



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

Pincher Creek

Thursday, May 29, 2025
9 a.m.

Transcript No. 1

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission

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Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Pincher Creek

Public Participants

Craig Burrows-Johnson
Monica Zyla

9 a.m.

Thursday, May 29, 2025

[Justice Miller in the chair]

The Chair: Okay. It is 9 o'clock. Good morning, everyone, and welcome to the very first public hearing of the Electoral Boundaries Commission in Alberta. We are pleased to say that we chose the beautiful area of Pincher Creek in southwestern Alberta and look forward to the start of our season of public hearings.

First of all, a special thank you to those of you who have registered. I assume everyone who has registered is here, but we'll go through the names shortly.

My name is Justice Dallas Miller. I'm the chairman of the commission, and I serve as a trial justice in the Court of King's Bench in southern Alberta.

Other commissioners are – obviously, you see the nameplates at the table. Right next to me is Susan Samson, long-time resident of Sylvan Lake – from a southerner's perspective that's central Alberta – and an experienced municipal politician who served a full term as mayor of Sylvan Lake. Susan was named citizen of the year several years ago in Sylvan Lake and received the Queen Elizabeth II diamond jubilee medal in 2012. She's a dedicated volunteer in her community with a focus on the importance of public health care.

Next to Susan is John Evans, KC, a lawyer with a province-wide firm known as Stringam and who works out of their Lethbridge office. John conducts trials across the province, and his legal ability has been recognized by way of being awarded the KC designation, or King's Counsel. John is a very busy lawyer but finds time to volunteer on commissions like this and the Alberta Judicial Nominating Committee.

To my right is Dr. Julian Martin, a retired history professor from the University of Alberta with a master's degree and a doctorate from Cambridge University, and we were fortunate he came back to Canada. Julian has volunteered, after his retirement, on many committees in Sherwood Park and served on several provincial tribunals such as the Surface Rights Board and the Land Compensation Board.

At the end of the table, next to Julian, is Greg Clark. Greg is an entrepreneur and consultant, focusing on information and knowledge management. Greg has served as a member of the Legislature of Alberta for Calgary-Elbow, so we're pleased to have someone that has that experience on this commission. Greg, too, is a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II platinum jubilee medal and currently serves as the chair of the Balancing Pool of Alberta – no, that's not a gymnastics association – and he consults widely and advises organizations relative to proper governance. Greg holds an MBA and an ICD.D designation in terms of board governance.

We are the Electoral Boundaries Commission, and I was told to operate this. Before we get started, because of the amount of time that we've got set aside and there are fewer presenters, we'll be a little bit more informal and we won't stick to the time guidelines and we may very well have much more of a discussion and conversation. You don't have to worry about the microphones; they're all managed by Cine Audio to the far end of the room here. Just so you know, the audiofeed will ultimately be public and put on the EBC website. As well, the proceedings today are recorded by *Alberta Hansard*, and transcripts will also ultimately be on the EBC website. As I said, this is the first public hearing.

Now I wish to go through – oh, before I go further, I should acknowledge one other person in the room, Aaron Roth, who will put his hand up. He is the fellow that makes all this possible. He arranged everything, and he will be graded based on the hotels and the lunches that we enjoy on this trip. He's done a superb job getting everything organized for us.

A few more things then I'll walk through the slide presentation. Ultimately, we will end up on some maps as well. There are maps of Livingstone-Macleod and all the touching or bordering electoral divisions as well put up in the room, so feel free to walk around or make reference to them in your presentation.

We've got the task as an Electoral Boundaries Commission, a task that is guided by the legislation and a timetable that is guided by the legislation, that we must have a report completed, what's come to be known as an interim report, within seven months of our appointment. This commission was appointed by the Speaker of the Legislature of Alberta in late March, so we must have an interim report submitted by late October. That interim report will be public and will be distributed widely and then will be subject to comment, criticism, affirmation, and recommended changes. Then after the late October deadline in the next five months we will take further consultation from the public and create the final report as directed under the legislation, and that must be completed by late March 2026. That's our legislative timetable.

One of the main tasks that we have as a commission is that at the time the Alberta Legislature changed the law or made some changes to the legislation governing the commission, they also said, "We're going to add two more constituencies, two more ridings or two more electoral divisions," and where those go would be part of our deliberation and work going forward. So it's not a matter of just realigning the existing boundaries; we must fit in two more constituencies, and we're going to move from 87 to 89. Of course, everybody knows this, each electoral division or riding or constituency – I use the term "electoral division" because that's the terminology in the legislation, but we're most familiar with and the most commonly used is constituency or riding – has one member of the Legislature. His or her task is to sit in the Legislative Assembly in Alberta and represent their constituency. We are in a democracy. I like to pride ourselves as Canada is probably one of the best countries to live in, largely because of our free and democratic process and system.

In addition to increasing the constituencies, Alberta, as you know, sociologically and demographically has changed considerably over the last few years. Our population has increased dramatically. Just to give you an idea, the last Electoral Boundaries Commission, that concluded its report in 2017, was faced with a population of just over 4 million people, or less than 4.1 million people. Today we are relying on the most up-to-date statistics available to us from Statistics Canada and verified by the office of information and statistics of the Alberta Treasury Board, and the numbers that we're relying on peg the Alberta population at 4.88 million people. So we're adding two more ridings, and we have about 700,000 more people to deal with this go-round.

To give you some perspective, the formula that the Electoral Boundaries Commission came up with last time – well, you see the figure there – 4,062,609 population. That was the number they used back in the 2017 EBC report. Eighty-seven electoral divisions yielded an average population per constituency at 46,697. We operate under effective representation. In Canada we do not operate on one person, one vote, as Americans do. We operate under the principle of effective representation. The authorities have established that effective representation includes or can include a variance of minus 25, plus 25, so the target range for the Electoral Boundaries Commission in 2017 was that range, 35,023 to 58,371. That was eight years ago.

9:10

Here we are now with today's figures, that we're going to rely on, 4.8 million, again, but this time divided by 89 ridings. That

reveals a target or an average for each constituency of that number, 54,929. The target range you will see is 41,197 to 68,661.

Unfortunately, the population growth has not been perfectly aligned in every riding. It's been obviously clustered in the two major cities, Edmonton and Calgary. So the task of this commission going forward – and as I said, today is our first day. We're in this beautiful part of the province. We're in Lethbridge this evening. As in the old tourism commercial we stamp around Alberta starting next week, go all over the province. So we want to hear from you, hear your submissions and information not necessarily exclusively with respect to this electoral division. We can hear about the bordering ones, or we can hear about anything as well. We'll take that into consideration.

But what we're going to be tasked with is following the markers outlined in the legislation, many factors. Where the population density is: that's a big concern for our commission. When we redraw boundaries, we're going to be conscious and have to follow common community interests and organizations. We'll deal with geographic features. As we know, natural boundaries sometimes are created by geography, rivers, mountains. Communication and transportation across Alberta: that's another factor that we'll be concerned with. And we will endeavour to create understandable and clear boundaries in the electoral divisions that we recommend.

Another task – and I don't have this on the screen at all – is that we're tasked with actually naming the constituencies, which is kind of an afterthought. If you have any comments in relation to the naming, we're happy to hear those as well.

Overall, the authority that the Electoral Boundaries Commission has: we have to take in other factors and other considerations that we feel are appropriate, kind of an open-ended authority that we have as a commission. That's why these hearings are so important. If you have some concerns that are not necessarily targeted and fall under one of the very perfect items of the legislation but are factors that we need to know about, we need to hear from you in respect to those.

What you have before you is the complete current electoral map of Alberta, and I believe it's posted as well on the wall behind me. I'm just going to quickly go through the constituencies that border this constituency. To the north you have Banff-Kananaskis. The population figures are there, and if you have good eyesight, you can see those. As well to the north is Highwood, bordering is Cardston-Siksika, and of course here we are in Livingstone-Macleod, and we'll be dealing with Lethbridge this evening.

Those are my introductory comments. This morning we have on our list of presenters, if I can just identify all of them: Craig Burrows-Johnson, if you can just put your hand up. Okay. Sahra Nodge? No. Monica Zyla? Okay.

Craig, you're listed first. Presumably, you registered first, so you get to go first. Normally we have – I restrict people to seven minutes. Take your time. Take your time. We want to have a conversation.

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: Well, I hate to be the centre of attention, so I'll make use of all of my seven minutes, and then I'll let you have the time.

Thank you very much for coming. Welcome to Treaty 7 territory, and good morning. My name is Craig Burrows-Johnson. I'm currently a resident of Lethbridge. I was born and raised in Taber. I'm a graduate of W.R. Myers high school, class of '72. My family has been farming and ranching in southern Alberta since 1903, when my grandfather immigrated from Yorkshire in England to Burdett in what was then the Northwest Territories. In 2005 our MLA Len Mitzel presented our family with a provincial certificate

recognizing us for a century of farming. We're still raising black cattle in the county of Forty Mile after 122 years.

I attended the University of Lethbridge and the University of Calgary and lived for 30 years in Calgary's inner city in the communities of Sunnyside, Kensington, and Briar Hill before moving back to Lethbridge in 2007. While studying and working at the University of Calgary, my focus was environmental design, urban and regional planning, art and architecture, and industrial design. I have been an advocate for and a participant in the Alberta main street program and the provincial heritage preservation program. In 2019 I was recognized by the Alberta government for my work in amateur sport as a founding member of both the Calgary and Lethbridge amateur sport councils.

