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Chair

Mr. Joe Preston

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•(1100)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC)): I'd like to call us into session, please. It is 11 o'clock. We are here for our study on redistribution.

We have the great province of New Brunswick today and a couple of witnesses in our first panel.

We will have bells again at around 11:20 a.m., and I'd like to finish this panel by then. Committee, please help me out with that and keep your questions short and succinct.

Members, you have five minutes each, if you'd like, for an opening statement. Please try not to use it all if you don't need it.

Mr. Allen, Mr. Williamson, it's great to have you here today.

Please start, Mr. Allen.

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to colleagues and members of the committee for allowing us to be here today to present.

Given the nature of this, I find the word “objection” might be a little bit strong, but I guess that's the word we have to use on the filing of the committee. I just want to give my kudos to the committee and the boundaries commission for New Brunswick on what a great job they did.

My objection is being filed based on two major things. One is on a change in the boundary that resulted from the time when the original proposal was made to the time when the final proposal was made for one area of the riding. When the original proposal was made by the boundaries commission, it was going to be included in the riding of Tobique—Saint John River Valley, but after the final report came out, a section of it was taken out. That was not contemplated in the original proposal, nor was it even discussed in any of the public meetings as a result of that. That was the first thing.

The second thing—a little lesser—is the naming of the riding. I actually wrote a letter to the committee, and I'll just very briefly go through the two issues.

One is, if you look at appendix A, the area we're talking about, the first page of appendix A, is an area called Canterbury—North Lake, Canterbury Parish—Meductic. That area where the river is flowing is actually in the current riding of Tobique—Mactaquac.

In 2003, when electoral redistribution was done, this area was actually in the riding of New Brunswick Southwest. The boundaries commission at that time, through communities of interest and other

reasons, said there was clearly a better economic tie, closer social ties, and closer family ties between this area and the Upper Saint John River Valley, which would include Woodstock, Grand Falls, and other areas in the riding of Tobique—Mactaquac. Hence the area was put into Tobique—Mactaquac. Then when the final boundary was proposed by the commission, the area was taken out.

Mr. Chair, when I actually saw the final boundaries commission report, I looked at it and said, those areas have been taken out. I went to the two local service district elected officials as well as the mayors and councils of the two municipalities involved—those being Canterbury and Meductic—and I told them about the presentation and what had actually happened in the final report. I asked them if they wanted me to make a representation to stay in Tobique—Mactaquac or move to New Brunswick Southwest, as proposed. I said I would not file an objection if they did not want me to. They did want me to do that. In the appendix in this presentation, there are also four letters of support—one from each of the municipalities as well as one from each of the local service districts—supporting staying in the riding of Tobique—Mactaquac. The net net of all this is that there are around 1,450 people, a population who are involved in roughly 1,000 square kilometres.

I've also included a table in the letter I sent to the committee, on page 4, where it shows what the change would be. Currently, under the population as proposed by the commission, Tobique—Mactaquac would be 7.91% below quotient, we would be 5.9% below, and New Brunswick Southwest would be 9.9% below and would become, approximately, 12% below.

I'll let Mr. Williamson speak to the geographic challenges he has on his.

A final point is with respect to the name, Mr. Chair. Given that the name was proposed, Tobique—Saint John River Valley, at a time when they were going to add an amount of territory including down below Fredericton, a naming change like that probably made sense. However, given that most of the characteristics of the riding have remained the same, I'm recommending that the Tobique—Mactaquac name remain.

Thank you, Mr. Chair and members.

•(1105)

The Chair: Mr. Williamson, it's good to have you here.

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Thank you. It's great to be back.

It's different on this side. I must say that I do miss the committee, the issues as well as the camaraderie, on both sides.

I'll try to be brief here. First of all, I agree with Mr. Allen that the New Brunswick commission did a wonderful job in both its proposals and its public hearings. What was important was that they were, I believe, quite responsive to public input, making modifications based on what they heard after consulting with New Brunswick voters. I hope that trend will be the case after they review what has been said here today.

My purpose for being here is just to say that I agree with Mr. Allen. While I'd be pleased to represent and serve all constituents who are in New Brunswick Southwest or who end up in New Brunswick Southwest, it's my belief that this proposed change should be reversed, and for a couple of reasons.

