: I see that, when the commission did its work, it balanced out all of the Brampton ridings to be between 110,000 and 119,000. It's very difficult to put 70,000 into any one of those without blowing up the map, I would say.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: In the first version, they did so. They kept Springdale intact. However, in the second version, they split it up.

I also attended most of the hearings. There was no demand to have any of those boundaries really messed with, not by any of my neighbouring representatives nor at any of the meetings I attended regarding Brampton East and Brampton West. Nobody at those hearings came forward arguing the boundaries that ended up affecting Springdale.

I don't know.... We could not have predicted this outcome of splitting the community in three parts.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Very good.

Mrs. Lalonde, I asked you the question about Blackburn Hamlet, and you said it's kind of a community unto its own.

I have the same question on the other side with Cardinal Creek Village. How integrated is it, or is it similarly a place of its own?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Cardinal Creek Village is a new development. It's definitely part of the growth of our community of Orléans. It is within four kilometres of what we call the heart of St. Joseph Boulevard or the heart of Orléans, if I could say. Since the beginning of the construction of that new development, they have always associated themselves with being Orléans.

The current proposal would make them part of the Glengarry—Prescott. I think there's a new name; it's no longer Russell. My colleague and I had numerous conversations on this. I know they would be well served if this is the final decision. However, that community has identified itself as part of the City of Ottawa, as Orléans residents since they moved in a few years ago.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: The only thing I can see there, with having gone from 139,000 in your riding with the redraw down to 126,000, is that it's equally hard to put more things back in there.

The last question is for Mrs. Roberts. Were there any objections from any of the surrounding ridings on making King whole?

Mrs. Anna Roberts: Thank you for the question.

It's interesting that you ask that question because there weren't any objections. What's interesting is that we now service ward 6. Because the residents of ward 6 feel that they're part of King, when they look up the MP for King—Vaughan, they call our office and we service them. All we're saying is to keep them part of King because they are part of King Township.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Thank you.

The only final comment I would offer is a comfort to Mrs. Lalonde that, if people have to drive 20 minutes to an office, compared to some of the places in Ontario where they have to drive hours to get to an office, she's already in a better position.

Those are all my questions. Thanks so much, Chair.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you, Ms. Gladu.

Are there any other questions here?

Yes, Mr. Fergus.

Hon. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): I have two quick questions.

Ms. Sahota, regarding Springdale, I have some experience as my parent actually lived in Springdale when the community was start-

ing up a couple of decades ago. I really do understand how it is a community of particular interest and of concern.

You could have argued for it to go to one place or another. I really do appreciate the fact that you are letting the commissioners determine where it should go. Brampton as a whole is a growing place, so you're not in opposition to adding an extra riding, I take it.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: No, I'm not in opposition to that. If anything, I think that the population of Brampton could justify even six ridings at this point in time. However, I understand that they're looking at the numbers very conservatively and not for very recent growth or future growth.

Absolutely, I'm not in opposition to that.

[Translation]

Hon. Greg Fergus: Mrs. Lalonde, when it comes to Orleans, a point you didn't raise was the importance of maintaining its francophone core. From its very beginnings as a municipality, Orleans was always considered a francophone community. For ages, all representatives for the riding of Orleans have been Franco-Ontarians.

Could you tell us about the importance of maintaining this community of interest?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Thank you, dear colleague.

Orleans has the highest concentration of Francophones in the City of Ottawa. The proposed boundary change could remove francophone communities from the electoral riding of Orleans. They are strongly attached to their identity and their francophone schools, which we are still building. In Orleans, we also have the highest concentration of young students in francophone schools. The francophone aspect must therefore be taken into account.

I just want to come back to one point. At the very least, in your final proposal, I ask you to leave St-Joseph Boulevard in our riding. It's at the heart of life and history in Orleans, as well as our Francophonie. I'm thinking of the Société franco-ontarienne du patrimoine et de l'histoire d'Orléans, or SFOPHO. It's a heritage society that set up historical plaques all over the community of Orleans. They highlight points of historical interest, like the Orleans Fruit Farm I mentioned earlier.