I dream of the day when the small towns and villages of southern Alberta begin to repopulate after decades of decline, and if this is going to happen, it will require the full and dedicated attention of our rural MLAs. In the last 10 years I have acted as scrutineer for the Progressive Conservatives, Liberals, and the New Democrats in both federal and provincial elections, so I'm not party loyal. I will always support the candidate I feel is best qualified for the position.

During the last Lethbridge election, the by-election in Lethbridge-West this past December, two main political parties nominated candidates who had both served as Lethbridge city councillors. Both John Middleton-Hope of the UCP and Rob Miyashiro of the NDP had strong qualifications in urban politics and affairs, and truth be told either candidate would have been an effective representative for the city of Lethbridge. Having said that, neither candidate had much competence or knowledge of rural issues or agriculture.

Citizens living in the rural parts of Alberta face distinct challenges from those living in urban areas. In my view, urban and rural areas deserve qualified representation in the Legislature of Alberta and members who are drawn from their own community and who are well versed in the issues specific to their areas.

I confess that my views on this have been conditioned not only by life experience but also by the last 20 years of my career, a time when I managed the Lethbridge post office as postmaster, a title that had perhaps more status in the past than it does now. I was responsible for mail service in both the city of Lethbridge and the 55 dependent rural post offices in southern Alberta from Coleman in the west to Manyberries in the east and from Vauxhall and Hays in the north to Coutts on the American border. Since 1886 mail operations in Lethbridge have been split between the rural and urban services. The differences between these two zones require two different service models for two distinct different types of communities.

The small populations, geographic distances, underdeveloped infrastructure, and low population density of rural Alberta versus the dense populations, concentrated services and infrastructure, and higher economic activities of the urban areas always require a different approach. Generally our rural communities tend to have older populations with higher levels of poverty, poorer health, which is exacerbated by difficult access to health care and aging infrastructure and sometimes cover very large geographic areas that may be experiencing long-term population decline. For example, in the county of Forty Mile the population has declined by 25 per cent since 1980.

9:20

In my view, Alberta MLAs representing the rural areas have big challenges facing them in the 21st century: climate change, water allocation, abandoned oil wells, surface rights issues, to name just a few. But in addition to these challenges, there are also opportunities. For example, there is now more affordable housing and land prices, better access to recreational spaces and parks, faster

Internet and Wi-Fi, and a certain amount of disillusionment with big-city living that makes moving to a small town or village a more attractive option than it once was.

We know that rural municipalities have much different land-use servicing, infrastructure, and development issues than urban communities. In my view, we need Alberta MLAs well versed on the issues facing farmers and ranchers and small rural communities. It's my view that the interjurisdictional responsibilities of MLAs should not be made more complex by adding one more level of government to their already complex set of duties; for example, adding a city council on top of a county government and various town and village councils. Therefore, I would ask that your commission maintain fair electoral boundaries that firmly delineate between the rural and urban areas.

Thank you.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much.

Questions. Mr. Evans, we'll start at that end, if you have any, and then move across.

Mr. Evans: In terms of the changing demographics between the urban and the rural, what are you thinking about in terms of a solution for that in the electoral boundaries? Have you given some thought to that?

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: Well, in light of what you've said about effective representation, the solution may be to expand areas where the population has declined, for example in Cypress county. I mentioned the decline in population in the county of Forty Mile. That may be one of the areas where the rural population has declined. But in other areas we're seeing an increase in the rural population. For example, close to us here, Nanton and Claresholm both just had three years of record real estate activity. In Drumheller, another area that I'm familiar with, the population of East Coulee, a small community just east of Drumheller, has increased. And it's funny; it's largely led by artists.

Artists are a bit of a canary in a coal mine. In the cities for decades they've been moving into areas where there were low rents and low occupancy and generally turned those areas into trendy areas, and then the prices go up, and they have to move on to somewhere else. Well, now we're seeing artists, musicians moving to communities like East Coulee or Vulcan because you can get a house for \$25,000. Affordable housing and affordable land are in the rural communities. As the high costs drive out many lower income people, including artists, from the cities, they are moving to the rural towns. Small towns and villages are benefiting from that now. So, yeah, in East Coulee there's a thriving artist colony out there.

Mr. Evans: So in the past we were more restricted according to the legislation in dividing up electoral boundaries based on municipal boundaries.

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: Yeah.

Mr. Evans: With the amendment to the legislation, we're not hampered. I'll characterize it that way. I apologize in advance for a reference to the legislation, but it's sort of a, you know...

The Chair: Occupational hazard.

Mr. Evans: It's an occupational hazard. Yeah. But I think it's very helpful in how we think about it, you know, solving these problems.

In addition to the just straight, you know, population perspective of the electoral boundaries, in section 14 of the legislation it gives us – and Justice Miller addressed these earlier in his introduction, but I think it's helpful for us to think about them – sparsity or

density and rate of growth, communities of interest, geographic features, obviously, the availability of means of communication, desirability of understandable and clear boundaries, and then other factors. The other factors, I think, are very helpful for us if we think about those because it gives us as a commission more discretion to take in community values. I think those are what's most important here.

In terms of thinking about solving the problem, if we look at, like, for example, Livingstone-Macleod and we imagine, we think about the centre there, so we think about Fort Macleod, and we think about it in terms of a spoke, like wagon wheels or – today it's really apropos – we think about a Model T wheel, because there are all those...

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: I saw them.

Mr. Evans: ... antique cars out there, what I think is that those at the very hub have a very common community interest. As you extend out, especially as we see what's going on in terms of people moving out of the centres to have sort of a more rural lifestyle yet have a very urban mentality, if you were to draw circles, there'd be a commonality of community interest. At a point when you get very, very, very rural, there's also a commonality in terms of their thinking and the people that are living out there. Their livelihood is dependent on cattle or grain or a combination.

If we think about it in that respect, then what we're really actually doing is extending out, and it's not so much just a rural and urban. It's much more of a community and the community interest factor, and we can label that whatever we want.

Have you thought about it in that respect?

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: Yeah. Common cultural values, for example.

Mr. Evans: Right. Yeah.

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: That has changed in southern Alberta in the last 50 years. The village of Burdett, where my grandfather moved to, 50 years ago was certainly a dying community. Not much left in the way of buildings. The elevators have been knocked down, and around them the size of the farms has increased by perhaps a factor of as much as 10. So rather than having a rural fabric that was comprised of farms that were average size of a section at most, now 10,000 acres is not unusual, and the farmers there no longer are working the land themselves. They are bringing in agricultural workers.

9:30

Many of those workers have come from Mexico. The Mexican Mennonite phenomenon: landless agriculture workers, what Europe would call them. I stopped in Burdett last year and the school yard was full, which is interesting. Where were all these kids coming from? I went there, and they were all speaking German. The reason that the school was so popular is that they had set up an English as a second language program. That is a completely new culture.

We're also seeing much more immigration and new immigrants from South Asia. There's a substantial Sikh community, for example, in my hometown of Taber. Culture is changing. It's moving right under our feet. An area that you could have at one time said was pretty homogeneous culturally is much more diverse now and with a population that is increasing. New housing being built; a rural school filled again.

I see that as very hopeful. As I said before, I dream of the day when these small villages are repopulated again. My one

grandfather homesteaded near Etzikom, and at one time there were 400 people in Etzikom and a hotel and all that. Now the current population down there is about 30, on a good day, in the county of Forty Mile.

Things are moving out in the country. There are changes occurring. Where are they leading? I think they're leading to better services, better infrastructure, and hopefully effective representation. But my point is that to take advantage of these opportunities, it's important that the MLAs are able to concentrate on rural issues – agriculture is going to be facing some huge challenges this century – and not be distracted by the many issues and challenges and opportunities in the urban areas. In my management career we had people assigned to certain areas because they were good at what they did. There was a clear delineation between duties, and that was done in order to make the most efficient use of their time.

It must be difficult for a rural MLA. I'm thinking northern Alberta, like Slave Lake and those areas, where an MLA has got to cover really vast districts, you know, an area the size of France in northern Alberta. That's difficult. But when you see them having to deal with both, along with the major urban areas like Calgary – like, the newest city, I think, in Alberta is Airdrie. Airdrie has just exploded in the last 20 years. It's gone from a town to a city. The changes are occurring not just in the cities but outside them as well.

The Chair: We've got to get rolling here. Are there any questions?

Mrs. Samson: Yes. First off, I want to thank you for coming out today. An excellent, interesting presentation, which I thoroughly enjoyed, and I learned a lot. One question specifically for Livingstone-Macleod. It is the riding that I'm interested in because I'm sitting in it. Is there anything specific about it that if you could tweak it, you would, or you would change or you wouldn't?

Can I just say this, too? When I look at it, I think: man, we've got 89 to look at; this one fits really nice. It's got a population of 53,180 as of 2024. It fits within the plus and minus 25 per cent variance. I kind of like that. I think chaos reigns when change comes in, but there always is room for change, and that's my question to you, sir.