I support what local representatives are saying regarding the gravitational pull. Whether it's the economics, the communities and families, and, as even I've discovered, the roads system, the area really does have a northern pull into Woodstock and points north.

While the Trans-Canada runs east-west at the northern end of my riding or district, and at the southern end of Mr. Allen's, for me to approach that really I am using country roads. While there are roads throughout the riding, those ones really are secondary, and throughout the winter are virtually impassable.

I think you would concur with that...? Yes.

The other point I'll raise very quickly is that of course my numbers would fall from about 9.9% off the average to 11.9%. So the numbers would fall, but the deviation rises to 11.9%.

I'd like to point out that in the very southern end of my riding I have what are known as the Fundy Isles. These are four islands. One, Grand Manan, the largest in the south, is a 90-minute ferry ride to and from the mainland each way. Another, Campobello, is tucked in on the left. I think I'm probably the only member of Parliament who has to drive through a foreign country to get to part of my riding nine months of the year. I have to cross through the state of Maine. While there is ferry service three months in the summer, it's a ferry first to Deer Island and then another ferry to Campobello.

I feel that while water is not included in the overall geographic calculation, it ought to be, because that water is no different from farming land. The men and women who live in the bay area work that water. They fish that water. It's territory that I have to cross relatively frequently to do my job representing them.

As rural members of Parliament—I think many of us have the same challenges—the thing we hear out on the road is “We haven't seen you in a while”. It's not for lack of effort, and it's not for lack of putting miles on the vehicle.

I'll leave it at that, because I know you are pressed for time and you're trying to get through some business.

I'll be happy to take some questions. Thank you for having me here.

The Chair: I'm suggesting that we have time for about four minutes from each.

Mr. Reid, you're first on this side. If you want to share with Mr. Lukiwski, that will work.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Okay.

Just to be clear, then, the municipalities under discussion are North Lake and Canterbury?

Mr. Mike Allen: The two municipalities are Canterbury and Meductic, and there are two parishes, North Lake and Canterbury.

Mr. Scott Reid: On the map I'm looking at, only two names are written in, but I'm pretty sure we're talking about the same thing. I just wanted that for the record.

You mentioned, Mr. Williamson, how your riding is now going past the 10% variation.

Mr. Allen, what happens to your riding in terms of population?

Mr. Mike Allen: The population would actually go up by about 1,450 people, based on the proposal, and it would go to about 5.97% below quotient.

Mr. Scott Reid: So you're also below quotient.

Mr. Mike Allen: Yes.

Mr. Scott Reid: If I might just observe, it sounds to me...and I've seen this in a number of provinces I've looked through where I've found some oddities in boundaries. They seem to be connected to the commission having set up internal, although unstated, criteria that they, in this commission, will not go above or below $x\%$.

It sounds like in New Brunswick they may have chosen 10%. I can't help but notice how close 9.9% is to 10%.

I mention this now because, while I'm assuming something that I don't know to be true, if it is the case, I'd like the members of the commission to deal with marginal cases like this with the full awareness that what they're doing is setting themselves a boundary. They should be conscious of whether that ought to, or ought not to, trump communities of interest.

I think your argument here would be that in this case it's a technical boundary, not of great importance, and that the community of interest would trump that very small variation.

Would that be a fair assessment?

• (1110)

Mr. Mike Allen: That would be fair, and at the same time we're talking about just two of us. There's no domino effect based on this, but also there's a significant riding geographically in New Brunswick called Miramichi, which is well below quotient as well, far beyond the 10%.

Mr. Scott Reid: Thank you for that.

The Chair: Is there anything else, Mr. Reid?

Mr. Lukiwski, you have a couple of minutes if you want it.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, CPC): Sure.

Let me just say, Mike, that I certainly concur, and I support your recommendation to retain the name you currently have, because as you and many of the members know, it's my favourite name in Parliament, to be able to stand up and say "the honourable member for Tobique—*Mac-ta-quac*".

