

FEDERAL ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION
FOR MANITOBA
2003

DISPOSITION BY THE COMMISSION
PURSUANT TO SUBSECTION 23(1) OF
THE *ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES READJUSTMENT ACT*
OF
OBJECTIONS FILED BY MEMBERS OF THE
HOUSE OF COMMONS WITH RESPECT TO THE COMMISSION'S
REPORT DATED JANUARY 15, 2003

Introduction

The Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Manitoba received the Twenty-ninth Report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs on May 13, 2003. The Commission has taken note of the Standing Committee's general comments on the current federal electoral boundaries readjustment process. It has given careful consideration to the Standing Committee's conclusions regarding the proposed federal boundaries in Manitoba and to the specific comments of the Manitoba members of Parliament who appeared before it. In this report, we focus on and respond to the Standing Committee's conclusions with respect to the recommendations made by the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Manitoba.

Changes to Boundaries Outlined in the Report

CHURCHILL

Because of its immense size and scarcity of settlement, Churchill has always posed a difficult challenge for Manitoba commissions. In balancing the population equality and community of interest principles, we initially proposed that the northwestern portion of the current Selkirk—Interlake electoral district be integrated into the CHURCHILL electoral district, while the southeastern portion of the current Churchill electoral district, excluding the Fort Alexander Indian reserve, be returned to the PROVENCHER and SELKIRK—INTERLAKE electoral districts, where it had been prior to the 1996 Representation Order.

Late in our consultation process, we received representations from the Member of Parliament for Churchill, Bev Desjarlais, as well as from a representative of the Southern Chiefs' Organization, against the transfer of the northwestern portion of the current Selkirk—Interlake electoral district to CHURCHILL. This area includes several First Nations communities. At the same time, we received indications of strong support for the changes proposed to the southeastern CHURCHILL boundary. The combined effect of the transfer of most of the southeastern portion of the current Churchill electoral district to PROVENCHER and SELKIRK—INTERLAKE and a return to the current Churchill boundary in the Interlake region has negative implications for the voter equality principle, which is central to any boundaries revision process. However, in our initial Proposals, we clearly recognized that community of interest and community of identity could be interpreted in different ways and we welcomed submissions that might assign greater weight to certain factors than we had done.

We found the submissions from the Member of Parliament for Churchill and from the Southern Chiefs' Organization to be persuasive.

The *Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act* clearly provides that:

- 15. (1)(b)** the commission shall consider the following in determining reasonable electoral district boundaries:
- (i) the community of interest or community of identity in or the historical pattern of an electoral district in the province, and
 - (ii) a manageable geographic size for electoral districts in sparsely populated, rural or northern regions of the province.

We initially proposed the addition of the northwestern portion of the Selkirk—Interlake electoral district to CHURCHILL; however, the representations referred to above pointed out the geographical separation of this area from the rest of the CHURCHILL electoral district (almost 200 km of unpopulated land), difficulties of transportation, and the natural north–south social and economic linkages between this area and the southern part of the province (most of its population resides within a two-hour drive from Winnipeg). In order to meet the voter equality principle, which in our view must remain uppermost in any definition of electoral boundaries, we proposed a compromise which would have seen a portion of the southwestern part of the proposed CHURCHILL electoral district revert back to SELKIRK—INTERLAKE, and the Municipality of St. François Xavier move from SELKIRK—INTERLAKE to the PORTAGE—LISGAR electoral district. This would have ensured a population variance of about –5 percent for CHURCHILL and +5 percent for SELKIRK—INTERLAKE.

The Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, in its Twenty-ninth Report, disagreed with our proposal. It argued that:

- a) The Interlake communities in question do not share a community of interest with the Churchill riding.
- b) The addition of these communities makes the riding geographically unmanageable and not feasible to service under the restraints of the Member's operating budget.
- c) The 8% variance of population in the two electoral districts is well within the statutorily allowable maximum of 25%.

The Member for Churchill made the second argument before our Commission and we rejected it on the grounds that modern transportation and information technology have largely alleviated these problems. We see no reason to modify this position. Indeed the Member for Churchill implicitly acknowledged this by opening a constituency office in St. George to serve the southeastern portion of the electoral district, which had been added to Churchill by the previous Commission. For the record as well, we wish to point out that the submission from the Member for Churchill was not received until almost the end of the formal consultation process; the Member chose not to attend any public hearings and we received no request from her to meet with the Commission. Had the Member done so, our report's recommendation regarding CHURCHILL might have been different.

The other two arguments provided, being solidly grounded in the legislation and well argued by the Standing Committee, bear considerable weight, which cannot be ignored by our Commission, as indeed we acknowledged in our report. We also acknowledge, as previous commissions have before us, that the CHURCHILL electoral district presents insuperable problems of geographical size and population dispersion, which are common to only a handful of federal electoral districts in Canada, all northern ones. We therefore reaffirm that the current south and southwestern boundaries of the CHURCHILL electoral district be maintained and that the southeastern boundary of the CHURCHILL electoral district be as proposed in our report. We are willing to accept that, in this case, a unique one in Manitoba, a variance greater than our target of ± 5 percent be tolerated. By reverting to the previous boundaries in the Interlake region, the

CHURCHILL electoral district will now have a variance of –8 percent from the provincial electoral quota, and the SELKIRK—INTERLAKE electoral district will have a variance of +8 percent.