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: Yeah. I happen to think Livingstone-Macleod is pretty good as it is. When these boundaries change in Lethbridge, for example, there is this division between Lethbridge-East and Lethbridge-West, and it's funny the way the boundary has been drawn, especially in north Lethbridge. They have people showing up at polls all the time, at the wrong poll. They think they live in Lethbridge-West and they actually live in Lethbridge-East and vice versa. So with respect to Livingstone-Macleod I would say that it's not broken; don't try and fix it, okay?

The Chair: Thank you.

Dr. Martin: Thank you, sir. Again, I echo my colleague's remarks about your presentation – there's much to dig into – and I'll be very pleased to read the *Hansard* transcription to instantly know why they're here. Because you say so many interesting things so quickly that I can't fully take notes.

I have one frivolous question – I think it's frivolous – and one more philosophical if I might. First, why is it called Livingstone? Isn't that the name given to a range of the foothills?

Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: Livingstone Range is what we see out here to the west of Talbot.

Dr. Martin: Okay.

My more substantive question is about your remarks characterizing the public issues, political issues, economic issues that face rural communities and the need for someone who has experience in those problems and their dynamics. Now, we often in our line of work hear about the rural communities from the point of view of the scheduling problems of the MLA. "Oh, I've got to go and see 17 different council meetings this year, and I'm gonna be putting on 90,000 miles on my brand new truck." So you get a glimpse of the scale, the geography, and the number of decision-makers that need to be in the loop, as it were.

But what you've presented here is quite a different point of view on the difficulties associated with rural management. You spoke about the possibilities for – well, you've got affordable land, to be sure, but scaling up is a huge problem anywhere at any time. In this respect, to add new infrastructure, not just the capital but the scarcity of scale becomes an issue in rural communities, I believe, so you need expertise in the county governments as well. Do you feel that there is an issue to be addressed there if your community is going to grow in stable population?

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: I do, and I feel that the representation for that area should come from those communities and should be drawn from the expertise of the people who perhaps have an agricultural background or a background in village or town government or as a county reeve. Those kinds of candidates would be, in my view, best qualified to deal with what I think will be very, very complicated issues in this century. So I believe that there should be a marked delineation between rural and urban ridings.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

Mr. Clark: I'll be brief. You've anticipated my last question, perhaps in this specific context. Again, I just want to echo my colleagues and thank you so much for a really thoughtful presentation. An excellent way to start us off, so thank you so much.

9:40

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: You're welcome.

By the way, I've met you before. You were campaigning on 34th Avenue just off 14th Street. I was standing on a lawn with a friend of mine who happens to be in a wheelchair, and we had a lovely conversation. That was a few years ago, but I remember it quite well.

Mr. Clark: Thank you. One of the great joys of doing that kind of work is meeting people. One of the great disadvantages is that a lot more people know me than I happen to remember. Anyway, thank you. I do appreciate it.

Dr. Martin: Be grateful. Nobody admits to seeing me.

Mr. Clark: Yeah.

Maybe it just really is building on some of the previous questions by calling your point, and that just maybe specifically is: if we were to, say, create constituencies that would bite off a piece of Lethbridge and make it mixed with rural, how would that land with folks in this community or a similar community?

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: Well, I don't think it would land very well. I think that it would confuse the voters. I think it would water down the effectiveness of the MLA that had to deal with that issue. You know, you don't have to drive very far outside Lethbridge or any other community to find different lifestyles involved. People are

involved in different kind of work. Yeah. I think it would be a step backwards.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, sir. Your presentation was not only very good. I sit in Lethbridge. I sit in Medicine Hat. I go to Calgary. So you covered the southwestern L, the southern part of the province, very well. Anybody who mentions Manyberries and Burdett: you know that they are cognizant of Alberta geography.

Question: did you present to the last Electoral Boundaries Commission?

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: I did not. No.

The Chair: Okay.

Now, let me ask you a very specific question. Your city cousin may say to you: “Craig, you know, it’s one person, one vote. You guys in the rural have way too much clout. We’ve got to even this out.” What do you say to that?

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: I’ve heard that before. I’ve heard remarks in the last couple of elections that a rural vote is worth more than an urban vote, that some of the ridings have such a small population that a voter there: their vote may be worth double. You know, we live in such a big country that we have to make adjustments for the geography; a gigantic place that we live in. If we were in northern Alberta – we’re trying to capture enough territories to make 40,000, 50,000 – you end up with something the size of Germany. Now, you know . . .

The Chair: Yeah. Without the Autobahn.

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: Without the Autobahn.

It’s not practical, you know?

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you very much. Please stay because we may have some more conversation and dialogue. If I can get you to move out of that seat.

Monica? You’ve observed that we do not follow the seven-minute time restriction very closely.

Ms Zyla: Mine is very short, but it actually builds on Craig’s.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms Zyla: I also echo: thank you very much for coming, especially for this being the beginning of your stomp around Alberta.

I’m Monica Zyla, living in Livingstone-MacLeod, and I’m retired. I’m quite engaged in our electoral process, and I wrote a submission. I wanted to add my voice to your deliberation.

The Chair: Sorry. Did you submit a written submission?

Ms Zyla: I did.

The Chair: Okay. Very good.

Ms Zyla: Our riding is a riding comprised of towns, municipalities, and counties that have their own unique history. We are a large geographic riding, as has been mentioned. Many municipalities are retirement communities for the surrounding ranchers and farmers. Waterton and the Crowsnest Pass are unusual in this group because Waterton focuses mainly on tourism and environmental stewardship, and the Crowsnest Pass is historically a resource extraction hub that now caters to some tourism. It’s important to me that this process be fair, that it, too, draws on its own history of drawing a map that

reflects effective representation, respecting municipal boundaries and respecting like communities.

I’m disturbed a little bit by some of the change of wording in Bill 31 where it says that it’s not “shall” but “may” for municipal boundaries and like communities now. I appreciate what John had to say about giving you more flexibility, but because of the rural-urban discussion, to me, the municipal boundaries is a pretty important thing. The softening of that language makes me concerned as a rural person because the idea of being subsumed by Lethbridge is horrifying. Yeah. I hope that you’re able to appreciate the nuance in that language and how important it is to build the best in these large ridings with fewer people.

That’s about all I have to say. Thank you for your attention.

The Chair: Any questions?

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much for being here.

No, I don’t have any particular questions. Thank you.

Dr. Martin: I do. Well, we’re all using the phrase “effective representation.” You have alluded to it, as has Craig, at some length. I wondered if you would agree with Craig’s general line on effectiveness being a function of experience in the concerns and problems of the rural community. I take it, from Craig’s remarks, that an effective representative is one who understands agriculture, an emerging tourism sector, or small rural community dynamics. Now, would you agree that that is what you believe as constituting effectiveness?

Ms Zyla: Oh, yes, absolutely. The reason I think, though, is because in the last election, for instance, we had a couple of – well, we had many candidates, but the two that were percolated to the top were both from these areas and really appreciated the communities and some of the struggles, some of the challenges, some of the issues being here. Yes, I absolutely think that it’s important that they be local and understand the nuance all around them.

Dr. Martin: Okay.

Mrs. Samson: I have one comment to make as an illustration. I did read your written submission. You live in Bellevue, correct?

Ms Zyla: Yes.

Mrs. Samson: Yes. Good submission. I’ve been following the coal mining opening up again in the Crowsnest, and what I saw was a banding of smaller communities in Livingstone-MacLeod that stood up, and that to me represented, in the work I do today, community interest, bonding together against something that’s extremely important. What I saw was the Livingstone-MacLeod electoral district speaking with almost one voice and not that kind of support shown by the major cities like Lethbridge or Calgary, that will be ultimately affected. For that, I think it’s a real example of the strength in this riding and the continuity and the commonality and keeping it together. Would you agree with that?

Ms Zyla: Well, I think there are two distinct ones, actually, that are speaking in the coal extraction discussion.

Mrs. Samson: Yeah.

Ms Zyla: But I do agree that it has become a completely nonpartisan issue. It matters so much to us who live at the headwaters, considering people who live downstream, for the ranchers who get directly affected every single day to the young families who have moved to our communities because they are disillusioned with the larger

urban centres because they have little lungs that they're concerned about. So it has become an amazing discussion, and it has shown that the people of Livingstone-Macleod are incredibly aware of our responsibilities here.

9:50

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

Mr. Evans: No, I don't have any questions. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Good.

Mr. Clark: Sorry. Apologies. I did think of one. I guess I'm really interested as to living in rural communities – and I think one of the questions earlier alluded to this – getting around, putting a bunch of miles on your vehicle, and being in person. I don't think anyone would disagree that that is incredibly important. Having said that, we also live in a time where you have access to all sorts of communication tools, the old-fashioned telephone, Zoom call, those sorts of things. I guess I'm just curious how you would characterize effective representation in the context of being able to be in touch with your elected representative or their office, be it in person, be it online, you know, that sort of level of access. What is your experience, and what is your expectation, and how does that dynamic play out?

Ms Zyla: Yep. My experience and expectation are fairly similar. The elected MLAs that we've had in our riding in the time that I've lived here have made an effort to come to the communities and do the coffee klatch kind of thing. They also make sure that, because generally they're from one of the larger centres, they're sending out communication to let you know when they're coming, social functions, and that kind of thing. You know, generally my experience is that I use the old-fashioned way of e-mail oftentimes, and it's very, very effective.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

Ms Zyla: I feel heard.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much for your presentation and the conciseness of it, but I have a question. If I can extrapolate, a real theme of what you've said is that you do not want to be lumped in with Lethbridge. Okay. That's particularly important in this southwest corner, but do you acknowledge that we might have to be able to bring in – the terminology that's been used is “blended ridings” or “rurban ridings.” Do you acknowledge that maybe in some parts of the province we might have to do that?