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mike Allen: There's just something about that.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: I read your brief, and you said in the first map that was presented for public discussion by the boundaries commission they didn't have these changes in it, so therefore you didn't make a representation at the public hearings; you didn't feel there was a need. Can you explain to the committee why? Did the commission give a rationale as to why it made these changes after the fact, which were reversed in 2003 and were obviously opposed by you, Mr. Williamson, and most of the people of the riding?

Mr. Mike Allen: They said they used a community of interest argument. I'm trying to remember the exact wording of the report. However, that goes completely contrary to what was stated in 2003 as to the reason of moving them into Tobique—Mactaquac in the upper river valley, and hence why we wanted to add the four support letters in there as well.

The other thing that's important is that New Brunswick's system of governance with respect to municipalities and areas like that is a real challenge. There are local service districts and municipalities. Now they've set up 12 regional service commissions in New Brunswick, and these weren't necessarily the final boundaries in place before the commission reported. This area is in the new regional service commission that includes Woodstock, Hartland, Florenceville-Bristol, and up river. So everything is going to be planned with the up-river communities from an infrastructure standpoint and everything.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Cullen, be as tight as you can, please.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Yes, I'll try to keep it even shorter, so my friend who knows the region better might ask some questions.

Just to be clear, you're both under. We're talking about moving 1,450 people. That's what you said, Mr. Allen?

Mr. Mike Allen: Yes.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: It would make one of you more under and one of you a little less under; essentially that's the effect we're looking at here.

Your point, John, about the water access and having to go through the States to get there.... Ryan Leef sometimes claims the Yukon is another country. I have to go through the Yukon to get into parts of my riding, but I think he may have the sole claim on the country.

How does that logistical aspect affect this decision? What is it to get around on these ferries? Are they frequent? Are they not? Is it a bit of a nightmare getting on and off these islands, or is it as simple as can be?

Mr. John Williamson: It just consumes time. For Campobello, it's just a question of going through the border crossing into Maine,

in through Canada, and then through Maine again and in through Canada.

Interestingly, this island is perhaps the only border station between the two countries that stayed open after 9/11. There are good relations on both sides, but still it requires a passport or a Nexus card. So it really is just a question of time. But you have lines at the border and things like this that you have to plan for. I suppose the point I was trying to make is that the water is just another obstacle. In New Brunswick, we all represent large rural ridings.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Can you speak to that a little in terms of the obligations? You said the obligations or the expectations are different from folks in—

Mr. John Williamson: In the last three years I've found there's very much a desire among constituents throughout Southwest for people to know and interact with their member of Parliament. I'm sure Mr. Allen's riding is the same.

Often I go on the weekend and carve up the riding. I'll spend part of it in the east, which extends to the Sussex area. I'll go to the island. Often when I go to Grand Manan it's an overnight visit. Islanders keep track of who comes on and off their island. You do score points for staying overnight.

• (1115)

Mr. Nathan Cullen: It's like a punch card or something.

Mr. John Williamson: Pretty much. It's informal, but the same idea. The ferry is not free; it's more for off islanders. But again there's that expectation.

Those who run on and off the island are noticed. It's the same thing over on Campobello as well, so it is good to stay. I don't like to rush in and out of communities because that speaks to the character of the member representing them. So it really comes down to the fact that I'm not looking for more territory, particularly in this case.

Mr. Allen makes an excellent point that with the way the local districts are being drawn, this change cuts it in two for a reason that has not been adequately explained or considered from the point of view of those trying to represent it.

Again, I discovered in the last couple of years that there is that expectation, that hope, that members will be available. This change would make that a little more difficult.

The Chair: Thank you.

Monsieur LeBlanc.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, I have no questions.

The Chair: You understand, you being our New Brunswick representative.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I understand. I think the presentation makes sense. We'll talk about that later when we're looking at our report, but I've read the presentation and I think there's a lot of merit to it.

The Chair: All right.

We have a minute or so. Does anybody else have a question for our witnesses?

You've done a great job explaining. You've done a great job in bringing both of you here and getting letters from the people on the ground saying that they agree with what you're trying accomplish. I think that in itself should be enough to move the day. In my opinion, it won't always work.

All right, then, I suggest we suspend. We will try to come back again after bells and votes. I think about noon we'll be back down here.

Thank you very much.

• (1115)

(Pause)

• (1205)

The Chair Thank you, committee, for your prompt return to the room after the votes.

