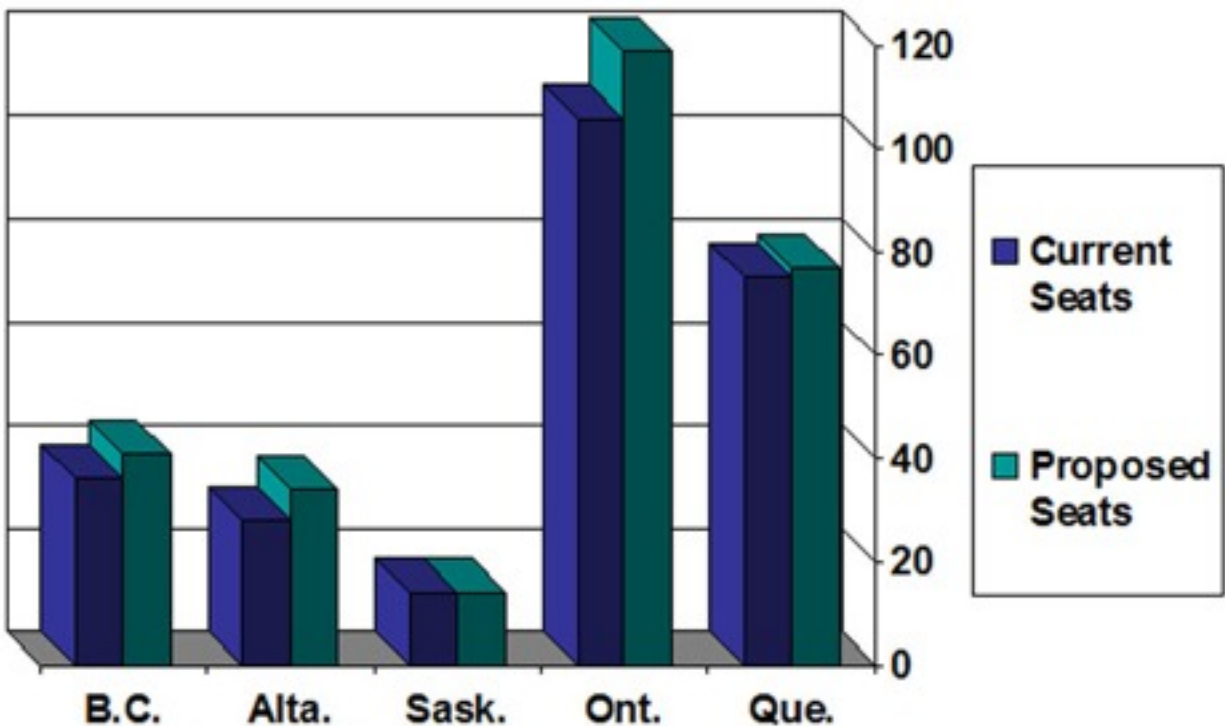


Saskatchewan unlikely to gain seats in Ottawa

Category: [National News](#)

Created on Wednesday, October 19, 2011



Graph reflecting the current and proposed seat structures of the House of Commons. Graph created by Nathan Liewicki.

by Nathan Liewicki

Before the last federal election, Stephen Harper's then-minority Conservative government vowed to add seats in the House of Commons to Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia. Now that the Conservatives have a majority, they're planning to introduce legislation that would add 26 seats to the House of Commons.

Saskatchewan, however, doesn't stand to add to its current total of 14 seats.

Thirteen of the proposed new seats would be given to Ontario, with Alberta standing to gain six seats. British Columbia would send five more representatives to Parliament and Quebec two more.

Saskatchewan's growth rate of 1.53 per cent was the highest in Canada in 2010, yet University of Regina political science professor Howard Leeson doesn't believe the province deserves more seats in the House of Commons. In fact, he feels Saskatchewan, like Prince Edward Island, is over represented in Ottawa. Prince Edward Island is represented by four seats, yet according to representation by population they should only have one seat.

"There is an agreement that Saskatchewan's number of seats will not fall below 14, even though on a representation by population basis we probably only rate nine or 10," Leeson said.

Tom Lukiwski, Conservative MP for Regina-Lumsden-Lake Centre, echoes the notion that Saskatchewan doesn't need additional representatives in the House of Commons.

"We made three distinct promises contained in our election platform," Lukiwski said. "One of those promises is simply to increase the number of seats to better reflect population growth in those provinces where population is increasing, primarily in B.C., Alberta and Ontario."

Lukiwski hopes that the new electoral redistribution system will be in place by the time the next federal election occurs in 2015.

"The main thing we want to ensure is adequate representation from province to province, but we don't want to harm the smaller provinces," Lukiwski said.

But the Conservative government's math is still being questioned when it comes to how these proposed new seats are to be doled out. One of the critics is Liberal Ralph Goodale. The Wascana MP wants to ensure Saskatchewan is treated equally in these discussions.

“While Saskatchewan's population is substantially lower than British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Quebec, it is, for the first time since about the 1930s, rising over the one million population mark.

“I would certainly want to watch very carefully in the arithmetic that's coming forward to make sure that Saskatchewan is being treated fairly on a representation by population basis,” Goodale said.

He said his concern is that the Conservatives are just doing things as they go along. He'd like to see an open and rational discussion of what's likely needed based on changing population patterns, while also setting partisan considerations aside, he said.

“This is the most blatantly partisan government that anybody can remember in recent history,” Goodale said. “There will undoubtedly be a political calculation behind whatever arithmetic they put forward.”