Ms Zyla: Well, I'm glad that Craig got the, you know, question from urban people thing, that their vote doesn't count as much as my vote, for instance, because I think that's a really, really hard question to answer. And I recognize that this is an incredibly difficult job that you have because not only, as you say, are you looking at the 87 ridings, but you're looking at expanding to the 89. So that complicates your lives immeasurably, I'm sure.

It comes down to the quality of candidate, I guess, to some degree. But, also, as a rural person for a number of years it's been so frustrating to hear the focus on these urban issues. Health care, for instance, is incredibly different out here than it is in the city, and it would be so distressing to lose somebody who would champion the rural point of view for something as important as health care. I recognize that this is something that you're going need to be looking at, but boy, oh boy, the impact is real.

The Chair: You probably wouldn't be surprised to know that in the two big cities Lethbridge is considered rural.

Ms Zyla: I know; anything but Edmonton and Calgary. I know. It blows my mind.

The Chair: Yeah. Okay. Good.

Any other questions or dialogue that we want to continue with either presenter, actually?

Ms Zyla: Well, can I just speak to the spoke idea?

The Chair: Sure.

Ms Zyla: Thank you. I think that the observation about moving further and further out, the sort of values and the culture change as you get further and further away from that spoke, the idea, I guess, even though our communities are diversifying – even, you know, the Crowsnest Pass has become quite different in the 10 years that we've been living there in terms of ethnic makeup and age, the demographic. It's just fantastic.

Still, once you're in those rural places, you adopt that rural attitude partially because you have to. All of a sudden, as we've learned from one of our new neighbours who's just moved down from Calgary, gee, Home Depot is not around the corner anymore, something like that. You know, there is no Starbucks. You adopt the rural mindset fairly quickly, and it's important, I think, to recognize that as you get away from those spokes, so the further away you are from Lethbridge, the more rural you get.

Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Dr. Martin: I just had one general comment.

The Chair: Sure. Okay.

Dr. Martin: Yeah. And I could address both of you if I might. One thing that the two of you have done very effectively is to highlight the complexity of the phrase “effective representation.” If you are in Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche, what does effective representation mean? It's not really answered by mathematics of the number of voters or the number of population; it's answered in this whole sociological realm that the two of you have pointed out for us, and I thank you for it. It's not an easy one to answer – what constitutes effectiveness? – but it's one that we have to wrestle with because, quite apart from particular directions or suggestions in the act, it does talk about effective representation as if we knew what that meant, and we don't.

Thank you.

The Chair: I'd be curious to know your comments on the name. Are you happy with the name of the electoral district?

Ms Zyla: Love it.

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: Yeah. It's very good.

The Chair: Okay. So check that off as one thing we don't have to change.

Dr. Martin: Now I know what it means.

The Chair: Yeah.

Sorry. What was that?

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: Much more exciting than Lethbridge-East.

Dr. Martin: What would you say – I mean, this is frivolous. Indulge me. What would you say to Taber-Manyberries?

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: It's a long drive.

Dr. Martin: No. But as a name. I've often puzzled why it was Taber-Warner when Warner is just a real small place halfway between Taber, Lethbridge, and Milk River.

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: Warner didn't always used to be that small.

Dr. Martin: Oh, all right. Thank you.

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: There were 600, 700 people in Warner just after World War II. So perhaps that's the historical reason for that. Mind you, at the time in Manyberries there were probably 150 people at the end of World War II, and there are, I think, 12 now.

Dr. Martin: Right.

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: Manyberries is one of those names that has – well, look at a Guy Vanderhaeghe novel or something like that. Unfortunately, I had to close a post office in southern Alberta that had the lovely name of Purple Springs.

Dr. Martin: You closed it.

Mr. Burrows-Johnson: I'm afraid so, yes. I thought it was the most magical post office name perhaps in Alberta.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

Dr. Martin: Purple Springs: that's a wonderful name.

The Chair: I'm now going to start looking at properties a lot different. Follow the artists.

The Chair: Yeah.

We'll adjourn today's hearing, and if you really want to see us in action, come to Lethbridge tonight at 6:30.

[The hearing adjourned at 10 a.m.]



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

Lethbridge

Thursday, May 29, 2025
6:30 p.m.

Transcript No. 2

Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Lethbridge

Public Participants

Drew Adamick
Randy Bullock, Reeve, Cardston County
Jeff Coffman
Belinda Crowson
Jeffrey Deurloo
Maria Fitzpatrick
Keith Gardner
Cheryl Meheden
Cameron Mills
Tamara Miyanaga, Reeve, Municipal District of Taber
Rob Miyashiro, MLA, Lethbridge-West
Scott Paul
Ken Sears

6:30 p.m.

Thursday, May 29, 2025

[Justice Miller in the chair]

The Chair: Good evening, everyone, and welcome to this evening's presentation of the Electoral Boundaries Commission. Thank you, everyone, for coming. We know that there are other things going on this evening, and we appreciate your attendance.

First, my name is Justice Dallas Miller. I'm the chairman of the commission, and I serve as a supernumerary justice of the Court of King's Bench in southern Alberta.

I want to introduce the other commissioners very briefly. Right next to me is Susan Samson, a long-time resident of Sylvan Lake. For those of us in the south, that's central Alberta's representative. She's an experienced municipal politician, councillor and served a full term as mayor of Sylvan Lake. She has volunteered throughout her community for years and was a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth diamond jubilee medal in 2012, and she's volunteering for several projects in her community with a focus on public health care.

Next to Susan is John Evans, KC, a lawyer based in Lethbridge here but has a province-wide practice with a firm known as Stringam, and he focuses his work in Lethbridge. He conducts trials across the province, and his legal ability has been recognized by being awarded KC, or King's Counsel. John volunteers as well as a member of the Alberta Judicial Nominating Committee.

On my right is Dr. Julian Martin, a retired history professor from the University of Alberta. Julian has two degrees from Cambridge, and we're fortunate he came back to Canada to teach. He has volunteered on many committees in his home community of Sherwood Park, and in a sense he's our capital city region representative on the commission. Julian has also served on provincial tribunals such as the Surface Rights Board and the Land Compensation Board.

At the far end of the table is Mr. Greg Clark, an entrepreneur and consultant in the information and knowledge industry. We're privileged to have Greg. As a former MLA he served one term in the Legislature for Calgary-Elbow. Greg also is a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth platinum jubilee medal for his community work. He currently serves as the chairperson of the Balancing Pool of Alberta, a very important organization that you don't realize affects your life. Greg holds an MBA degree and the ICD.D designation.

We are your Electoral Boundaries Commission.

For the start of the evening I'd like to have a few suggestions as to how we can make this run a little smoothly. First of all, silence your cellphone. Don't turn your cellphones off because we want to keep up to date with what's happening. The microphones: don't worry about that. They are professionally handled and taken care of by Cine Audio, and an audiofeed will go eventually to the EBC website in the public hearings section. This evening's proceedings will also be transcribed by *Alberta Hansard*, and we'll have the transcript on the EBC website a few days after the meeting.

Now, in order to give you some context and some background as to why we're here and why you accepted the notice to come here and present – and before I go to the PowerPoint, I want to introduce one other person. Where is he? Aaron Roth is sitting at the back next to the post. If you have copies of your written submission, please provide a copy to Aaron. He'll keep track of it for us. He's the administrator of the commission.

For those of you who are presenting this evening, we have to have some time limitations. I believe we're full in terms of presenters, a full group of 10 presenters, so we're going to limit you to about seven minutes with three minutes for question and answer from the commission after your presentation. You could convince us to give you extra time if you give us a report on the hockey game and it's positive, so keep that in mind.

You've been introduced to the Electoral Boundaries Commission. Our task, first of all, is to come up with a proposed revised set of electoral boundaries across the province. Why? Because according to the legislation every two election cycles we must look at the electoral boundaries. That's been the law for quite some time irrespective of other changes. However, this time around we have a significant change in that the government has passed legislation to add two more electoral districts to Alberta's Legislature, so we're expanding from currently 87 electoral divisions or ridings or constituencies to 89 for the next provincial election. That's one of the first tasks we have to deal with as a commission. As you're aware, each electoral division elects one Member of the Legislative Assembly to sit in Edmonton, and voters across the riding are the ones that choose that MLA.

In addition to the move from 87 seats to 89, population has changed, and it has changed significantly in Alberta. Just to give you a background, the last Electoral Boundaries Commission issued their final report in 2017, and as you can see from that bar graph, the population that they relied upon was just in excess of 4 million people. The population that we are dealing with now is 4.88 million people. That's based on the latest Statistics Canada census supplemented and verified by the Office of Statistics and Information of Alberta Treasury Board. So we've moved significantly in terms of population in addition to the increase in seats.