We strongly recommend as well that future commissions treat the CHURCHILL electoral district, as we have defined it following the lengthy consultation and Standing Committee process, as a special case in Manitoba. The boundaries that we have defined for the CHURCHILL electoral district should be used as a starting point for the definition of the other federal electoral district boundaries in Manitoba, all of which should fall within an approximate 5 percent variance from the provincial electoral quota.

Electoral District Name Changes

CHARLESWOOD—ST. JAMES

The Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs supported an objection filed by Mr. John Harvard, Member of Parliament for Charleswood St. James—Assiniboia, with respect to the proposed change of the electoral district name from Charleswood St. James—Assiniboia to CHARLESWOOD—ST. JAMES. The Member's objection is the only one received by the Commission on this matter.

The Member for Charleswood St. James—Assiniboia states that the three-part name should remain as is for historical reasons. The Commission does not feel that the history of the Assiniboia district is of as major a consequence as portrayed by the Member. The Commission upholds its decision to use a shorter electoral district name because it strongly feels that three-part names should be avoided if at all possible, as indeed the Geographical Names Board of Canada's guidelines suggest. The two largest regions of the electoral district are Charleswood to the south of the Assiniboine River and St. James to the north of the river. The St. James area encompasses the Assiniboia district; hence there is no practical need to include "Assiniboia" in the electoral district name.

If a member wishes to initiate a name change in Parliament, that is his or her right, but that intent cannot prevent the Commission from exercising its independent judgment.

We therefore reaffirm that the electoral district name proposed in our report be maintained.

RIVER HEIGHTS—FORT GARRY

The Standing Committee supported an objection filed by Ms. Anita Neville, Member of Parliament for Winnipeg South Centre, with respect to the proposed change of the electoral district name from Winnipeg South Centre to RIVER HEIGHTS—FORT GARRY. The Commission received no expression of concern from any other source.

In our view, "Winnipeg South Centre" is a non-descriptive anachronism. It carries over from the past when Manitoba had only five urban electoral districts: South, South Centre, North Centre,

North and Saint Boniface. The geographic names were accurate descriptions of the territories included in each one. At the present time, Winnipeg South Centre includes most of the neighbourhoods that used to be within Winnipeg South; that is, the electoral district names mentioned were not even within the boundaries of Winnipeg South Centre. To confuse the situation even more, there was until quite recently no electoral district bearing the single name Winnipeg Centre.

It was our hope that we could suggest an electoral district name that would be more closely descriptive of the districts or areas that are included within it. RIVER HEIGHTS—FORT GARRY was selected because most of the proposed new electoral district is made up of those two districts. We recognize, of course, that the neighbourhoods named by the MP have not been included in the new name. That will inevitably be the situation in any multi-neighbourhood urban electoral district, particularly, if three-part names are to be avoided. It certainly was not our intention to be exclusionary, but on the other hand, the two names selected are those of the two largest neighbourhoods of the new electoral district and are readily recognizable by all Winnipeggers and indeed nationally.

Having made the foregoing comments, we must say that we understand the concerns that have been expressed and we are not proposing change for the sake of change. Neither do we suggest that insurmountable difficulty will flow from the maintenance of a name which, although outdated, is still generally understood.

We therefore agree that the current electoral district name of Winnipeg South Centre be maintained.

DAUPHIN—SWAN RIVER

We were apprised, through the Standing Committee's Twenty-ninth Report, that Bill C-301 is currently before the Senate. This bill would change the name of the Dauphin—Swan River electoral district to Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette.

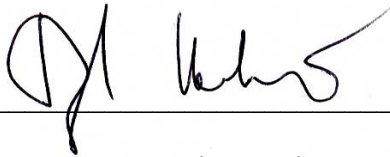
Since the community of Marquette is located in the PORTAGE—LISGAR electoral district, and that any historical value attached to the name is far outweighed by a cumbersome four-word electoral district name, the Commission would not have suggested this change.

We therefore reaffirm that the name DAUPHIN—SWAN RIVER be maintained in the new federal electoral boundaries map.

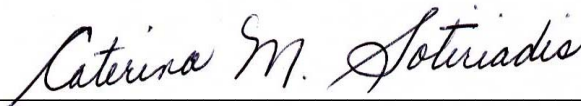
Dated at Winnipeg, Manitoba, this 2nd day of June, 2003.



Mr. Justice Guy J. Kroft
Chairman



Mr. Raymond M. Hébert
Deputy Chairman



Ms. Caterina M. (Bueti) Sotiriadis
Member

CERTIFIED copy of the disposition of objections to the Report of the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Manitoba.



Kevin Young
Commission Secretary