

SUBMISSION #33

33) Submitted by: Brad Cathers, MLA, Lake Laberge
Date Submitted: March 9, 2018
Electoral District: Lake Laberge/Porter Creek North

Submission:

Dear Mr. Justice Veale,

In follow up to my comments at the public meeting held at Porter Creek Secondary School on February 12, 2018, I would like to again state my firm belief that my constituents in Hidden Valley and MacPherson have a right to be consulted on any proposed change to electoral boundaries, especially a change which would see their individual votes have less power.

Residents of that area have been in the Lake Laberge electoral district for over 25 years, and those following media reports have been informed repeatedly over the course of the commission's work that no changes were being proposed which would affect them. With over 350 people in Hidden Valley and MacPherson directly affected by the possible change, good public process and meaningful consultation requires that they be informed of the possible change by the commission, and have an opportunity to provide their views on it in person as well as in writing.

I understand the change currently being contemplated would move Hidden Valley and MacPherson out of Lake Laberge to the riding of Porter Creek North. It would put residents of Hidden Valley and MacPherson in an electoral district with about 2,000 eligible voters, while people living across the river on the Hot Springs Road would be in a district with 1,150 eligible voters.

The 2008 Electoral Boundaries Commission states this in its Final Report: "Canadian common law generally allows for a deviation of plus or minus 25 percent as "the Canadian standard." The 2008 report also includes this excerpt, which raises a point related to the population imbalance which would result from it: "On the other hand, the law dictates that we can only recommend exceeding the standard deviation of plus or minus 25% from the electoral quotient when there is strong justification for doing so."

People living in the Lake Laberge area, including residents of Hidden Valley and MacPherson, tend to be very engaged in public consultations. Public meetings are usually quite well-attended. I can confidently predict that attendance at a properly advertised public meeting in Lake Laberge to discuss this proposed change would be much higher than the turnout at the commission's public meeting at Porter Creek Secondary School - and that unlike that meeting, quite a few people other than current and past politicians would attend.

On the evening of the commission's meeting at Porter Creek Secondary School, there was a public meeting at the Hootalinqua Fire Hall regarding the new civic addressing system. While I was not in attendance due to the commission's meeting conflicting with it, by way of comparison, I would note that over 60 people attended the previous public meeting about civic addressing hosted by the Department of Community Services in late 2017.

At my public constituency meeting on Wednesday, March 7, 2018, several people were upset about the lack of public consultation. People also felt that the commission should have taken steps to inform them that changes not included in the interim report were now being contemplated, and did not understand why the commission did not notify the public of this possible change in its advertisements which are currently in newspapers and on social media.

The attempts I have taken to inform constituents of this on social media have stated the facts to the best of my understanding, and have simply encouraged people to write to the commission if they have an opinion. Several people have posted comments expressing a lack of confidence that their views will matter to the commission, and indicating lack of faith in the process.

I encourage you to not proceed with any proposal unless you have held public consultation with people living in the affected riding, in order to ensure public confidence in the Electoral Boundaries Commission process.

As you are aware, the Returning Officer for Lake Laberge has also written to you to express opposition to this possible change.

In conclusion, I will state my view that the Hidden Valley and MacPherson area is more rural than urban, and shares a sense of community with people living north of city limits. A shared elementary school, a community association serving people in that area and north of town, and the Mayo Road Community Facebook page are a few examples of this community connection.

Sincerely,

Brad Cathers
MLA for Lake Laberge



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Box 2703, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6

March 9, 2018

Mr. Justice Ron Veale
Chair, Electoral District Boundaries Commission
Box 2703
Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6

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