

## **SUBMISSION #35**

**35) Submitted by:** Watson Lake Chamber of Commerce  
**Date Submitted:** March 10, 2018  
**Electoral District:** Watson Lake

### **Submission:**

#### **WATSON LAKE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE COMMENTS REGARDING THE CHANGES TO ELECTORAL BOUNDRIES**

- The Watson Lake Chamber of Commerce has lobbied the government to improve the consultation process. The process for this public meeting regarding the Proposed Changes to the Electoral Boundaries is flawed. We were advised any person or group requesting a public meeting is to have a "presentation" prepared. A public meeting should be available to any district with changes, providing information about the changes and the opportunity to get feedback and comments from these districts. We do understand that some information is provided online but not everyone is able or willing to find these documents - wanting face to face consultation instead.
- The Watson Lake Electoral Riding currently runs along the Alaska Highway with a portion along the Robert Campbell Highway. Including Ross River and/or any other community, so far from the major community in this riding, creates problems for travel. The Robert Campbell Highway is not a route one should take in the winter. (October to May) There are no services, little traffic and poor road conditions year round along the Robert Campbell Highway. The kilometer distance verses the hourly time to travel to Ross River is considerable, making it out of the way, inconvenient and unsafe. In the winter, some government employees are not permitted to use the Robert Campbell Highway and some departments discourage the use.
- That being said, the changes to the Nisutlin Riding would appear to make sense.
- Given the condition of the Campbell Highway, time and travel make more sense between Ross River, Faro, and the other Pelly River communities.
- The Watson Lake Riding has many Economic drivers that are different from Ross River. At this time, tourism, Alaska Highway Traffic and different levels of government employment are the main economic drivers in the Watson Lake area. The economic development and infrastructure priorities in the Watson Lake area will be vastly different than the priorities in Ross River. With Watson Lake being the "Gateway to the Yukon", adding an area that is so far off the path does not make sense.

- It is stated in the Interim Report from the Commission, that the Watson Lake Riding population will decrease by approximately one third over the next review period. The Watson Lake Chamber would disagree with this assessment. The Yukon Bureau of Statistics states that Watson Lake averaged between 1400 and 1500 in population since 2006. Watson Lake had a spike in population in 1991 but we have remained stable since. There is no available rentals and/or houses for sale, along with no vacant houses or land, substantiating the claim we remain stable in our population.
- Although Watson Lake Riding has a lower than optimum population according to the Commission, a riding such as Vuntut Gwitchin is considerably smaller. We accept that Vuntut Gwitchin is unique, but so is the Watson Lake Riding in population, location, economy and culture.
- The Watson Lake Chamber feels community representation for all Yukon communities is vitally important. Although every community would like its' own representation, we realize this wouldn't be possible. Groupings of close communities like Tagish and Carcross or Watson Lake and Upper Liard makes sense, grouping geographically isolated communities don't. For the same reasons Vuntut Gwitchin is isolated, so should Watson Lake be.
- The fact that rural representation is needed and desired by all communities, we would suggest allowing Faro and Ross River their own Electoral Riding.
- If there is not an option to increase the Electoral Ridings then having Ross River in the same riding as Faro would enable the MLA to combine travel/meetings to that area. Including them in the Carmacks/Mayo/Pelly region would be the best option.

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