Again, to give you some perspective, the last Electoral Boundaries Commission had a ratio of 4,062,609 population divided by 87 seats. The average number then resulted in that 46,697. The target range for an acceptable electoral district is the range minus 25/plus 25 using that 46,697. That was the last Electoral Boundaries Commission, 2017. This time around when we are able to give our final report – by the way, our final report is legislatively mandated to be submitted to the Speaker by late March 2026. We will issue what's come to be known as an interim report in late October of this year.

We're starting off these public hearings – maybe I should have said this at the beginning – in southwestern Alberta. We were in Pincher Creek this morning – beautiful Pincher Creek; beautiful day – and we came to Lethbridge for this evening's session. This is our first day of public hearings. Starting next week, we cover Edmonton, Wainwright, Westlock, St. Paul. The week after we hit Calgary and some rural areas, and the final week we do the north: Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, Slave Lake, and places like that. So we'll be on the road for the next three-plus weeks in meetings exactly like this, and we'll be hearing from Albertans in terms of their concerns about boundaries, about population, about where the constituencies should be divided, and things like that.

6:40

The population did not expand or grow evenly across the province, so that's why we have got the very challenging task of making sure that the 89 ridings produce what we call effective representation. Effective representation means that there is relative equality between the electoral districts in terms of population. We do not have the one person, one vote; that's an American system. In Canada we call it effective representation, and it's backed by legislation and Supreme Court of Canada authority.

When we complete our work or when we actually put pen to paper and start writing our reports, after our public hearings are concluded in June, we will be taking into consideration what we hear at meetings like this. But we are also compelled to look at several factors, and those factors include, and these are legislative factors: the relative population density throughout the province, common community interests and organizations – that's a big, significant factor; that can include industry, culture, art, values, and

things like that – geographic pieces – geography is a great way to create communities and make lines of demarcation and boundary – communication and transportation routes across the province: they will come into play when we prepare our report.

As well, we need to make sure that we have understandable and clear boundaries, and that is a challenge, more of a challenge than most people realize, because it's a significant task. In addition, we are tasked with naming the constituencies, or the electoral divisions. I don't think it's a challenge in this particular part of the province, but we'll see. We have to name the constituencies that we recommend to the Speaker. And we have an all-encompassing other factor in the legislation that allows us to take into consideration any information that might be of assistance over and above what we hear and what we get in terms of submissions on the website and in terms of the population and boundaries.

That little bit of background and introduction gets us to this point. That is the current electoral map of the province of Alberta, demarcating all 87 boundaries. You can see a larger version of that at the back of the room, and the electoral divisions for Lethbridge and surrounding area are also posted. We were in Pincher Creek, so we had the bordering ridings for that community this morning.

And here we are in Lethbridge. We have 10 presenters, I believe, and the list I have – I'm just going to run through the presenters. Maybe just identify yourself, and then I'll call you up in order.

Drew Adamick.

Cheryl Meheden.

Merrill Harris.

Just in time. Ken Sears. Okay.

Jeff Coffman.

Maria Fitzpatrick.

Belinda Crowson. Oh, there you are. Okay.

Jeffrey Deurloo.

Rob Miyashiro. Maybe coming back from Edmonton. Who knows.

Scott Paul.

Keith Gardner.

Cameron Mills.

Tamara Miyanaga. Did I pronounce it right?

Mrs. Miyanaga: No. But it's okay.

The Chair: I'll call you Tamara. How's that? Tamara.

Randy Bullock.

Okay. We've got some time for those individuals who haven't responded to show up.

We'll start with Drew. Will you please come forward? You can have a seat. The microphone will pick up what you have to say. Identify yourself, tell us what you do, and please proceed.

Drew Adamick: Thank you very much, hon. Justice Miller and members of the Electoral Boundaries Commission here. My name is Drew Adamick. I'm an entrepreneur, living here in Lethbridge, running a financial planning and advisory practice, serving clients not just all across Alberta but also all across Canada as well, too. I'm glad to be here on the traditional Treaty 7 territories of the Blackfoot Confederacy and the Métis Nation of Alberta Region 3 and all of those who call Lethbridge and area home. My presentation to the commission today here: I was in the process of preparing a written submission, but considering time constraints, I decided to keep it as brief as possible, respecting everyone's time here, understanding that the commission's legislative authority and the guidelines are bounded here.

The feedback I'd like to give would be that when you're making your recommendations, while I understand the government has

recently removed the requirement that municipal boundaries be respected, at least that's what I may have heard online, too – correct me if that isn't the case – I do believe that when we look, especially with urban boundaries within Alberta here and especially here in Lethbridge, we are a growing community. Who knows if we might end up getting one of those two new seats down here, depending upon how population grows, but I do believe it's important to make sure that any urban issues within the urban communities – you know, again, in southern Alberta, here Lethbridge, Medicine Hat as well – be respected and that the boundaries be respected as much as reasonably possible. I know you've got a tough job balancing out boundaries, and you're factoring populations and everything, too, there, balancing urban, suburban, and rural areas of the province.

Other considerations I would like the commission to take into effect would be particularly in regard to rural Alberta, regarding making sure that communities aren't necessarily divided unnecessarily by too much length. I understand in this day and age as well, too, especially with things like Zoom, that it's easier to do virtual presentations in meetings, but there is still that important connection factor, the MLA as ombudsperson, and having that local role is important. While outside the purview of the commission, I would kind of recommend that perhaps maybe something I would suggest if there are further concerns about that would be that the provincial government increase budgeting for rural MLAs to have more offices in their constituencies, you know, if there is any anticipation. We all know that people always like that option to go into the office to see their MLA in their office as opposed to calling or e-mailing.

The other thing, another consideration would be the rights of Indigenous communities throughout, making sure that Indigenous land, nations, and their traditional territories are also reflected within the boundaries as well, too. For example, down here in Treaty 7 territory making sure that the interests of Indigenous and First Nations communities are also taken into consideration so that their collective communities across the land are also not, as much as reasonably possible, too divided up as much, making sure that they also have, you know, their ability to have effective representation, too, in the provincial Legislature.

That's, more or less, in summary just kind of my feedback as well, there. I'm well aware of the work that you all do there. You know, I don't envy your task, too. It's always very important and a very important part of our democratic process. So I'm just here to give – that's my two cents' worth here.

The Chair: Thank you.

Any questions?

I may use this opportunity to maybe clarify something. On the electoral division map you will see that Lethbridge-West – I'm just going to give you population numbers to give you some perspective. In the 2017 Electoral Boundaries Commission the population in Lethbridge-West was 46,525. This time around, using the updated statistics, it's 67,725. Lethbridge-East, in the 2017 EBC report, was 46,204 – I guess it's up there, but you have to have better eyesight than I do to read it up there – and then this year's population figure will be 53,599 for Lethbridge-East. So it gives you some perspective and some numbers, though.

Okay. Thank you very much, Drew. Where do you live, what constituency?

6:50

Drew Adamick: I live in Lethbridge-West.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

Drew Adamick: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Cheryl Meheden.

Dr. Meheden: Good evening.

The Chair: Good evening. Please proceed.

Dr. Meheden: I have notes, but don't worry; they're 14 font, double spaced.

My name is Cheryl Meheden, and I'm a resident and voter in the electoral district of Lethbridge-West. I've lived in Lethbridge for more than 30 years. I'm a business owner, retired professor, grandmother, and community advocate. I care about my city and my neighbourhood. I am an engaged citizen and am active on municipal committees and in my neighbourhood association. I tell you all of this so that you know that I am vested in this city and that I'm a willing participant who works to make Lethbridge better.

I'd like to start this presentation by sharing some of what I've learned so far about this process and perhaps repeating some of what has been said earlier. A news release from the Alberta government and also shared by the hon. Justice Miller was that under the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act the population of each electoral division in Alberta must not be more than 25 per cent above or more than 25 per cent below the average population of all the proposed electoral divisions. We heard that earlier. In consideration of this 25 per cent threshold, according to Elections Alberta information there are currently nine electoral divisions in Alberta with populations greater than 25 per cent of the average electoral division population. I'm going to come back to that in a minute. This indicates that there are Alberta regions who are underrepresented in the Legislature.

I would further quote the Hon. Mickey Amery, Minister of Justice and Attorney General, who stated, "The amendments we are proposing are essential to keeping up with Alberta's significant population growth and ensuring fair, effective representation for all Albertans in the legislature." Knowing these things, I agree and I understand that Alberta's population growth warrants a redistribution of the electoral boundaries, and there are ways for the minister to meet his goal by changing the electoral boundaries in Lethbridge-West. I would propose that as the fourth-largest city in Alberta and an expanding urban centre it is reasonable and democratic for the growing population to receive appropriate representation in the Legislature.

As a resident and voter of Lethbridge my needs are very different than a resident and voter in Barons or Coalhurst or other rural territory. The municipalities are also very different, some of which include their economic and taxation structures, their population attraction versus population densification strategies, access to services, infrastructure needs, and so on. As we've learned, when the boundaries were redrawn in 2017, the average population per district was about 46,000, I think, and today that number is closer to 55,000. In 2017 it made sense to incorporate rural territories into Lethbridge-West, and now in 2025 it makes sense to remove these territories as the population of Lethbridge currently surpasses 11,000, which coincidentally is almost exactly two electoral constituencies.