Without further interruption, I hope, we have until the top of the hour at one o'clock.

Monsieur Godin, we were going to have you on a panel. The other person is speaking in the House, so we're going to let you go first for five minutes. We'll ask you some questions, and then he'll come down and we'll do the same with him.

Committee and witnesses, please be as brief as you can, because we are still a bit limited on time.

Go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am pleased to be able to present my brief to you.

As the member for the Acadie—Bathurst riding, I would like to thank the committee for having accepted my request to speak today. I am happy to have the opportunity to share my views on the proposed changes to the Acadie—Bathurst riding, that is to say the integration of the village of Belledune, as well as the proposed change to the Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe riding.

First of all, I am very much in favour of this proposal. However, as I said during the commission's hearing this summer, I must say that it is above all up to the people of Belledune to weigh in on their future, which is what they did during the hearings.

Belledune already has close ties to the riding because of its proximity. For example, many travel regularly between Belledune and Acadie—Bathurst, be it to work, to shop, to go to school or to see their family. It includes many employees from the smelter and the electrical plant.

Furthermore, Belledune's port has long played an important commercial role in the riding, because it is a popular attraction for businesses and economic development. There is no doubt that uniting Belledune's and Acadie—Bathurst's strengths would make for a stronger and more energetic riding. If you put this proposal forward, Belledune's inhabitants will be able to count on their member to ensure a smooth transition and to look out for their interests.

On another note, I want to emphasize how important it is for the commission to respect, in its proposal, the federal court's decision in the case of *Raïche v. Canada*, which followed the last boundary readjustment. Briefly, because of this decision, the communities of Allardville, Saumarez, and Bathurst were reintegrated into the Acadie—Bathurst riding, in the best interests of our official languages communities.

However, I cannot overemphasize to the committee the importance of carefully taking into account the consequences of decision-making on official language minority communities. That is why I wish to reiterate the concerns I raised during the public hearings regarding the proposal to add the city of Dieppe to the Beauséjour riding and separate it from Moncton.

I am pleased that the commission did not choose to maintain this position in its final report, following the fierce opposition of the Acadian community to the issue. I would like for the committee to take note of this opposition so that it is not tempted to reconsider this proposal.

Even though Dieppe is the francophone population's demographic centre in the region, Moncton remains an important centre of the Acadian community's cultural and community life. Moncton includes many francophone and Acadian institutions, such as Moncton University, Assomption Vie, the Dr. Georges L. Dumont Hospital, the Aberdeen Cultural Centre, the Escaouette theater, as well as a large number of Acadian associations, such as the New Brunswick Acadian Association of Professional Artists, the New Brunswick Federation of Young Francophones, etc.

It is therefore important to take into account, throughout the entire process, the direct link between the Acadian community's demographic weight and its political weight. That is why I hope that this committee will ensure that it fully respects its obligations under the Official Languages Act to enhance the development of both francophone and anglophone minorities in Canada.

Thank you.

• (1210)

[*English*]

The Chair: Madame Turmel, you're up first.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Godin, by adding Belledune to the riding, that would make a 22% difference. I understand very well the francophone dimension of the community of interest.

Could you tell us what will be the future development opportunities in this sector that would greatly increase the population and the gap? Even though we are not supposed to consider it at this stage, it remains important for the commissioners who will have to review this matter.

Mr. Yvon Godin: We're not there yet, and besides, that's less than 25%.

In the case of *Raiche v. Canada*, it was really the community of interest that counted. During the 2002 boundary readjustment, people will remember it, we created a subcommittee to deal with the readjustments at the time. Tom Lukiwski sat on it then. Look at the community of interest. If you look at where the Belledune riding is located, you will see that Acadie—Bathurst is between Miramichi and Belledune.

If you consult the archives, you will see that the member for Miramichi said, in the newspapers, that it didn't make any sense to put Belledune and Miramichi together. There was no community of interest. People in Belledune went to school and shopped in Bathurst. People who work in the smelter came from Acadie—Bathurst. Even Belledune's mayor spoke up on the matter and said that the right choice, for Belledune, was Acadie—Bathurst.

