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—
Chair

Mr. Joe Preston

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• (1100)

[English]

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

We're still on federal electoral boundaries for the province of Quebec. We have witnesses today. Welcome.

Mr. Dion, you wanted to have a moment of time before we started today, though.

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I just want to inform my colleagues at the committee that I distance myself from any discussion, debate, report redaction, and so on, regarding the boundary issues on the island of Montreal. There's no problem with names, nominations, and so on, but there is a problem with anything that is linked to boundary issues. I need to do so because my riding is at stake.

My colleague Dominic LeBlanc will replace me in any discussion we have about the island of Montreal boundaries.

The Chair: Super. Thank you, Monsieur Dion.

All right, let's go to witnesses.

Witnesses, you'll each get five minutes to plead your case, and then we'll ask you really hard questions. It'll give you a feeling for what it's like to have a witness at the end of the table during committee meetings.

Madame Raynault, would you like to start for us, please, for five minutes.

[Translation]

Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP): Mr. Chair, eminent colleagues and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of the Communauté Atikamekw de Manawan, the residents of which have asked me to do everything in my power to challenge the redistribution proposed on February 26. Since time is limited, allow me right off the bat to summarize the reasons for this challenge.

First, the announcement that Manawan would be removed from the electoral district of Joliette, was a shock to the Atikamekw community. The council and residents immediately mobilized. We therefore have with us a unanimous resolution by the Conseil des Atikamekw de Manawan and a petition signed by 600 residents who want to keep Manawan in Joliette. Those 600 signatures represent more than 50% of adults on the Manawan electoral list. This petition makes ours the most significant challenge in Canada in 2013. Apart

from this mobilization effort, however, there are good reasons to reject the proposed redistribution.

Joliette is the closest urban centre to Manawan and the location of the Centre d'amitié autochtone de Lanaudière, which serves some 50 aboriginal families living in an urban setting. Joliette is also where Manawan residents go to do most of their shopping, to go to school off reserve and so on. Highway 131, which crosses my riding from north to south, is the only link between Manawan and the Joliette urban area. It is also the road the Atikamekw must use to reach the electoral district of Saint-Maurice—Champlain, the urban centres of which are much farther away than Joliette.

If the proposed redistribution were implemented, the Atikamekw would definitely continue going to Joliette as they do now but would not have a federal political link with that territory, which is also their own. Furthermore, as a result of the challenge, we learned that community relations between Joliette and Manawan will grow in coming years. The Commission scolaire des Samares recently began a process of cooperation with Manawan's educational services to promote the inclusion of Atikamekw youth who go to school off reserve. There are currently 45 Atikamekw students at the primary level of the Commission scolaire des Samares and 15 at the secondary level. Logically, Atikamekw secondary enrolment will triple over the next few years.

In addition, among the some 50 Atikamekw families settled in Joliette, there is a majority of young people aged 20 to 29 and, even more so, a majority of women. The demographic changes and births that may be anticipated will only expand the Atikamekw presence to and in Joliette, since the Atikamekw are also settling in the countryside around the city. The confirmed demographic boom in all first nations is being observed in all areas in Manawan, and relations with Joliette will only increase.

This situation is developing together with an increasing openness by the Atikamekw toward non-aboriginals, as may be seen in the efforts of the school board and the development of Tourisme Manawan, for example.

Lastly, we would have liked to challenge this redistribution earlier, but the loss of Manawan was not made public until the commission members' report was tabled on February 26. Other parts of my riding were subject to changes, and residents were able to speak before the commission, which listened to them.

Today I am simply asking you to allow the commission members to review their decision based on the arguments compiled in our report, the people's will expressed in the petition and the resolution of the Conseil des Atikamekw de Manawan.

For that reason, I ask you as well to let the commission members analyze our request. I am convinced that they will accommodate the Atikamekw's wishes and accept the many reasons for leaving Manawan in Joliette.

Thank you.

• (1105)

[English]

The Chair: Merci.

Madame Quach, please.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair, for this opportunity to speak to the commission's proposals.

In fact, my only demand concerns the proposed name of "Salaberry", which would cover a portion of the existing electoral districts of Vaudreuil-Soulanges and Beauharnois—Salaberry.

Many people do not feel represented at all by the name that has been selected. A consensus emerged around the name "Suroît" at the public hearings on October 23. That name is already being used and is much more inclusive. It is being used by the Office du tourisme du Suroît, which already covers the RCMs of Vaudreuil-Soulanges, Beauharnois-Salaberry and Haut-Saint-Laurent. There is really a consensus on that name.

If you want to select another name, there is a lesser consensus on a second name, Salaberry-Soulanges, although it was accepted by all the residents who took part in the hearings on October 23, 2012.

We do not know the origin of the name "Salaberry", which was not discussed at the preliminary hearings. That is why I am testifying in committee today.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Monsieur Nicholls.

[Translation]

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I also want to testify to submit a proposed name change for the electoral district of Vaudreuil-Soulanges. We would like to suggest the name "Vaudreuil—Soulanges-Est".

The name "Soulanges" is a heritage name in the province of Quebec. It is the name of a seigniory that dates back to New France and that was named in honour of Pierre-Jacques de Joybert de Soulanges et de Marson.

Historically, the communities that lived in the territory of Soulanges were those of Saint-Clet, Coteau-du-Lac, Les Cèdres and Pointe-des-Cascades. As the new electoral district of Vaudreuil includes the municipalities of Les Cèdres and Pointe-des-Cascades, which historically constitute the eastern part of the seigneurie of Soulanges, I would like to propose the name Vaudreuil—Soulanges-Est.

I also propose another minor change, that three municipalities be grouped together in the new electoral district of Vaudreuil, which we propose should be named Vaudreuil—Soulanges-Est. They are the municipalities of Sainte-Justine-de-Newton, Très-Saint-Rédempteur and Sainte-Marthe.

The reason why we want to include these three communities north of the electoral district is that they are hard to reach by Highway 20. It would be very difficult for the member for Salaberry to travel to the north of the riding in winter road conditions.

In addition, Mont Rigaud is an important geographic entity in the territory. The communities of Très-Saint-Rédempteur and Sainte-Marthe are part of Mont Rigaud. I would like to retain that geographic entity and the communities around Mont Rigaud. They have a considerable common interest in keeping the mountain. In addition, Sainte-Justine-de-Newton is not part of the historical seigneurie of Vaudreuil or that of Soulanges. It is a township that was established under the British regime.

Since the population of the municipality of Sainte-Justine-de-Newton has very strong ties to those of the municipalities of Très-Saint-Rédempteur and Sainte-Marthe, and they often hold joint events, we propose that those three municipalities be kept together as part of the new electoral district of Vaudreuil—Soulanges-Est. This is a very minor change. Altogether, it represents fewer than 3,000 residents and even fewer electors. I therefore do not believe this will cause a serious problem regarding the variance from the number of electors.

That in short is what I wanted to present. I know that my electors were very disappointed to lose the historical name of Soulanges. We would like to keep it in the name of the electoral district of Salaberry or Vaudreuil and, in an ideal world, in both ridings.