Having said that, in a strictly numerical sense political equity is not the same as political equality, and in a province as vast and geographically diversified as Alberta a balanced approach is needed, one that reflects population growth in urban areas while still ensuring that rural voters have a meaningful voice in the political process. This has already been accounted for when we factor in things such as population and representation in some rural areas. Special consideration for districts with significantly lower

populations already exist, and this contributes to political equity. For example, districts such as Slave Lake, Fort McMurray, Cardston-Siksika, and three others have populations that are less than half of the average, which is double what the 25 per cent threshold set out by the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act requires. I understand why this is necessary, and at the same time I recognize that a failure to adjust urban seat counts could lead to vote dilution, where many thousands of urban voters become underrepresented compared to sparsely rural ridings.

The special considerations for rural areas like Cardston-Siksika, Fort McMurray, and others are already provided, with those areas having acceptable disproportionate representation. To put that in perspective, in these underpopulated rural regions one of their votes is the same as three Lethbridge votes, which is far off from, you know, the American one person, one vote democracy that they used to be able to try and achieve. I understand and accept this disparity, but what I would not understand is changing the electoral boundaries to add rural areas to the city of Lethbridge. The rural territory that was added to Lethbridge-West in 2017 should be returned to the Macleod area from which it was taken. This would result in better representation for everyone, both urban and rural.

The opposite approach, which may include carving out Lethbridge-West and adding in other rural territories, dilutes the democratic legitimacy of Lethbridge voters because, as identified, urban and rural voters have important but different needs and issues. To be more democratically legitimate, the city of Lethbridge should have its rural electorate removed and allow that electorate to become part of a district which shares its needs. Rural areas have special considerations that are not met when they are part of a city.

I would conclude by saying that redistribution by restricting Lethbridge to having two representatives within the urban geographic boundaries and without outlying rural territories would accommodate for the population growth that Lethbridge has experienced and would still ensure that Lethbridge has fair representation that aligns with the guidelines that you've set out in the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act. I would hope that the committee considers the differences between rural and urban areas to be fairly and effectively represented as opposed to diluting the representation of Lethbridge voters.

Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you. Thank you for that well-reasoned presentation. I have a question.

Dr. Meheden: Sure.

The Chair: If you can explain briefly: what part of the country or the rural area is in Lethbridge-West?

Dr. Meheden: Coalhurst is part of Lethbridge-West.

The Chair: Oh, okay. Yeah. I should know that.
Okay. Any other questions? Yeah.

Dr. Martin: Thank you. Lovely presentation. Very logical. Always like that. I want to reinforce something that you acknowledge, and that is that, you know, this commission is all about what constitutes effective representation. We have a lot of suggestions in the act about the lines of inquiry one might pursue in deciding upon that for a particular district or a set of districts. But also we heard a lot this morning about what would constitute effectiveness, which is something I hadn't really thought about very hard but, obviously, is part of our brief.

I would also like to suggest to you if I might, just for your further contemplation, that there is a significant difference between

population and its balancing and the number of eligible voters. We have to struggle with that one, too, perhaps under the category of any other things of significance. The number of eligible voters in both Lethbridge-East and Lethbridge-West is almost identical. It seems at first blush to be good, and it's about the middle of the pack across the whole province, 35 and a half thousand eligible voters according to Elections Alberta. I'm not quite sure where I'm going with it, but any moral talk – and we're bound to hear lots of it – about balancing populations for cases in order to promote equity and the like, you know, fail to understand that there are many other factors for us to juggle as well.

Thank you.

Dr. Meheden: You're welcome.

The Chair: One brief question before I let you go.

Mr. Evans: Cheryl. Is it all right if I call you Cheryl?

7:00

Dr. Meheden: Sure.

Mr. Evans: You made a comment that Coalhurst was part of . . .

Dr. Meheden: I might be confusing federal and provincial electoral boundaries.

Mr. Evans: Yeah. If you look – I double-checked because I thought that maybe I was wrong, but the north boundary of Lethbridge-West is highway 3. This is the south side of highway 3, so there are really no rural communities involved in Lethbridge-West, but that's not to take away from the point.

Dr. Meheden: No. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, ma'am. If you have any written material you want to leave, leave it with Aaron at the back.

Dr. Meheden: Good. Thank you.

Mr. Evans: Thank you.

The Chair: Merrill Harris? No-show. Okay.

Ken Sears.

Ken Sears: Hello, commissioners. My name is Ken Sears. Just to give you a little background, my great-grandfather got off the train in Brooks in 1910, looked around, got back on the train, and came down to Nanton, and now my family are down into six generations in those foothills, so I do have some understanding of rural Alberta, at least rural southern Alberta. I came here in 1971. I went away for a while, came back, and I've been back for the last 25 years. I'm presently retired; actively retired.

Now, because of my background, I had wanted to come to the presentations in Pincher this morning, but my truck decided it didn't want to do that, and that will be relevant to maybe some of the things I'm going to say about the ability of people in rural Alberta to access representation.

However, what I've really been thinking of – and I'm going to try and limit myself to more and more smaller and smaller areas in southern Alberta, but I've been thinking about the highway 22 corridor that runs from what is now called Diamond Valley, the real estate agents' term. It was Turner Valley, Black Diamond. It runs straight south and hits highway 3 just east of the Crowsnest Pass.

Now, the reason I want to talk about that is that if you go down that highway, off to your west very quickly on you go by the Eden Valley Indian reserves, two little ragged bits of land. You can't see

them on most maps until you actually focus down on it. You've got to keep hitting that plus button.

The Chair: Sorry. What's the name of the reserve?

Ken Sears: Eden Valley. It's a Stoney reserve. It's actually more closely related to the ones north along highway 1 to Canmore. Culturally, it exists in and of itself, and that's part of the point I'm trying to make here.

You go further south and what you're doing is that you're going over the forest reserve on your west. As you get down to the Chain Lakes reservoir, you've got forest reserve on both sides in the Porcupine Hills. You know, you have this narrow little strip of land which is the municipality of Ranchland. It has a grand total of 97 people in the entire municipality, but it's functional, and it's not that isolated in that a lot of the people in there have relatives or have land over the Porcupine Hills further. They exist within the context of other municipalities as well.

The reason I'm bringing them up is that Ranchland also has on its very southern border the Grassy Mountain coal site, and that is a fault line. That is a political and social fault line in this province. You cannot find two communities more different – Crowsnest Pass, 8,000 people living on coal mines and many of them working across the border in B.C., and those ranchers, those hard-core mossy back ranchers, to the north of them – yet they are represented by a single MLA out of Claresholm, and I, for the life of me, do not see how she is able to honestly and fairly represent both communities. That's a fault line.

You go down from there and then – I guess what I'm doing is I'm identifying, in my mind, problems here. I can talk about that part of the country for a very long time. But the point I'm making is that these rural ridings, particularly, have contained within themselves disparate and sometimes extremely unlike groups, you know, what you're sort of talking about here with common community interests, those sorts of things. Any riding is not a monolith. It's not the same. It contains within itself all sorts of different groups, all sorts of different cultural groups, political groups, interest groups.

When you look at that and people say, "Well, gee; we've got a riding with that much smaller population," in some ways, yes, you do. But given distance, given visibly disparate interest groups – I live in Lethbridge, yet I can name you more social groupings in southwestern Alberta, in rural Alberta than I really can in Lethbridge. They tend to get lost in the larger population, which is not to say that the larger population should be in any way discriminated against. One person, one vote. I understand you're saying that this is not the whole point, and I understand that in Canadian context, but these ridings have to make some legitimate geographic and cultural sense.

As I said, I can identify the Crowsnest Pass, Ranchland as a fault line. But then I come closer into Lethbridge, and what we've got on the west border here is this narrow little corridor that joins this weird, hourglass-shaped riding of Cardston-Siksika, which has a population of 25,291, far below the median. Yet Cardston-Siksika, as I understand it, exists simply because you had an MLA who said: I don't want to have to try and represent people from the Saskatchewan border all the way to Cardston.

The Chair: Okay. Sorry. I'm getting the warning that you're running into the deadline.

Ken Sears: Oh, sorry.

The Chair: I just want to correct, though. Cardston-Siksika, in my understanding from the data I have, has a population now of 47,000.

Ken Sears: Okay. One of the problems I've had is trying to find accurate numbers. Okay. But Cardston-Siksika is. . .

The Chair: Within the range.

Ken Sears: It's just in the range. You know, it does not – anything north of about Vauxhall socially exists in the context of Cluny and Gleichen and the Blackfoot reserves up there and Calgary. So, again, it's not really representing a coherent social group.

I'll do this really quickly. Okay. I'll get really fast to this. There is concern and there's concern in Lethbridge that, gee, we've got these two ridings here, and these are smaller rural ridings with a smaller population. Somebody is going to come along and say: let's take a portion of Lethbridge and put a big wedge of the rest of southern Alberta, and it will all come down to Lethbridge, and it'll make the numbers, and it'll look really good. Well, that's what I call the Costco version of redistricting. People drive in to Costco all the time in Lethbridge, and they drive through their hometowns, and those hometowns are dying. In order to maintain a viable political system in rural southern Alberta, you have to not – you have to resist the temptation to turn those ridings into a mixed riding. They will be buried, and they will be lost.

I'm sorry I took so much time, but that's, you know . . .

The Chair: Okay. Any questions from the panel of Mr. Sears?