I'm just giving you my opinion. Yes, the number counts, but people count much more. The human aspect counts much more. In politics and in democracy, the heart must be taken into account, the way that people feel about it and the way they want to be represented.

That's why, when I presented my brief to the commission, I said that I was ready to welcome them. That's also what I recommend, but it's up to them to decide, because they are the ones being represented. They don't feel represented, and it's not because of the member from Miramichi. It's simply because it's not at all practical. People all deal with Bathurst. The number is nothing but a number. Humans are humans, and we are here to represent them.

That's my opinion.

Ms. Nycole Turmel: Very well.

If I understand correctly, you support Mr. Goguen's brief, even though he's not present.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I familiarized myself with Mr. Goguen's brief, and I spoke with him. I know how it works and I suppose you are going to ask me if I spoke with Mr. Goguen.

I did speak with Mr. Goguen. I am aware of his brief. In fact, he was told that high schools built outside of the riding will be located inside Beauséjour's riding. He found that that didn't make any sense and that it should go back to Moncton's riding, which is still below 25%.

It's ridiculous for Moncton's English school to remain inside the Beauséjour riding. I think that's the content of Mr. Goguen's brief. I can truly respect and support this request.

You are also going to ask me if I spoke with the member next door, for the Beauséjour riding. That's not far from our region. Yes, I spoke with him, and he supports it as well.

Ms. Nycole Turmel: Okay.

[*English*]

The Chair: Let's hear from the member from Beauséjour.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[*Translation*]

I only have one question to ask Mr. Godin.

Mr. Chair, I support the presentation that Mr. Godin has just made. I know that, in a previous session, Mr. Godin and our colleagues raised questions about this subject. In New Brunswick, we are used to gaps of 20, 21 and 22%. I know that Mr. Reid and others talked about it. In some provinces, the commissions really tried to keep it within a 10% limit. That's not official, but that's still an objective of some commissions.

Do you agree, as I do, with Robert Goguen? He will of course be joining us after finishing his presentation to the House. Mr. Goguen's proposed changes would lead to an increase in Moncton's population, which is very urban compared to your riding or to mine. The fact that the numbers are getting close to 25%, is that a problem for you? It's still under the legal threshold, but that could increase somewhat if, ultimately, Robert Goguen's proposed changes are accepted by the commission.

•(1215)

Mr. Yvon Godin: No, I don't see a problem. In fact, some other ridings in Canada are above 100,000. They haven't even gotten there. There is still hope. We have to look at the human side. In my opinion, an English school in Beauséjour riding doesn't make sense. That has to be taken into account.

I can't fight for Acadians to have an advantage and then refuse to give that same advantage to anglophones. I don't work that way. I find that Mr. Goguen's arguments make a lot of sense. We are ready to support them. We can't say that one side is good and that the other side isn't good. It has to be equal for everyone.

Still from the point of view of language, at a given moment, someone chose 25%. It could have been 30%. In the Miramichi riding, last time, it was more than 30%, because it was known that there was no community of interest. The federal court recognized that taking 99.99% of that city and putting it with Miramichi didn't make any sense. I believe that that established a precedent.

In the 2004 election, about 850 people spoiled their ballot. People were angry. There was no community of interest. It's good that the court recognized it. We have to base ourselves on the court's decision too.

[*English*]

The Chair: That's it. What a great job of convincing us. I see no one else on my speaking list. When members come here and agree with each other, it's always pretty easy just to agree.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I just want to hear if Tom agrees with me.

Do you agree, Tom?

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Well, normally, Yvon, I try not to listen when you speak, so it's tough for me to say whether or not I agree.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Don't worry, you didn't insult me.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Normally, I do listen to what you say. I try to reiterate what you say, but much softer.

The Chair: Mr. Reid, do you have a point on Mr. Lukiwski's point?

Mr. Scott Reid: Yes. I disagree with the suggestion that Mr. Lukiwski was here 10 years ago the last time he did it; you are remembering me.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Yes. We look a lot alike.

Mr. Scott Reid: I was here. People often get us confused.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: It's like looking in a mirror.

Mr. Yvon Godin: But my memory is very good. You were on the subcommittee with me and we did lots of work on it, and you agreed with me at that time. Do you recall?