The purpose of my proposal is thus to have a new riding name, that of Vaudreuil—Soulanges-Est.

• (1110)

[English]

The Chair: Merci.

We'll go to questions from members.

Mr. Reid, for five minutes, please.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): It's going to be a challenge, given the number of witnesses.

The Chair: I'll be flexible.

Mr. Scott Reid: No, just in getting everybody through. I'll try to be brief, actually.

[Translation]

My questions are for Ms. Raynault.

I believe the population of the Manawan reserve is 2,500 inhabitants. Is that correct?

Ms. Francine Raynault: Yes, it is 2,500 inhabitants.

Mr. Scott Reid: I have the current map of your electoral district. It indicates that Manawan is surrounded by a municipality called Baie-Atibenne.

Ms. Francine Raynault: Yes, but it is farther north than Manawan.

Mr. Scott Reid: It is bigger, but I believe it surrounds Manawan.

Ms. Francine Raynault: It is a sector where there are a lot of lakes and rivers.

Mr. Scott Reid: Yes.

If Manawan returns to your electoral district of Joliette, I believe it will be necessary to give Baie-Atibenne back to your riding as well. What is the population of Baie-Atibenne?

Ms. Francine Raynault: About 100 inhabitants. Virtually no one lives in that sector.

Mr. Scott Reid: So the population concerned is not very large.

Ms. Francine Raynault: No.

Mr. Scott Reid: I understand.

I believe that the other municipality there, Baie-Obaoca, will be in the new electoral district. I do not know its name. It is Shawinigan or Saint-Maurice. Is that correct?

• (1115)

Ms. Francine Raynault: Perhaps it is the electoral district of Saint-Maurice—Champlain. I do not know.

Mr. Scott Reid: Thank you.

Ms. Francine Raynault: As I said earlier, when we received the commission members' report on February 26, it concerned only Manawan. There was never any mention of these very sparsely populated places.

Mr. Scott Reid: What is the population of the two electoral districts, the ridings of Saint-Maurice—Champlain and Joliette?

Ms. Francine Raynault: The populations of the two ridings are similar. There is not much difference between the two.

Mr. Scott Reid: All right.

Ms. Francine Raynault: We propose that the district of Joliette retain Manawan. In fact, with your permission, I would like to say that I am here because I am the spokesperson for the Atikamekw since I am their member. They could not be here since that is not possible in the circumstances. However, I want to say that they really want to stay in the electoral district of Joliette.

Mr. Scott Reid: Yes. Their intentions are very clearly stated in their letter.

Ms. Francine Raynault: Yes.

Mr. Scott Reid: The other question is for Mr. Nicholls. It is a question about history.

Were there previously only two seigneuries in your region, between the two waterways, south of the Ottawa River and north of the St. Lawrence River?

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: There were three seigneuries: the seigneurie of Vaudreuil, the seigneurie of Soulanges and the seigneurie of Nouvelle-Longueuil.

Mr. Scott Reid: Did you say "seigneurie of Nouvelle-Longueuil"?

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: Yes, under the proposal, the seigneurie of Nouvelle-Longueuil is currently attached to Salaberry, but we do not want to promote the name Longueuil because that would cause some

confusion with the city of Longueuil, which is situated a little further to the east.

However, Mr. Reid, I can say that my fellow citizens are very much aware of the territory's history and heritage and its names and symbols are important to them. They wanted to change nothing. They wanted to retain the status quo and for Vaudreuil—Soulanges to remain intact. However, since the commission in Quebec City has parameters, we must take them into account. We have proposals and minor changes to suggest.

Mr. Scott Reid: I understand that. The same was true in my riding 10 years ago when we proposed a name change. It did not reflect the names of Frontenac or Lennox and Addington, which were very important to the residents of those regions.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: I would like to add that people consider it strange that only one community south of the Ottawa River is included in Quebec. That is my territory, my electoral district. And that is because of the very large number of francophones who were living there when the decision was made concerning Lower Canada and Upper Canada. The decision was made to include that region in Quebec as a result of the many francophones in the area.

That is the only part south of the Ottawa River that belongs to Quebec. I consider that quite unusual.

Mr. Scott Reid: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Reid.

Madame Turmel.

[Translation]

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

My first question is for Ms. Raynault. It concerns consultation and the way the electoral district is drawn.

The new electoral district does not include Manawan. I am somewhat familiar with the region. I see that it mainly consists of forest. Can you tell me the names of the members for the neighbouring ridings and whether they were consulted before this change was made?

Ms. Francine Raynault: Yes, I spoke with Ms. Lise St-Denis about the situation. She told me she would not challenge the decision. She also agreed that Manawan should remain part of the electoral district of Joliette. Of the 1,108 electors in Manawan, 600 signed the petition, and Ms. St-Denis told me she would respect the people's decision.

• (1120)

Ms. Nycole Turmel: My second question concerns the first consultation that was held. You told us the question was never raised, even though you made your presentation to the commission.

Ms. Francine Raynault: That is correct, Ms. Turmel. When I appeared before the commission last October, there was no indication that Manawan would be transferred to another electoral district.

Ms. Nycole Turmel: All right.

Mr. Nicholls, with regard to the three municipalities that you mentioned and that you would like to see transferred back to your riding, can you show them to us on the map? I am trying to find them.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: We see them here.

Ms. Nycole Turmel: To what other electoral district were those three municipalities transferred?

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: They are now in Ms. Quach's riding.

Ms. Nycole Turmel: I see. And she would have no objection to them being transferred back to your riding?

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: No.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: We consulted each other and organized public consultations together. That was not challenged by Ms. Quach.

Since those municipalities are not very accessible via Highway 20 in winter and lie to the northwest of Ms. Quach's riding, we think it makes more sense for them to be included in the electoral district of Vaudreuil than that of Salaberry. It is also because the riding office is located in Saint-Lazare, the neighbouring town to Sainte-Marthe. So it is much easier for the people from Sainte-Marthe, Très-Saint-Rédempteur and Sainte-Justine-de-Newton to travel to the Saint-Lazare office than to Ms. Quach's office in Valleyfield.

Ms. Nycole Turmel: Ms. Quach, you mentioned that you were opposed to the name recommended by the commission, but do you have a preference in that regard?

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: In fact, people agreed on the names "Suroît" or "Salaberry—Soulanges".

Ms. Nycole Turmel: All right.

[English]

The Chair: Merci.

Monsieur Dion, for five minutes.

[Translation]

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Greetings to my three colleagues.

First of all, Ms. Raynault, can you repeat for the committee what other electoral districts would be affected by the change you propose?

Ms. Francine Raynault: No other riding would be affected. The electoral district of Joliette is affected because it was proposed that Manawan be transferred to the riding of Saint-Maurice—Champlain.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: So it is the electoral district of Saint-Maurice—Champlain.

Ms. Francine Raynault: Yes.

As I said earlier, that is the only electoral district affected. It is the only place where changes were made without consultation.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: So there are two electoral districts, Joliette and Saint-Maurice—Champlain.

Ms. Francine Raynault: Yes.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Do you have the other member's consent?