7:10

Mr. Evans: I have one question.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Evans: If you're looking at the legislation, with the changes to the legislation in section 14 and the relevant considerations now we're able to, regardless of the municipal boundaries, take into account communities of interest. Is that what you're really – you're saying: look, these things should be more than just a physical boundary; we should have a community aspect of common interest, common focus, common goals.

Ken Sears: I would say "the common interest" is such a vague term that almost anything can be poured into that mould. That's worrisome. To me, the common interest is – and I haven't seen any indication of this in previous redistricting – almost an invitation for some smart politician in Edmonton to decide to play games with that because anything can be a common interest.

Mr. Evans: I mean, the legislation says communities of interest and then it says: including municipalities, regional and rural communities, Indian reserves, and Métis settlements. So I suppose it's somewhat restricted by virtue of the surrounding examples. Is that what you're talking about in terms of, like, for example, where you talked about the Crowsnest Pass versus the ranchers to the north? To me, what I understood you were saying was there's a sense of community, a sense of a commonality with respect to Crowsnest Pass but different from the ranchers in that community. Is that . . .

Ken Sears: Oh, yes, very much so. That was the point I was making. In any riding you have these subgroups. Now, I happen to be a very big fan of the municipal governments because they really do have a one-to-one, you know, voter-vote relationship.

Mr. Chair: In an nonward system.

Ken Sears: In an nonward system. I mean, we're just talking rural here. That, to me – I look at Ranchland. They represent their

interests, as the town council of Crowsnest Pass represents their interests as they see them. The question I had with that, and this was – I guess I had just identified what I thought was a problem with that particular riding.

Mr. Evans: Sure. What I'm interested in, Mr. Sears, is what would – I mean, your point is well taken in terms of that community interest could be – I mean, assuming there is a smart politician in Edmonton, they could do something magical with that. But we have the catch-all: any other factors the commission considers appropriate. Would you be able to share with us what factors we should be considering to help us achieve the goal you would like us to achieve?

Ken Sears: Again, "any other factors" is a such broad, you know – I mean, so . . .

Mr. Evans: No, I'm asking you to . . .

Ken Sears: Okay. Just what I think?

Mr. Evans: Yeah.

Ken Sears: I think one of the things you have to do is, first off, in this context you have to look at the urban-rural divide. It is there, it exists, and I think that has to be taken into consideration and honoured. But then you have to start looking at all the things they've talked about over the decades, which is what highways cross a particular geographic area, what, you know, different cultural groupings are there.

Eden Valley reserve is not in any way, shape, or form the same as the surrounding territory, nor really in a deep, important sense are the Blackfoot reserve or the Blood reserves. They exist in and of themselves. They have connections and interconnections with the surroundings, but they have a different existence. They have a different identity.

Even southwestern Alberta: everybody talks about Alberta as being oil and gas. If you look at southwestern Alberta, the seven municipalities in southwestern Alberta, oil and gas in this part of the province is not a growth industry. Oil and gas reserves have been declining for the last 20 years. Sometime in the 1980s they went down and they started resurveying every last piece of ground in this province, starting around Waterton. They went right down to Precambrian. They know what's in the ground. Southern Alberta, southwestern Alberta is not an oil and gas industry anymore.

The Chair: We're going to have to use the chair's prerogative to wind this up.

Ken Sears: Okay. Sorry there, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you for your engaging presentation. Let me ask you this one question: are you for or against blended ridings?

Ken Sears: I'm against them. They don't work.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you. Thank you very much for your comments.

Mr. Jeff Coffman. I know we're on a time clock here, but because a couple of people have missed, I'm being a little loose with the time limit.

Mr. Coffman.

Mr. Coffman: Just seeing if Aaron wanted to provide a score update. It's 3 to 1 Oilers.

The Chair: Good. What period? Sorry. Still any time left? Oh, good.

Mr. Coffman: There's hope.

The Chair: Well, you get five minutes extra just for that.

Mr. Coffman: Well, thank you. Thank you. I'm glad they're winning, then.

Good evening, commission, Justice Miller, members of the commission. Thank you for the opportunity to address you. My name is Jeffrey Coffman. I've been a resident of Lethbridge for 33 years, living both in Lethbridge-East and Lethbridge-West. I hold a bachelor's degree and master's degree, both in political science, from the University of Alberta and the University of Lethbridge respectively. I served four terms on Lethbridge city council. For the last 14 years I've taught the municipal government courses at the University of Lethbridge, and I undertake policy work for smaller municipalities and have acted as an interim CAO, most recently for the town of Coalhurst.

In my time this evening I'd like to respectfully ask the commission to consider three points in your final report, and I have one additional question at the end for the commission. Since you're all very well versed on your legal and legislative obligations, I won't add any background to my legislative references.

The first point is to request that the commission's final report emphasize the values and prescriptions set out in section 14 of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act with specific references to, one, the section 3 Charter stipulation, and that population must be a dominant consideration in drawing electoral boundaries; two, that electoral districts ought to have understandable and clear boundaries; and three, that considerations of communities of interest are paramount, especially as they relate to municipal jurisdictions with populations at or near the district quotient, in this case being the 54,929. I do trust that the commission will submit a factual, data- and evidence-driven report, so these three conditions will inevitably be part of your considerations. By including this emphasis, it's my hope that the government cannot misinterpret the necessity to redistrict the province towards effective representation.

The second thing I wish, respectfully – or, actually, the second thing I state is that I support the commission in following the data, especially as it is intended to meet the obligations under section 15(1) of the EBC Act. There are nine constituencies that have a deviation greater than 25 per cent over the quotient, seven of which are in Calgary and Edmonton. Calgary-North East and Edmonton-Ellerslie are the two districts that require the most attention, with 55.1 and 50.1 per cent positive deviation respectively. Any reflection on the principle of the Charter requirement for effective representation ought to lead the commission to recognize that the significant growth in our largest city has led to inequitable and ineffective representation in the Legislature. I do support following the data, and I know you will.

My third and final point comes from both my academic studies and my teaching. Political scientist Arend Lijphart has written extensively on the processes of redistricting for fair and effective representation. The second of his 16 criteria state, and I quote, the boundaries dividing the electoral districts must coincide with local political districts.

Respectfully stated, municipal boundaries are not simply demarcations of local jurisdiction. Municipalities are unique policy units, each with its own political identity and values. I'm certain that Mrs. Samson can attest to the fact that Sylvan Lake is not Red Deer, nor is it Rocky Mountain House, nor is it Red Deer county. As a former councillor and as an interim CAO I know that the

citizens of Lethbridge are not the citizens of Coalhurst and vice versa even though they are separated by nine kilometres. Each is different.

7:20

And when I say "different," I'm not referring to any ideological alignment or how someone votes. By differences I mean communities of interest. Dr. James Lightbody, formerly of the University of Alberta, would identify this as, quote, the local norms and expectations, unquote, that lead municipalities towards their own approaches and policy directions to meeting local challenges, and these challenges are different for each community. When you take part of a large urban centre to create a rural-urban, district, you fail to understand or respect the fact that the residents in both the urban and rural communities have different cultures, economic and historic values, goals, and considerations. For example, the local norms and expectations for the people of Coalhurst or Picture Butte or Lethbridge county are different from the local norms and expectations for Lethbridge residents.

If we think of this in a federal context, nowhere in Canada does a federal riding cross a provincial boundary. The ridings of Lakeland, Alberta, and Battlefords-Lloydminster-Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan, represent the residents of Lloydminster, Alberta, and Lloydminster, Saskatchewan, respectively. The city of Lloydminster is divided to acknowledge the two communities of interest, and I ask the commission to remember this when redistricting for population growth, especially in Edmonton and Calgary.

For further consideration on community of interest, I'd suggest the commission read the literature of Dr. John Courtney from the University of Saskatchewan, Dr. Jennifer Smith from Dalhousie, or Dr. Réjean Pelletier from Laval.

These are my three points, then: that the report emphasize the values and prescriptions set up in section 14 of the EBCA, especially regarding section 3 of the Charter; that electoral districts ought to have understandable and clear boundaries; and that the considerations of communities of interest – in this case, municipalities – are significant.

My question, then, for the commission regards a rumour circulating in our community, and you've heard one presenter this evening already refer to it. On January 29, 2025, the *Lethbridge Herald* quoted John Middleton-Hope publicly stating that "another constituency association will be formed in the near future in anticipation of a possible third [district] being created in Lethbridge." The *Herald* continues citing Mr. Middleton-Hope as stating his desire to "make sure the other two [districts] in Lethbridge also go Conservative."

My question to you is not the source of his information, but given the previous statements and understanding of Calgary and Edmonton combined with the data of Lethbridge-West and Lethbridge-East, Lethbridge neither needs nor deserves another constituency. As a leader in this community and somebody who was approached to try to verify these sort of statements, my question is quite simple: has the commission been tasked by anyone with creating a third constituency in whole or in part involving the city of Lethbridge or surrounding area? I know the answer to that question, but I'd like to be able to advise the people of this community.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Coffman. Perfect timing; your time was up. However, I can assure you that you are the fourth presenter this evening. We had two this morning. No one has hinted anything

or said anything to the commission about what you just quoted at the end.

Mr. Coffman: Oh, thank you.

The Chair: We've heard nothing about that.
Okay, Susan? We've got time.