I therefore ask the committee and the commission to take this essential aspect into account in the final proposal. By arbitrarily dividing St-Joseph Boulevard, a boulevard that is quite central to our feeling of belonging as Francophones and as proud Franco-Ontarians, you're taking away a rural component, which mostly includes land.

I beg you, dear colleagues, to at least take into account the importance of St-Joseph Boulevard, which is part of our cultural and linguistic identity and could remain in the riding of Orleans.

If it is absolutely imperative to cut down the riding of Orleans to balance the ridings' demographic weight, I ask the committee not to divide St-Joseph Boulevard. That way, the riding could keep the lands, institutions and landmarks that represent it, as well as maintain its link with the Greenbelt. They are an undeniable part of our proud heritage.

• (1145)

Hon. Greg Fergus: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'll give my colleagues a chance to speak.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mrs. Lalonde, I just want to focus on something once more. As you said, those lands are part of the Greenbelt. If the committee accepts your recommendation and asks the commission to review the boundary, it won't be possible to increase population density in Orleans, because no property development will happen in that zone.

Is that right?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: That's exactly right.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Very well.

Thank you.

The Chair: Ms. Gaudreau, you have the floor.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Madam Chair, I just want to say that our conversations were extremely constructive today. As we come to the end of our analyses, know that I was very moved when it was highlighted that, among a dozen criteria, the electoral quotient seems to be quite high in the order of priority.

Deciding to butcher a riding to the detriment of heritage, communities of interest and Franco-Ontarians is a serious decision.

To conclude, I'd like to give the last word to our colleagues, if they want to present crucial arguments in the hopes of changing the boundaries. Mrs. Lalonde mentioned several things she wants to keep in the riding she represents. I'd also like to hear from Mr. Shipley, Ms. Roberts and Ms. Sahota.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Did you want comments from all four of us?

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Indeed, I know that's what you would like, Mrs. Lalonde, but I think your comments are enough for now. I'd like to give Ms. Sahota and Ms. Roberts the final word.

[English]

Ms. Ruby Sahota: I've handed out versions of the map, so you can take a quick look at how different the map became. My main disappointment is that main arteries have not been considered. I think they should go around specific communities of interest, rather than go through them.

For instance, the head of my local gurdwara said, "Myself, along with my fellow board members, fear that our voice may be weakened if the electoral boundary changes that are proposed go through. Not only this gurdwara but the ecosystem of Springdale will be affected with this change."

About 40% of my riding's population is Sikh. The second-most spoken language is Punjabi. Perhaps that's not so much of an issue today, but it could be. Having a representative who's able to staff their offices appropriately and provide the appropriate services is necessary in a community like that. It makes it much easier if you keep a community of interest like that intact within a federal riding so that representation can be properly given.

• (1150)

Mrs. Anna Roberts: Thank you for the question.

What we have to understand about King Township is that ward 6 is part of King Township. It's a very small community. It was started with Dutch farmers. The community has always been separated.

As it is currently, they have nothing in common with the current region of York—Simcoe, and they will have nothing in common with New Tecumseth—Bradford. However, their association is with King Township. The residents always feel like they're left out.

All we're asking is to keep them intact in this very small community of communities. Thank you.

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, for giving us a bit more time.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Gaudreau.

[English]

Ms. Blaney, do you have any last questions?

Ms. Rachel Blaney: I have no further questions. Thank you.

The Chair: Brilliant.

With that, we would like to thank you, colleagues, for taking the time to join us today. If there's anything else you would like our committee to consider or you want to provide, please send it to the clerk and we'll have it circulated around.

We wish you a good day. On behalf of PROC committee members, I thank you for your time and attention.

We will pause for two minutes, because we're going to head in camera so that we can go on with the rest of our business.

Thank you.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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