Ms. Francine Raynault: Yes, I spoke to Ms. St-Denis. She said that she would not challenge this change and that she accepted it.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: That is perfect.

As you said, this does not involve a major demographic change.

Ms. Francine Raynault: That is correct. Let us say that it does not really affect the number of people in each of the ridings.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: You also have strong popular support.

Ms. Francine Raynault: That is true.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: You have a very long petition.

• (1125)

Ms. Francine Raynault: Yes, and it was signed in two days.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: That was good work.

It was not proposed to the commission because it came as a surprise to you. Is that correct?

Ms. Francine Raynault: Absolutely. In fact, if it had been proposed at the first hearing, people would probably have submitted a brief as did those from the other municipalities.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: That is perfect. Thank you.

Ms. Quach, may I suggest a name?

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Yes.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: I would really be upset if the name Salaberry were removed, particularly since the government has just celebrated 1812 with great fanfare. It may have done it in an awkward way, but it is true that this was an important time and that Salaberry is a major figure in our history.

Have you considered the name "Salaberry—Suroît"?

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: No, we had not thought of that.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: That is my recommendation.

In fact, I do not understand why you would give it the name "Soulanges" since your colleague wants it as well.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: In fact, that is what was proposed by the people of both ridings.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: A choice has to be made. We could not have the name "Soulanges" twice because people would go and vote in the wrong place. I would prefer to avoid that kind of confusion. My suggestion is "Salaberry—Suroît".

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: In fact, my colleague from Vaudreuil—Soulanges proposes "Vaudreuil—Soulanges—Est". So that would probably be "Suroît—Soulanges—Ouest" or "Salaberry—Soulanges—Ouest". However, we would have to represent the will of the people who introduced resolutions.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: All right, but I would prefer that the word "Soulanges" not be used twice, even if the words "est" or "ouest" were added. I would like to avoid that. However, if you think this is an important point, I will understand, but I do not think that is the case. We generally avoid having two adjacent electoral districts that bear the same name, except in the case of a large urban area such as Calgary Centre-North or Calgary West.

Mr. Nicholls, was the proposal you are making to us presented to the commission? In fact, I am surprised that it was not made as part of your own submission to this committee.

I am talking about the three municipalities, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: It can be seen from the record of the public consultations that I spoke firmly in favour of the status quo. We saw the changes proposed in the commission's report. I did not send the proposal to repatriate those three municipalities to the commission, but I did submit the request to the commission following the consultations.

It is difficult to decide which municipalities should remain in the riding I currently represent. It was really while musing during snow storms and winter activities that I realized those three municipalities truly belonged to the electoral district of Vaudreuil—Soulanges.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: You thought about the subject, but did you get popular support? Did a lot of people speak out in Vaudreuil—Soulanges?

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: The mayor of Sainte-Justine-de-Newton was one of the loudest voices among those who wanted to keep the name Soulanges and to maintain the status quo. The cities, particularly the village cores in those three municipalities, are something separate. People in the rural areas try to create village cores separate from the other cities in the south of the riding. They have a sense of belonging, especially to the municipality of Rigaud and Mont Rigaud. That is why we would like to include them in the electoral district of Vaudreuil—Soulanges, .

Does that answer your question?

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Yes, thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Monsieur Aubin, really quickly; we have about a minute left.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): I have two or three brief questions. The first is for Ms. Raynault.

I understood from your presentation that there is massive support from the Atikamekw community. Is that support reflected in the general community of Joliette, ? Does it want to retain that part of the territory?

Ms. Francine Raynault: Yes. I often spoke with people and told them that Manawan could be another electoral district. They prefer that it remain part of the riding of Joliette. Some 50 families live in Joliette. Children come to Joliette. We are used to seeing them in the community. They have a friendship centre and go to the hospital in Joliette. The Joliette community is definitely ready to keep them.

• (1130)

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you.

I have a brief question for Mr. Nicholls.

Would repatriating those three cities to your riding enhance the cohesiveness of the RCMs in any way?

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: I think so. The RCM of Vaudreuil—Soulanges would like to keep the 23 municipalities under the same

roof. The commission's new proposal includes two new municipalities that were not previously there: Les Cèdres and Pointe-des-Cascades. Transferring three other municipalities back would be a good thing, according to the RCM of Vaudreuil—Soulanges.

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you.

I have finished.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you to our witnesses for coming today. Thank you for your presentations and for the information you have sent us.

We'll suspend for a minute while we change panels.

• (1130)

(Pause)

• (1130)

The Chair: I'll call members back to order.

We have new guests.

Madame Mourani, it's great to have you here today. Monsieur Dion, it's great to have you at the end of the table today.

Let's get started. Madame Mourani, are you prepared to go first?

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Well, no....

The Chair: Okay, Monsieur Dion.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: I would suggest Madame Mourani go first because there are few objections.

The Chair: Okay, there you go. We're...[Inaudible—Editor]...the commission.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Was that your whole five minutes, Monsieur Dion? Madame Mourani, would you like to proceed?

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I am going to use my documents to make my presentation.

First of all, I would like to thank all of you for welcoming me and for agreeing to hear the voice of the people of Ahuntsic. The boundaries recently proposed by the commission came as a big surprise to the people of Ahuntsic. Local elected representatives, who are directly concerned, and the citizens of Ahuntsic reacted strongly.

In our view, this is a sociological, historical and human aberration. As presented, the proposal breaks up our community and strips it of its political weight. When I say our community, I mean of course the community of Ahuntsic. This redistribution has caused a great deal of anger.

Let us talk about the history of Ahuntsic ward. I would like to show you some maps and to present Ahuntsic ward to you. Look at the one on your left, Mr. Chair. It is Ahuntsic ward. It does not include the Bordeaux section.

Historically, Ahuntsic ward developed from Sault-au-Récollet. In 1615, Father Joseph Le Caron and Samuel de Champlain stopped at the Rivière des Prairies, took the aboriginal portage trail and celebrated the first mass on Montreal Island. In 1625, we see the Recollet Nicolas Viel, a French missionary, and his Ahuntsic companion, a young Frenchman, who drowned in the river. That place, this part, bore the name Sault-au-Récollet. This is the village of Ahuntsic. This municipality was founded in 1897 based on the parish of Sault-au-Récollet.

So you will understand why a municipal councillor there reacted sharply and sent you a letter, Mr. Chair, in which he railed against the fact that Sault-au-Récollet had completely disappeared from Ahuntsic. It was completely torn away from Ahuntsic and transferred to the electoral district of Bourassa. I will read you a sentence on the subject: "Furthermore, the proposal that you are making to change the boundaries of the electoral district of Ahuntsic would add insult to injury." Why did he write that? Because a very small part of Sault-au-Récollet is currently part of the riding of Bourassa. People would have expected it to be transferred back to the electoral district of Ahuntsic instead. You also have a letter from Quebec's minister of immigration and cultural communities and member for Crémazie, explaining to you as well that she objects to the redistribution and advancing numerous arguments, including historical arguments.