Mr. Scott Reid: I've never disagreed with you on any subject ever, not even once, so it must be true.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Thank you very much.

[English]

The Chair: If that is the case, we will suspend.

Monsieur Goguen is in the question and answer segment of his speech and he'll be here any moment. We'll suspend until he comes, and then we will deal with him.

•(1215)

_____ (Pause) _____

•(1225)

The Chair: I love anxious members of the committee.

Go ahead and catch your breath.

Mr. Robert Goguen (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, CPC): I'm sorry I'm late. I was just giving a speech on nuclear terrorism.

I'll try to be brief. I'm hoping no one is going to have a meltdown.

The Chair: You have five minutes, sir. Tell us what you're talking about.

Mr. Robert Goguen: In essence, the revised plan provides a boundary that would have 85,595 people living in it, which is plus 13.5%. What I'm objecting to is the removal of nine polls situated within the city of Moncton on the north side of the Trans-Canada highway. The population there is 6,087.

We may as well talk about it right off the bat. Adding those 6,087 people would drive the population up to 91,682, which is plus 22% of the provincial quotient. You should be mindful that in the Miramichi—and this is all about geographics, as that's the way New Brunswick is laid out—they're minus 21%.

In my mind, the only apparent reason for moving these nine polls into the neighbouring riding of Beauséjour—Dieppe is the voter parity and the quotient. So why should we take exception? Why should we amend this and let the riding of Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe go to plus 22%?

Well, there are two very good reasons. One, we want to respect the ultimate goal of effective representation of the citizens residing there, and two, we want to preserve the community of interest.

You must have heard these terms before, Mr. Chair. I'm just guessing.

The Chair: That was a new term for me.

Mr. Robert Goguen: It's a good one.

Let's start with effectiveness of representation. All nine polls are sitting within the boundaries of the city of Moncton. There's a public transit system that goes from where they live to my riding office within about 15 minutes. At this time, there is no public transit that goes to the honourable Dominic LeBlanc's riding, which is in Shediac. So if you don't have a car, you either hitchhike to come to my place or you can take the bus, or you can hitchhike to the neighbouring riding. I don't think you can hitchhike on Highway 2, although it's nearby.

With regard to community of interest, other than perhaps having a very nice cottage in Beauséjour or Dieppe, there are not any significant ties between this area and the riding of Beauséjour—Dieppe. These polls have been within the city of Moncton, within this riding, for over 45 years. The community of interest...I won't repeat it; it's in my brief. Look, they have the same municipal council. All the factors are there, the economic commission, the whole bit. In fact, if anything, the ties with this part of the riding in Moncton are going to intensify rather than diminish.

Here's why. Moncton High School, which is situated right in the heart of Moncton, is moving in 2014. It's moving to poll 55. So in essence you'd have Moncton High School in Beauséjour—Dieppe riding, and all the houses and all the infrastructure built around it in Beauséjour—Dieppe. It doesn't seem to make sense from the point of view of community of interest.

If you look at it from a total point of community of interest of the riding, it's Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe. A portion of Riverview, 45% of the residents, reside in Fundy—Royal. They have Dieppe. Now the initial provision was to try to put all of Dieppe within Beauséjour—Dieppe, but a portion of Dieppe is now in Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe. By putting these nine polls into the neighbouring riding, what you have is a further fractioning of a community of interest. So you could have part of all three of the cities in other ridings. That to me doesn't make sense from the point of view of effectiveness of representation and community of interest.

The major objection, and I draw your attention to this, for not having put all of Dieppe into the Beauséjour—Dieppe riding was a concern about diluting the political strength of the francophones. Doing that would have taken the francophones from 31% to 20%. In the riding as it stands, I believe 28.2% of the voters would be francophone. By adding the 6,087 in the nine polls, the number of francophones actually goes up...and there is a mistake in my brief; I said 29.62%. I redid the math; it's 29.25%. The francophones go up by a full percentage point, so surely that argument can't rule the day.

I've spoken to the honourable Dominic LeBlanc. He doesn't object to representing these people, but it doesn't cause much of a domino effect to his riding. I believe his riding as it stands is about 84,000. Moncton is at 85,000. By removing the 6,000, his riding is still over the quotient, so it really becomes a matter of balance, effective representation, and community of interest.