The map of Ahuntsic ward is currently used by the United Way, which of course acknowledges the actual communities in the territories. Our Solidarité Ahuntsic issue table is a major association in our ward involving hundreds of members, community organizations, institutions and citizens of Ahuntsic who are also opposed to this redistribution. I will cite a sentence on this point from their letter: "And without any exaggeration on our part, we run the risk of striking our community from the map."

Let us get straight to the point. The major problem with this redistribution as it concerns Ahuntsic, the heart of the matter, if you will, is that the commission has chosen to give special treatment to the electoral district of Saint-Laurent to the detriment of Ahuntsic, a rare and unusual case, as the commission confirms in its report. It says this, and I quote: "...note that the Saint-Laurent electoral district, on the Island of Montréal, received special treatment...."

The commission knows perfectly well that the electoral district of Saint-Laurent, as redistributed, has a smaller population than the average population of all the electoral districts. It justifies its decision on the ground that there will be future demographic growth there. It bases its analysis on data from the electoral district of Saint-Laurent and does not take into account those from Ahuntsic. It is making a bet and engaging in speculation.

● (1135)

However, I have received a letter from the Corporation de développement économique communautaire Ahuntsic-Cartierville, which argues that Ahuntsic is currently undergoing a demographic boom. It provides a non-exhaustive list of residential projects being considered or implemented and adds that that list does not include the floor space of commercial buildings that we have in the Chabanel area. An area of 13 million square feet is still under pressure for residential development. For example, we have 125 Chabanel, which

will soon be welcoming more than 250 residents. Consequently, we can easily estimate the number of new households in five years at more than 2,000.

Mr. Chair, today we are making the same request as we made to the commission. Since no new electoral district has been added to Montreal, I ask that we simply maintain the status quo for Ahuntsic.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

● (1140)

The Chair: Thank you.

[*English*]

Monsieur Dion, would you like to add something?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The first thing I would like to say is that we are very pleased that the commission has listened to Quebeckers. Its first proposal caused a lot of problems. Its second is very well received.

The requests being made are generally for minor adjustments or name changes. On the Island of Montreal, there have been no challenges from any members whatever, and everyone is satisfied, with the honourable exception of our colleague from Ahuntsic. As you will see, the changes requested are only name changes. I share in that satisfaction. It was a genuine feat to bring together all the members from the Island of Montreal, except one, and the commission did it.

In the brief I submitted to you, I cite examples showing why the commission's proposal improves the situation on the Island of Montreal relative to the status quo. In many cases, it reunites communities that were divided. In other cases, it creates divisions that make more sense, that are more logical. So it is really an improvement. We should definitely not return to the status quo.

As for my riding, Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, I would have liked to keep Saint-Laurent and Cartierville together. I am honoured to be the member for those two very distinct communities. That will not impress my colleagues who come from more rural areas and must deal with some 40 communities, but I have two. Having had to fight for a sports centre in Saint-Laurent, we could not tell the people of Cartierville that they should just go to the one in Saint-Laurent; they would not have accepted that. We had to fight to get one in Cartierville. So these are two very different communities.

However, what happened is that Saint-Laurent has experienced outstanding demographic growth. Every place experiences demographic growth, but no place on the Island of Montreal has had growth comparable to that of Saint-Laurent. In 10 years, the number of inhabitants increased 17% from 77,381 to 93,842. Today that makes my riding, which now has 117,950 residents, the most highly populated on the Island of Montreal. It exceeds the provincial quota of some 101,300 by 16%.

So I did not appear before the commission to request the status quo; the effort would have been wasted. The commission was very clear: it did not want to exceed a variance of plus or minus 10%. When it made exceptions, it could not be in urban areas. They were very clear about urban areas: they wanted to keep the variance within 10%. My colleagues will understand that that is entirely reasonable since it is what the commissions of the other provinces have done. In fact, the target for those of Manitoba and Alberta was to keep variances within 5%, not 10%, for all of Manitoba and Alberta, an objective that they essentially achieved.

Consequently, it was unrealistic to request a positive variance of 16% for the Island of Montreal. No one should suggest that Cartierville should stay in Saint-Laurent; the commission will say no. With a heavy heart, I must give up Cartierville, which represents 24,000 residents. The logic that the commission has followed is to include them in Ahuntsic, since those people are already together from a municipal standpoint. Cartierville, Bordeaux and Ahuntsic together form a borough. So that is what will be done.

As regards the demographic variances, Saint-Laurent has roughly 94,000 inhabitants, which corresponds to a variance of -7% from the established quota, but it is experiencing strong growth. I repeat: growth is ongoing, and 2,000 inhabitants are being added every year. The cranes are there. This is not a project that is being challenged because of excessive densification or anything, as we see elsewhere, including in Ahuntsic. The cranes are there; building is under way. All of Bois-Franc is under construction, as the mayor has confirmed. And if the commission concludes that the growth in Saint-Laurent is exceptional, then believe me it has done its job.

I believe my five minutes are up. I would also simply like to say that the proposal to cut Papineau makes a great deal of sense. This is a major division of that place. No serious opposition is mobilizing against that idea; I would challenge that statement.

• (1145)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Reid, go ahead for five minutes, please.

[Translation]

Mr. Scott Reid: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Mourani, I believe you said that 5,000 residential units are being built in your riding. Are those units situated within the current or projected boundaries?

Mrs. Maria Mourani: They are located within the current boundaries. I will give you a few examples.

Approximately 900 units are planned for Henri-Bourassa Boulevard West. So that is in the present riding, as we know it. We are talking about 500 units for Meilleur and Sauvé streets and 69 units for Saint-Laurent Boulevard and Fleury Street. There will be 600 units on De l'Acadie Boulevard, in Bordeaux, which is part of the present electoral district of Ahuntsic. We are also talking about 418 units for Crémazie Boulevard and Legendre Street. We also have the Louvain site, which is being developed and is an immense site that used to belong to the city.

We also have one of the largest sectors, on Chabanel Street, which has 13 million square feet. There will be increasing residential development there because, as you know, all previous development was related to the textile industry, which is unfortunately in sharp decline. There are increasing attempts to transform all those large buildings into residences. For example, more than 250 residents will be arriving very soon at 125 Chabanel Street West. The Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation, or CEDEC, estimates that approximately 2,000 new households will settle there over the next five years. However, I think there will be many more than that.

Mr. Scott Reid: So population growth is being projected. Based on the projected boundaries, there will be 110,000 residents in your riding.

Mr. Dion, the population of your riding, based on the projected boundaries, would be 94,000 residents. I believe that population will increase as well.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: In fact, the current population is larger because those are figures from 2011. There are already nearly 95,000 residents and there will probably be 101,000 at the time of the 2015 election.

Mr. Scott Reid: How many will there be?

Hon. Stéphane Dion: There will be approximately 101,000 residents, according to the projections, at the time of the 2015 election. You must understand that these are not projects like what we have just heard about. These are things that are being built. The cranes are there, the houses are built and people are constantly moving into them.

Mr. Scott Reid: What are the rules that the commission members must follow? Is it acceptable to consider the current population compared to the population projected for 2015 in that electoral district?

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Yes.

Based on the populations, we are currently within the limits. We are at -7% of the provincial quota. That is nothing exceptional. The commission is not trying to justify its decision. I do not expect it to remain the least populated electoral district on the Island of Montreal for a very long time. At the time of the election, we will already be above the provincial quota. That does not mean that no construction is going on elsewhere, but there is nothing as extensive as what has been built in Saint-Laurent over the past 10 years and what is coming in the next few years.

So we are talking about more than 7,000 units that are under construction as we speak. There are projects elsewhere, of course, and, in many cases, they are being challenged. Many of the projects on the list we just heard are being challenged, including by the federal member. There are no challenges in my riding. Things are moving forward and families are arriving every month.

Mr. Scott Reid: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Madame Turmel, go ahead for five minutes.

[Translation]

Ms. Nycole Turmel: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Mourani, I would like to have a little more information on what happened between the first presentation and the second. You say that you made a presentation the first time and that you are still not satisfied after receiving the second report. Mr. Dion, on the other hand, says he is very satisfied.

This riding is having a major impact around it. During this time, have you had any discussions or consultations with other members who will be affected? The entire Island of Montreal will be affected if we return to the status quo. What consultations have you conducted with other members in the Montreal region?

•(1150)

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Ms. Turmel, I am going to be very frank with you.

The ridings around my electoral district are those of my colleague Mr. Dion, that is Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, the electoral district of Bourassa, Mr. Pacetti's riding of Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel and, behind it, the riding of Papineau. As you will see, at the time of the commission's first consultation, I saw very clearly that we did not view the redistribution in the same way. Quite frankly, I did not really consult my colleagues. I knew very well that Mr. Dion and everyone else were satisfied.

Furthermore, this model was not submitted at the time of the first consultation. According to the redistribution that was provided to us, Ahuntsic was divided into four parts and distributed to the ridings of Saint-Laurent, Bourassa, Saint-Michel and a small portion to the riding of Papineau. So it was a very exploded model. In the presentation, we requested the status quo for Montreal as a whole and suggested that no new members be added. I saw at the hearings that everyone and all the parties agreed not to add new members in Montreal. In addition, I very clearly explained the nature of the historic Ahuntsic ward. This is consistent with the principles of the act, that is to say those respecting status, the community of interest, the historical pattern of those ridings and so on.

Lastly, I wind up with this document, in which I see that Ahuntsic has been divided differently again. The historic core of Ahuntsic has been taken and transferred to the riding of Bourassa, and Cartierville has been added to us, thus increasing our population. It is true that the variance in Saint-Laurent is -7%, but it is +9% in Ahuntsic, with all the developments that have just been added.

What do you want me to tell you? Yes, it is true?

Ms. Nycole Turmel: However, according to your presentation if I am correct in my understanding, if we return to the status quo for Montreal—the commission was established because the government at the time did not want the status quo—would that have an impact on the rest of the province?

Mrs. Maria Mourani: I may be mistaken, but I understood at the commission's hearings that no one wanted to add other electoral districts to Montreal and that people wanted the status quo. I was even contacted by an assistant from your party, who told me that your party shared the view that no members should be added to Montreal because there were enough and that it wanted the situation to stay that way. I may have missed something, but I understood that no one wanted to add more members to Montreal and that people wanted to maintain the status quo. Now I see that there are no additions to Montreal. Why overturn all that?

When I look at all that, I am quite willing to believe my colleague when he says that, in his opinion, there has been no outcry in Ahuntsic. That perhaps is what he hears in Cartierville and Saint-Laurent. It should not be forgotten, however, that the federal electoral district of Ahuntsic includes part of Bordeaux and that this has not caused a reaction by the population there. Bordeaux is used to being attached to Ahuntsic and Saint-Laurent. It is another community of life.

However, it has caused enormous reaction among the citizens and local elected representatives of Ahuntsic ward.

Ms. Nycole Turmel: If my understanding is correct, there have been no discussions or consultations with other members, and yet Mr. Dion said precisely the contrary of what you are saying about the redistribution.

Mr. Dion, I assume you also consulted your Liberal Party colleagues.

•(1155)

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Absolutely, but I also consulted my colleagues from your party. Everyone agrees. People made suggestions to the committee. That is what I did as well. I anticipated the reaction of my colleague Ms. Mourani. That is why I am testifying in committee.

I would prefer the status quo. I will be happy if she wins and I am given Cartierville. I love Cartierville, but a margin of +16% means that will not happen. Ms. Mourani is proposing something unrealistic. Cartierville cannot be left in Saint-Laurent. That will not be accepted.

In this case, I do not want Cartierville to be fragmented. It must be put together with Ahuntsic. If I am asked the question later on, I will say that Cartierville must be given to an electoral district that will be completely functional and that will function very well. A division in Papineau makes sense. I would not give Cartierville to a riding if I considered that abnormal. This is a riding that will function well.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. LeBlanc, you have five minutes and then we'll finish up.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[Translation]

I want to thank Mr. Dion and Ms. Mourani. We have quite an obvious contradiction before us. There are two quite different viewpoints.

My question is for Mr. Dion.

Earlier you said that we could ask you a question on the future of Cartierville and on integration with the new electoral district. I am therefore asking that question right now in order to give you the opportunity to answer it. However, before concluding this discussion, do you have any reaction to Ms. Mourani's comments? Is there anything you would like to add to what she proposes in the few minutes we have left?

Hon. Stéphane Dion: I believe my colleague and neighbour mentioned three aspects, including matters pertaining to residential construction. I answered that nothing compared to Saint-Laurent.

She also talked about the public reaction. I maintain that there was no outcry anywhere. We are talking about transferring 9,400 residents, but worse things could happen. There is also the history, to which I will return.

I admit to you that I am very sad to lose Cartierville. The commission is transferring that territory to an electoral district that makes sense. It is better there than in the current riding for various reasons.

First, the borough of Ahuntsic-Cartierville is currently divided into three electoral districts: Bourassa, Saint-Laurent—Cartierville and Ahuntsic. It will now be divided into only two. And one municipal councillor said that dividing it in two was better than dividing it into three. The mayor has said nothing on the matter. He has not reacted strongly.

Second, the division in the east between the new electoral district of Ahuntsic—Cartierville and that of Bourassa is much better for people than what we currently have because it is along the enormous Papineau Avenue, which has five traffic lanes, two parking lanes and a median. It is complicated. Bruchési Avenue, which is the current boundary, is a one-way street indistinguishable from the others.

Third, there is a good population balance among the three former cities. Consequently, that will work well between Bordeaux, Cartierville and Ahuntsic.

Fourth, the weight of the people from Sault-au-Récollet, who will wind up in Bourassa, will be greater. They will represent 16% of the population rather than 7% as is currently the case. The member for Bourassa will therefore have to deal with this riding.

People are really not concerned about the historical reason. I have documentation showing that Sault-au-Récollet is not Ahuntsic. In fact, Ahuntsic joined the City of Montreal in 1910 and Sault-au-Récollet in 1915 but was already divided in two between Montréal-Nord and the City of Montreal.