That's my story and I'm sticking to it.

•(1230)

The Chair: Super. Thank you for being concise.

Mr. Lukiwski, you have five minutes.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Thanks very much.

I really don't have much, other than an observation.

I think this is the first time I've heard that we have representatives from the three main parties all agreeing to a proposal by a member. In other words, if both the Liberal from New Brunswick, Monsieur LeBlanc, who borders up to your riding, and Mr. Godin, who represents the NDP, all agree with your objections, I think frankly that's a pretty good testament that what you're recommending is probably the route to go.

The only question I have is why the commission would suggest the changes they have. Is it merely, in your opinion, that they wanted to try to get the population quotient?

Mr. Robert Goguen: That's the only rationale I can come to. It was to come as close as possible to the quotient. Beyond that, if you look at effectiveness of representation and at community interest, those two factors override the numbers.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Yes.

From my standpoint, Mr. Chair, based on the fact that we have representatives from the other two parties all agreeing with this, I think it's a pretty strong testament right there to the effectiveness of your presentation and the fact that we should probably just recommend it.

The Chair: Thank you. Great.

Madame Latendresse.

[Translation]

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Out of simple curiosity, were these changes made in the first report that the commission produced?

Mr. Robert Goguen: Not at all.

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse: Okay. So that's why you didn't...

Mr. Robert Goguen: No, we didn't deal with it because initially, the entire city of Dieppe was in Beauséjour, and francophone groups expressed their concern. This is the second version.

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse: Perfect.

I want to emphasize that, in this case, we are talking about a gap of 22%. We collected proposals in Alberta or in other provinces with a higher population, where the gap was 10%, but the number of people going from one riding to another was much higher. From the point of view of representation, that has to be taken into account. Even if we're talking about 22% here, only about 6,000 people, according to you, would change ridings...

Mr. Robert Goguen: ... about 6,080.

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse: I think we have to take that into account as well. It remains below the set limit. I don't see any problem, especially if we take Mr. Lukiwski's comments into account. Everyone agrees.

Mr. Robert Goguen: Very well.

Even if the riding next door, that of my colleague, included about 78,000 people, its size is enormous. If there is greater population density, we believe that it's more efficient from the point of view of representation.

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse: Absolutely. We're also taking into account geographic size.

[English]

Mr. Robert Goguen: No meltdown.

[Translation]

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse: Thank you.

Ms. Nycole Turmel: Mr. Chair, could I ask a question?

[English]

The Chair: There's some time.

[Translation]

Ms. Nycole Turmel: Mr. Goguen, did you submit a brief to the commission?

Mr. Robert Goguen: No, not at all.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. LeBlanc.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank my colleague Robert for his presentation. As a courtesy, he discussed it with me before he filed the submission with our committee.

Mr. Chairman, I would suggest, and I hope Robert agrees, that two criteria in the law are effective representation and community of interest. Obviously the population variance is the third. Certainly, if you read the New Brunswick commission report, they very much privileged the arguments of community of interest and effective representation.

That's why, for example, they left our colleague from Miramichi at almost negative 25%, because they thought, in their judgment, that those two factors, in the words of the New Brunswick commission's final report, were more important than a strictly numerical calculation in a province that's largely rural with a number of growing cities, as is the case for Mr. Goguen.

If community of interest is an important criterion, what Mr. Goguen is suggesting makes eminent sense. This is the first time a portion of the city of Moncton has been added to the rural riding I represent. The only possible explanation must be that they wanted to achieve a reasonable parity between our two ridings. The community of interest is so strong. The workplace migrations are so strong; the school boards, the hospital boards, and the social and cultural activities are very much with Mr. Goguen's community of Moncton. I think they can be certainly as effectively represented by Mr. Goguen as they would be if I were their member of Parliament.

I didn't submit a request to appear, so I've just appeared from the committee table. I didn't recuse myself, as Tom did on another matter.

Mr. Chairman, I wanted to put this on the record because I think Robert makes a very commonsensical, eminent argument. The people in those communities told me, when they realized this was the proposal in the second report.... It was not in the first report, as was noted in response to Alexandrine's question. They will be very surprised on election day to realize they're voting with rural communities an hour away by car when the other side of the Trans-Canada Highway is the riding they had always been involved in.

I'm wondering if Mr. Goguen would agree with that very logical argument I've just made.

● (1235)

Mr. Robert Goguen: It's hard to defeat logic. Basically it's precisely that. All the factors have been made. You have a huge riding. It actually probably bolsters your effectiveness of representation to not have to.... So it's a win-win situation.

The Chair: Great.

Are you finished?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Mr. Goguen.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Armstrong.

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): My question is for either one of our witnesses.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I wasn't sworn in like Robert was.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Dominic, where are your offices in your riding?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: It's singular. It's one office in Shediac.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: In Shediac.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: It's a 20- to 25-kilometre run from where these people are, whereas Robert's office would be 15 minutes, three to four kilometres.

Mr. Robert Goguen: Fifteen minutes on a bus, and depending on how you drive, ten minutes.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: But there's no public transit from Moncton to your riding office. It's obvious that just for access to the office and access to the MP for people who are of lesser means, this proposal should be accepted, and we should support that.

Mr. Robert Goguen: To your point, there's Pine Tree mini-home, which has a fairly dense population. It's a mini-home park.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: I think you can see why all three members of Parliament are supporting this, because it makes geographic sense as well. Also, since New Brunswick is the only bilingual province, it also supports the Acadian community. I think we have to always respect that as well, particularly on the east coast, because we have a very diverse, spread-out Acadian population. I think this supports that population. It also supports access to the MP.

I think they've made a good presentation here.

The Chair: Fantastic.

Mr. Reid, what part of New Brunswick are you from? You're up next.

Mr. Scott Reid: Well, I was going to ask questions, but based on what I've seen so far, I'm just going to pontificate about more stuff.

Actually, what I really want to do is ask numerical questions. You've got the status quo in your current riding, and I'm actually addressing Mr. LeBlanc as much as I am Mr. Goguen here. You've got the ridings proposed in the report, which if you were not to raise anything would be what we'd be stuck with, and then finally you've got the proposal, Mr. Goguen, that you've made and, Mr. LeBlanc, that you agree with.

Under each of those three scenarios—maybe Bob we could start with you—can you just give me what your population is now, what the proposal would make it, and what it would be under your changed proposal, just what those three numbers are?

● (1240)

Mr. Robert Goguen: As it stands, it's about 98,000. What's proposed in the second version would be 85,595. By bringing in those nine polls, it would be 91,682.

Mr. Scott Reid: Okay.

Dominic, do you know what it would be for your...?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Sure. It's a good question.

I would just note, colleagues, that Robert's riding currently is well above the 25%.

Mr. Scott Reid: That was what I was going to ask.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: At 98,000 he's well above, and has been probably since the year after the last commission report. Even with the request to add these 6,000 or so people, it still brings him down from what he is at today and brings him to within the 25% variance.

But to answer your question, Scott, my riding currently is 78,000, the quotient being 75,000. Under the proposal, if Mr. Goguen's suggestions are not accepted, I'm up to 84,000, so I'm plus 9,000 under their proposal now. If Mr. Goguen's suggestions are accepted by the commission, ultimately I would go back to 78,000, still a bit above the quotient.

I would point out—and I think Mr. Goguen and Monsieur Godin would agree—that one of the big growth areas in southeastern New Brunswick is the city of Dieppe, not necessarily this area, although there would be some growth in this area. But as the migrations from northern New Brunswick move into the south, Dieppe would be one of the areas that would grow a lot, half of which would be in my riding as well. So over time I think I would start to creep back up. This change would probably not have a dramatic effect over the next 10 years. It's not the hot spot of growth.

Mr. Robert Goguen: Dieppe is one of the fastest-growing cities in all of Canada.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: And Robert and I split that city, so that will continue to....

Mr. Scott Reid: Thank you.

The Chair: Those are all the questions I have and all the speakers I have on my list. I think you've done a great job, all three members. Thank you.

I thank my colleagues—and Dominic also—for helping us with this. I think we've heard from New Brunswick today.

Do we need to go in camera to give direction to our analysts on this report?

Some hon. members: Yes.

The Chair: All right. We'll suspend for a few minutes and go in camera.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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