There were barely 1,000 residents in each of those villages at the time. That is why there has been no outcry about this. People are much more concerned about the reality of today, with the enormous Papineau Avenue crossing Montreal Island at that location, than those historical considerations. They are interesting, but they can be read differently. Some local historians show that Sault-au-Récollet is not the village of Ahuntsic. They are two different villages.

I moreover have a map that can demonstrate that. It is the official map of Montreal. It is printed in small letters and even I cannot read it. If you look more to the right, the darker portion is Sault-au-Récollet, with the part that is currently in Bourassa. The other part is currently in Ahuntsic and it would be cut off at Papineau. That means that part of Sault-au-Récollet would be in Bourassa and another part in Ahuntsic. It is already divided today and will be divided differently and in a more logical way for people.

• (1200)

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

[English]

The Chair: Thank you. That finishes this panel.

We'll suspend for a moment.

Mr. Scott Reid: Can we just keep that up for a second, please?

The Chair: Yes.

Put that back up for Mr. Reid, if you would, please, just for a second.

Is it okay if I suspend while you're looking at it?

Mr. Scott Reid: Yes.

The Chair: I'll suspend for a minute while you're looking at it.

Thank you very much for coming today.

• (1200)

(Pause)

• (1200)

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll call the meeting back to order.

We have another great panel of colleagues with us today.

Mr. Toone has spent some time with us at this committee so he knows how much fun we have here. We also have Mr. Fortin and Mr. Caron. Thank you all for coming.

I understand your presentations today are simply name changes. Although I'll give you five minutes each, if you could try to do it in less than that it would be appreciated and if we have any short questions we'll quickly ask them.

Mr. Caron, do you want to go first?

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): I want to thank the committee members.

The request before you concerns only a name change. I have prepared a document that has been distributed to you.

The electoral district of Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques will not change. We are obviously very satisfied with that. However, it is proposed in both the first and second reports that the name be Rimouski, which is a problem given the historical and cultural aspects of the riding. It is a very large riding including the three RCMs of Rimouski-Neigette, Témiscouata and Les Basques. However, the people of Témiscouata and the RCM of Les Basques identify more, historically and culturally, with Rivière-du-Loup, which is closer to Rimouski.

This name is a problem because, although Rimouski is the largest municipality in the riding, it is also the most remote, situated in the far eastern portion of the district. Five minutes to the east of Rimouski, you leave the riding. Following the second report by the commission members, I consulted with the three wardens of the RCMs, those of Témiscouata, Les Basques and Rimouski-Neigette, and the mayor of Rimouski to determine whether there was some way to find a compromise solution.

The commission members want the names to be geographical, but also shorter than they currently are, and the name Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques is the fourth longest in Canada by a number of letters. After the consultation, we proposed a compromise. The three wardens and the mayor of Rimouski have agreed on the name Centre-du-Bas-Saint-Laurent.

The Bas-Saint-Laurent region consists of eight RCMs, including Rimouski-Neigette, Témiscouata and Les Basques. Three other RCMs lie to the east and two more to the west. We are therefore really situated in the centre of Bas-Saint-Laurent. Consequently, the name is entirely appropriate and, I think, meets the criteria the commission members seem to be using. That is why this name is being suggested.

• (1205)

[English]

The Chair: Excellent.

Monsieur Fortin, would you like to go ahead?

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Good afternoon. I would like to thank the committee members for their work, which is important in the circumstances.

First of all, I would like to recall that one of the four electoral districts in eastern Quebec disappeared when the commission members' first report was tabled. However, we are very pleased to see that the riding has been restored in the second report, particularly since the district that was doomed to disappear was mine. It is all the more interesting to see that the communities' arguments have been heard.

However, there has been an exchange, a slight change between the present situation and the scenario proposed in the second report. In fact, my present electoral district, Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, will lose the RCM of Haute-Gaspésie, which will be transferred to the electoral district of Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine. The RCM of Avignon, which is currently part of the district of Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, will be added to the present electoral district. That district will therefore consist of four RCMs, Avignon, La Mitis, Matane and Matapédia. In the second report, the commission members suggest the name Avignon-Matane. Two of the four RCMs are thus excluded from the present name, Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, which is quite long.

We tried to find a name that could suit the four RCMs, Avignon, La Mitis, Matane and Matapédia. We looked for a name that would have a unifying effect and be consistent with the commission members' wish to shorten the names of electoral districts. As you know, eastern Quebec currently has three electoral districts with the longest names in Canada.

However, no suggestion was made about what might bring those four RCMs together. The reasons are quite clear, particularly the fact that they belong to two different administrative territories, Gaspésie and Bas-Saint-Laurent. That means that the names Bas-Saint-Laurent-Est and Gaspésie-Ouest were not suitable. When we visited all the RCMs, they told us that, of two evils, that is to say the desire

to be recognized by their name and the absence of any uniform character that might unify the four territories, they would choose the lesser.

As you have read in the letter I sent to the clerk, Ms. Renaud, containing all the arguments, following a consultation, it was proposed that the future electoral district be named Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia. Haute-Gaspésie would therefore be dropped from the present name and replaced by that of the new RCM that would be added. This is a conclusion that we reached following consultations with all players, including the RCMs and stakeholders in the field.

Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Monsieur Toone.

[Translation]

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank the committee members for their work and their patience. You have to hear our concerns frequently. I know it may seem long, but we appreciate it. I would also like to acknowledge the commission's work.

As my colleague from the neighbouring riding has said, we asked commission members to preserve an electoral district in Bas-Saint-Laurent, Est du Québec and Gaspésie-les-Îles, and they agreed to that request. I understand that it was a difficult compromise at times. We appreciate the fact that they found a way to preserve the riding of Matane, the full name of which remains to be determined. We are definitely very grateful for the work they have done and we applaud them.

I would like to point out that two RCMs have been particularly affected, including Haute-Gaspésie. According to the warden and some mayors I consulted, people are absolutely delighted to join the electoral district of Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine. I cannot say that people in the RCM of Avignon are delighted, but they accept the compromise. They are grateful that a riding has been preserved. They note and appreciate that fact. Once again, we thank the members of the commission.

As for the name—that is why I am here today, particularly for the people of the Magdalen Islands—following the consultations that were held in the region, people called for the status quo and asked that the name remain "Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine", rather than "Gaspésie-les-Îles", as proposed by the commission. That is mainly because the Magdalen Islands are an isolated and remote region.

With regard to the designation "les-Îles", people do not necessarily understand what region one is talking about. The names of several ridings include the word "Îles". There is Laval-les-Îles, the "Mille-Îles" in the St. Lawrence River and so on. There are many islands in Canada and talking about "Gaspésie-les-Îles" could cause confusion.

The riding's present name is also part of the region's culture. We increasingly try to focus on a single name, "Îles-de-la-Madeleine", for reasons of marketing, knowledge of the region's tourism industry, seafood products and so on. We are trying to agree on a single name, "Îles-de-la-Madeleine". Changing the riding's name could be confusing and raise a barrier to what the people of the region are trying to do, which is to focus on a single name, "Îles-de-la-Madeleine".

According to the criteria with which the commission members are required to work, the name of an electoral district must be amended in the event of a significant change, but the change was frankly not very significant. Of course, the boundaries of two RCMs have changed. There has therefore been a change in that regard. However, there has been no change to the Magdalen Islands, and the people in the region would prefer to retain the name "Îles-de-la-Madeleine" in the name of the riding. The municipality has approved a resolution to that effect.

I submitted a written brief on the subject to you in late March. If you do not have it, I will be pleased to provide you with copies. The arguments set forth in it are more elaborate than what I have just presented to you. To summarize, the idea is to agree on a name and to give Magdalen Islanders the necessary support by choosing the name "Îles-de-la-Madeleine", rather than the familiar version, "Les-Îles".

Thank you for your attention.

• (1210)

[English]

The Chair: Merci.

We have time for some short questions.

Mr. Reid, you have a couple of minutes. Go ahead, please.

[Translation]

Mr. Scott Reid: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My question concerns only the names under consideration.

I find the three proposals that were presented very reasonable. I believe that a very long name is not that bad in itself. For example, "Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia" has 35 characters. There are 25 in "Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine". I am talking about the status quo. "Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques" has 37 characters and "Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington", my riding, has 32.

I would like to add a brief note concerning the Magdalen Islands. At the time of the last redistribution, it was suggested that the name of my electoral district be changed to "Lanark and the Lakes". The people living in the region covered by "the Lakes", that is to say the ridings of Frontenac, Lennox and Addington, were not very happy with the change. That is why I understand the feelings of the people living in the Magdalen Islands.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

[Translation]

Mr. Aubin, you have the floor.

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think the requests are reasonable.

I have a specific question concerning the riding of Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine. Is that name used frequently in other circumstances, in tourism brochures, for example? That would help understand the confusion that might be caused.

• (1215)

Mr. Philip Toone: Federal government authorities use the name "Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine". I am thinking, in particular, of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and Service Canada. The Association touristique régionale des Îles-de-la-Madeleine—there are many ATRs in Quebec—has been asking for years that people focus on the name "Îles-de-la-Madeleine", not on the familiar version, "Les Îles".

The municipality uses "Îles-de-la-Madeleine", as do the federal and provincial governments. This is increasingly how the Magdalen Islands are recognized.

So we would ask the commission, which we will be contacting in the next few days, not to block this emerging consensus. We ask the committee to support that consensus and allow it to expand even further.

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Monsieur Dion, do you have anything on this?

[Translation]

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Yes, I would like to add something very briefly, Mr. Chair.

As mentioned, this is about names. I do not believe this is very controversial. I very much like the idea of keeping the name "Îles-de-la-Madeleine". That way we know what islands we are talking about. There are so many in that area.

Mr. Fortin, the length of the name will no doubt be the only reason why the commission may be reluctant. We always think of the people who have to pronounce the names of members' electoral districts one after another, and the longer the name is, the more complicated it becomes. In fact, that should be an inducement to switch to electronic voting, particularly when there are 338 members. Just imagine.

So if you could remove one of the four names without causing a problem—

Mr. Jean-François Fortin: No.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: No, all four are really necessary?

Mr. Jean-François Fortin: There are really four very distinct RCMs with their own characteristics. So removing one of the four names would cause prejudice, as would not recognizing two of those RCMs in the proposed name Avignon—Matane.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: All right, but you realize that you are very often called the member for Haute-Gaspésie and are given all kinds of other names.

Mr. Jean-François Fortin: The Speakers of the House have learned over time, but sometimes they have to use a short form.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: All right.

On the other hand, Mr. Caron, you are headed in the opposite direction. You are saying that we can shorten the name. You propose that it be the electoral district of Centre-du-Bas-Saint-Laurent. That is very "wardenish". Have you consulted people other than wardens?

It seems to me your riding extends very far. Some communities in your riding find it hard to imagine that they form the centre of that region.

Mr. Guy Caron: In fact, the present situation in eastern Quebec is a bit strange. The electoral district of Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques is surrounded by the ridings of Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup and Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia.

You can clearly see why the commission members wanted to have shorter names. I think there were one or two exceptions in Quebec. However, that was what the commission members wanted, and I understand that they have the final say. Consequently, even the recommendations that the committee may make could be ruled invalid if they are not consistent with the commission members' wishes.

However, unlike my colleague François Lapointe from Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, we have the good fortune to have the three RCMs entirely in Bas-Saint-Laurent. Mr. Fortin's riding overlaps part of Gaspésie, whereas that of Mr. Lapointe overlaps part of Chaudière-Appalaches. So the name "Bas-Saint-Laurent" is entirely appropriate. If we say "Centre-du-Bas-Saint-Laurent", that is just to mention that there are two RCMs, Kamouraska and Rivière-du-Loup, to the west, and three RCMs, La Mitis, Matane and Matapédia, to the east. So the three RCMs are actually at the centre of the Bas-Saint-Laurent region. It is entirely a matter of geography.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Consequently, the people of Matapédia view themselves as being at the centre of the lower St. Lawrence region.

Mr. Guy Caron: No, Matapédia is in the electoral district—

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Pardon me, I meant Neigette or—

Mr. Guy Caron: It is Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: It is Témiscouata.

Mr. Guy Caron: If you look at that riding as a whole, it is at the geographic centre, between north and south, that is to say between the river and the border of New Brunswick.

The territory of Kamouraska is more to the west. When I enter the territory of Matapédia, I drive between an hour and a half and two hours. Geographically speaking, it is correct to say "Centre du Bas-Saint-Laurent".

• (1220)

Hon. Stéphane Dion: The people of your electoral district will not be surprised when they learn that their member proposed that it be "Centre du Bas-Saint-Laurent".

Mr. Guy Caron: We looked at a few options. First of all, there was a conference call with the three wardens of Témiscouata, Les Basques and Rimouski-Neigette. We did not want to take a chance.

We did not want the name to be just Rimouski if we retained the status quo. The concern would be that the commission members would reject the name and we would go back to the name "Rimouski", the solution that is unacceptable to both Témiscouata and Les Basques.

So we did some brainstorming and we considered several possibilities. We looked at "Bas-du-fleuve" and at "Bas-Saint-Laurent", but the latter was unacceptable because it did not embrace all of the lower St. Lawrence. Portions of the region are not part of the electoral district. The most acceptable name for all three RCMs was really "Centre-du-Bas-Laurent". It is geographically accurate. The name "Bas-du-fleuve" is inappropriate for Témiscouata because it has no relationship to the river. Consequently, they did not identify with that name.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Were you interviewed on the radio on the subject? Were there any articles in the newspapers?

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Dion, I'm just trying to stop....

[Translation]

Hon. Stéphane Dion: To what extent are the people aware of your proposal? Were you interviewed on radio? Was the proposal published in the newspapers?

Mr. Guy Caron: I spoke with the wardens of the RCMs, who are the elected or appointed representatives. People were completely satisfied. The population of the three RCMs was extremely pleased to know that the riding would not change. That was the most important point. I worked toward that with Mr. Fortin, Mr. Toone and Mr. Lapointe because it was the priority.

We want the name to be as inclusive as possible. I am aware of the limits the commission members have imposed. That is why I proposed various options to the elected representatives of the three regions, and that is the compromise that is acceptable to all three.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you. All three of you have made very good points on your name changes, and we'll move those forward.

I will suspend just for moment while we switch to another panel.

• (1220)

_____ (Pause) _____

• (1220)

The Chair: We'll get started, please.

It's great to have our colleagues here today. We're trying to get through the rest of our look at the electoral boundaries commission's report for Quebec. We're going to give each of you five minutes, but if you don't need to take that, please don't.

Who would like to go first?

Madame Hassainia.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sana Hassainia (Verchères—Les Patriotes, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before the committee today.

The report of the Electoral Boundaries Commission, which was tabled on February 28, 2013, respects a fundamental principle that I advocated during the public hearings, the principle of not dividing a municipality between two electoral districts. Consequently, I am satisfied with the electoral boundaries of Verchères—Les Patriotes and I thank the commission for taking that into account. However, the changes proposed in the report of February 28 considerably change the profile of the territory. Consequently, I am of the view that the name of the electoral district no longer accurately reflects the territory and its residents.

The new territory of Verchères—Les Patriotes now includes the entire city of Boucherville. Although the residents of Boucherville now make up 40% of the population of the electoral district, I believe that the name of the district should be changed to better reflect its composition and to stimulate Boucherville residents' sense of belonging to our electoral district. I therefore suggest that Pierre Boucher, the name of the founder of Boucherville, be added to the name Verchères—Les Patriotes. It is important for me to emphasize that the name of the electoral district should not be replaced but rather that Pierre Boucher's name should be added to it.

In addition, the names "Verchères" and "des Patriotes" should also be preserved in order to provide adequate representation of the electoral district's various territorial and demographic realities. The name "Pierre Boucher" currently appears on the electoral map in the name of the electoral district of Longueuil—Pierre Boucher, which includes half of Boucherville. However, I believe that completely removing the name of Boucherville's founder from the electoral map would be disrespectful to Boucherville residents. Pierre Boucher is the founder of Boucherville and a major figure in the history of Quebec, more particularly that of Montreal's south shore.

Madeleine de Verchères, the 14-year-old girl who defended the Fort of Verchères alone against Iroquois attacks, is a source of regional pride. Thus, to preserve the sense of belonging of the people of the RCM of Marguerite-D'Youville, the name "Verchères" should also remain. Verchères is also the name of the provincial electoral district whose territory is that of the RCM of Marguerite-D'Youville.

Lastly, it is equally important to retain the words "les Patriotes" in the name of the electoral district in order to represent the people of the RCM of La Vallée-du-Richelieu, many of whom are descendants of the "Patriotes". The battles of the Patriotes are significant events in the history of Quebec, even more so for the people of the RCM of La Vallée-du-Richelieu because the Patriotes' only victory occurred in Saint-Denis-sur-Richelieu, the 175th anniversary of which we have just celebrated.

For all these reasons, I believe that, in light of territorial and historical realities, the most appropriate name for the electoral district would be Boucher—Verchères—Les Patriotes.

Thank you.

● (1225)

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. St-Denis, you have the floor.

Ms. Lise St-Denis (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, Lib.): My remarks also concern a name change.

I simply request that the current name of the electoral district of "Saint-Maurice—Champlain" be preserved. The commission has proposed the name "Saint-Maurice". However, in its 2001 report, the commission proposed to add the name "Champlain" to that of "Saint-Maurice".

Before 2003, there were always two federal electoral districts, one called "Saint-Maurice", the other "Champlain". Saint-Maurice was Mr. Chrétien's riding, but it did not have the same boundaries. At the time, the commission justified adding the name "Champlain" on historical and geographic grounds.

My riding is very large, covering 39,000 square kilometres and 23 municipalities. It is bounded to the west by the Saint-Maurice River, which runs from the north to the south of the riding. The name "Saint-Maurice" is being proposed on that basis. However, an entire portion of the electoral district is not situated on the banks of the Saint-Maurice River. It is bounded to the east by the St. Lawrence and another riding and to the north by aboriginal lands.

I believe that preserving the name "Champlain" in the name of the electoral district would reflect the fact that Champlain is an old city, an old village dating back to 1662. It has always had its purpose in the history of the Mauricie region. The name "Saint-Maurice", on the other hand, evokes the river used by the Attikamekw and the region's founders. The people of my region rejected the name "Shawinigan" at a parliamentary committee meeting. I believe that name was linked to the Attikamekw, but the people from the riding did not want it.

Clarity is another reason. At the provincial level, one electoral district bears the name "Champlain", another is called "Saint-Maurice" and yet another is named "Lavolette". There are three provincial ridings in my electoral district. If the name "Saint-Maurice" is used in advertising for elections or for any other reason, people will think of the provincial, not the federal electoral district.

That is why I ask that the present name of the riding be preserved. It was proposed in the 2003 report and the federal electoral district has been called "Saint-Maurice—Champlain" since the 2004 election. I believe there is good reason to retain that name.

● (1230)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Monsieur Pacetti, please.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's always fun to appear before a committee with your colleagues, but my change is an administrative one. The name of my riding right now is Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel. The commission decided to change it to Saint-Léonard—Villeray. I'm asking that it go back to Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel.

For anybody who is not familiar with the City of Montreal, it is divided into boroughs. There is a district called Villeray on the island of Montreal, but it doesn't touch any parts of my riding.

I think it's a typo. I've distributed two documents. I don't know if you have the one with the map. The visual is quite apparent where they've made a mistake. I think the reason they made a mistake is that the borough in which the portion of Saint-Michel is included—and that's why I gave you the letter even though it's in French—is called Villeray-Saint-Michel-Parc Extension. I think they just took the first name and they did a cut-off. I think it's just a mistake. That's the extent of my intervention.

The Chair: Super.

Are there questions for the witnesses?

Mr. Reid, a couple of minutes, please.

Mr. Scott Reid: Actually, I don't have any questions at this time, just an observation, if I could.

I do think there's a good point being made here that there's a tendency of some of the boundary commissions to take the largest community, and it tends to disfavour on a systematic basis small communities, rural communities. I think that's something that deserves to be considered by us, and it's another problem for us as well.

The Chair: Thank you.

Are there no questions?

Monsieur Dion.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Stéphane Dion: I think it would be a very good idea to emphasize the contribution of Pierre Boucher. I also cannot conceive of eliminating that of Champlain. In the case of Villeray, not only is our colleague Mr. Pacetti entirely correct, but his neighbour, the member representing the riding of Papineau, where Villeray is situated, also agrees entirely with him. He has promised to send a letter to the committee. That should therefore be done quite quickly.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Stéphane Dion: I think the commission has done an excellent job but that it made a minor error to prove to us that it was human.

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes, and it's this committee's job to fix it.

Are there any further questions for our witnesses?

Thank you very much. We will pass on your information.

I will suspend the meeting and then we will go in camera.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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