Mrs. Samson: I have one question. We've had numerous written submissions and, if I can use the term "follow the data," clearly the people who took the time to write have said that they do not want to see hybrid ridings, rural ridings, anything like that. But we also saw some very strong – and they're in the minority of written submissions, of encompassing the rural communities of Coaldale, Coalhurst into the city of Lethbridge. We saw that suggestion more than once, and it surprised me because it came from people like yourself who are knowledgeable about politics at the municipal level. They had very good reasons about: I live in Coalhurst; I travel to Lethbridge; I work there; I go there for recreation; I shop there; I just actually sleep in Coalhurst; I don't do anything else there. What are your thoughts on that? Not living in this area, is the closeness – particularly, you're the CAO of Coalhurst. Is there a closeness there that would not rub them wrong if they became Lethbridge?

Mr. Coffman: Thank you for the question. Yes, it definitely would rub them wrong because the people of Coalhurst see themselves as being unique from the citizens of Lethbridge. It's literally seven minutes from my house to the office in Coalhurst. We are just that close. However, I can attest that there are distinct identities, serving for 14 years as a member of council in Lethbridge and working as an interim CAO in Coalhurst. There are distinct cultural values and identities in the two communities, and the same would hold true with Coaldale as well. Following the data and working with the numbers to expand, to encompass that broader community – because it would have to be contingent. I won't use the word "gerrymander," but you wouldn't create something unusual. You're going to put one or both constituencies, again, over a threshold. If we're trying to stay as parity with the quotient as we can, including them is going to throw off your numbers.

Culturally I would say that they are distinct. Otherwise, the people of Coalhurst would actually sleep in Lethbridge; they would buy a house in Lethbridge; they would live in Lethbridge. But they choose to live in Coalhurst; they choose to live in Coaldale; they choose to live in Picture Butte for a reason, and that reason usually goes back to their values, to what they value in community, to what they're looking for for their culture.

Does that answer your question?

Mrs. Samson: Yes, it does. I think that's what we need to hear, the reasoning, because that scenario could happen anywhere in Alberta.

Mr. Coffman: Absolutely.

Mrs. Samson: But we're talking about it here. Thank you. Excellent.

The Chair: Okay. Any other questions of Mr. Coffman? [A timer sounded] I guess that's the final bell, Mr. Coffman.

Mr. Coffman: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Our next presenter is Maria Fitzpatrick. Ms Fitzpatrick.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Okay. Bonsoir. Good evening to the members of the panel, and thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to you this evening. I have some notes here for my presentation. This presentation is from my experience as the MLA for Lethbridge-East from 2015 to '19 – I'm happy to see my colleague here – and from my heart. I love Lethbridge.

Now I'll begin as soon as I can get my notes up. As you mentioned about the current population, we did increase in population, but I think we still sit in the same position as we did in 2017. I presented in 2017, and my presentation was to maintain the boundaries in Lethbridge-East and Lethbridge-West because I felt the boundaries that were there provided an opportunity for the MLA, myself, to meet with my constituents. I will tell you that I have walked every street in Lethbridge-East from Hardieville to Six Mile Coulee. I have been on every street, and I have talked to the constituents of this riding. When I talk to the constituents of this riding, I hear common concerns, common values in terms of our constituency, in terms of our city. Many people feel the same way I do. They love Lethbridge. It's a really wonderful place to live, and I'd like it to stay that way.

Okay. The constituency is made up of a very diverse population. I would say that there is a feeling in this community that everybody is welcome in this community, and I'd like it to stay that way, as I said before. We have many white-collar workers in this constituency and in Lethbridge-West. We have people at the university, at the polytechnic, at the hospital, at the research centre. We have local businesses, Indigenous businesses, and we all operate very much as a community. We are Canes fans; we are Bulls fans. I'm telling you that unless you live in this community, you do not know what that means unless you go to a game, and then you can feel what this community feels like.

7:30

In Lethbridge there are also blue-collar workers, and all of those workers are represented. They're represented because they can access their MLA, and I'm telling you that I saw people in my office, I saw people at church, I saw people in the supermarket, I saw people on their doorstep, and they talked to me about their concerns and about possible solutions, and I have to say that I brought those to our caucus and to our government in Edmonton.

I would say that I've probably had a conversation with the majority of people in this constituency. I live in this constituency. I walk, I drive, I attend events, I go to the swimming pool, and even though I'm no longer the MLA, I still hear about the issues and concerns that people have and I am asked: what can we do about it? I think the key thing is that no matter who I'm talking to, whether it's a nurse at the hospital or whether it's somebody who's doing genome research out at the research centre, the concerns are the same; the feelings about our community are the same. People have talked to me about coming and doing a presentation tonight. In fact, I played golf last night, and the three people I played golf with said: are you gonna talk about this; are you gonna talk about that? And I have included that in my comments.

Certainly, everybody has concerns about our health care in Alberta right now. In Lethbridge we have incredible concerns about the possible contamination of the Oldman watershed. That's our only source of water, and it will affect us. It will also affect anybody downstream, right to Hudson Bay. They talk about it, and they want to know how we can stop those things.

I volunteer on five different community committees, and every single committee talks about those things. They talk about our health care. They talk about the contamination of our water. They talk about, you know, how do we deal with hate? That came up since the boycott at Coutts. They have those concerns, and they talk

to me about it. I can't say if they talk to the current MLA, but they talk to me.

I'm here to say that this is our community and we have common interests; we have common concerns. We have a commonality where I talk to somebody, and they tell me how much they care about their neighbour.

We had a fire on our street a couple of years ago, and the entire neighbourhood was out – coffee, tea, whatever for the firemen – to help the families that were affected by that fire, and that happens every time there's an incident in this community. An incident can happen outside our community: yes, they'll be concerned, and we certainly showed that when the Fort McMurray fire happened, but we come together as our community, and we're proud of Lethbridge.

I guess that my last comment to you is: please don't change the boundaries in Lethbridge. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Both west and east: is that what you're saying?

Ms Fitzpatrick: West and east.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, Ms Fitzpatrick.
Any quick questions? Yeah.

Mr. Clark: Hello. Good to see you. Yeah. Great to see you again.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Great to see you.

Mr. Clark: First off, thank you for your submission. I appreciate it. I haven't had a chance to speak yet today, so thank you to everyone who has submitted so far and to those who are here in attendance. It means a lot. This is democracy in action, and it's good to hear a few different perspectives, so thank you very much for that.

I actually have just kind of almost a tactical question. As a non-Lethbridgian or Lethbrider, I just observed that Lethbridge-West is slightly larger than Lethbridge-East, population-wise. Our numbers have Lethbridge-West at 57,725, or just a little over 5 per cent above the average, and Lethbridge-East at 53,599, or about 2 and a half per cent below the average. Where's the growth in Lethbridge coming from, east or west? Or is it fairly balanced? And would it make any sense to just nudge the line over a little bit to reduce the size of Lethbridge-West a little and increase the size of Lethbridge-East, just by moving over a few streets? Are there sort of natural boundaries there? Again, I don't know Lethbridge that well.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Okay. There probably is a natural boundary, but if you talk to anybody in Lethbridge, 13th Street is the boundary. If you're on the east side, you're in Lethbridge-East. If you're on the west side, you're in Lethbridge-West. Even though – I don't know – I guess that at some point the river would be the boundary, but it isn't right now.

The population, I think, is well managed in terms of the two constituencies because there is a slight difference in the population in east and west. There are probably more blue-collar workers in Lethbridge-East, and if you have a conversation in Lethbridge-East, the conversation is like this. If you have a conversation in Lethbridge-West, it's probably more, I want to say, university oriented. That may not be exact, but that's certainly the way people have described the city to me. Personally, you know, you go over the river, I can go to No Frills on the east or the west. It doesn't matter. But, as I said, I love Lethbridge, and there's so much here that people are involved in and that they do.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Okay. Thank you. Anything else?

The Chair: No, but Mr. Clark's question may be carried over to the next presenter, who's a city councillor.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Okay. And I will say that I am also a recipient of the Queen's platinum anniversary medal as well.

The Chair: Oh. Congratulations. Thank you.
Okay. Miss Belinda Crowson.

Ms Crowson: It's the bird. Crowson.

The Chair: Crowson.

Ms Crowson: I am not here as a member of city council.

The Chair: Oh. But you might have answers to some of the questions.

Ms Crowson: I might, yeah.

The Chair: Yeah. Thank you.

Ms Crowson: Thank you very much for allowing me the ability to speak to the commission on this. As you noted, my name is Belinda Crowson. I'm here today as a local historian, and I want to provide you some context and history on the Lethbridge ridings and on Lethbridge in general, which will give you some sense of why we are a little different than the rural areas around us.

Lethbridge was one of the original 25 electoral districts that Alberta created. The original riding, called the Lethbridge riding, covered the town of Lethbridge and a wide swath of rural areas. Lethbridge, though, changed very dramatically in those early years of Alberta. In 1906 we became a city, and we went through a population boom that quadrupled our population in just a few years. Recognizing that, in 1909 the Lethbridge riding was divided into Lethbridge District and Lethbridge City, so we have had a riding that has only been urban since 1909. We have never included rural areas since 1909, a long precedence for our community.

In 1913 the Lethbridge District, a rural riding, was divided into Taber and Little Bow, so in 1913 the only riding that used the Lethbridge name was the Lethbridge City riding. Understanding that, in 1921 they just removed the city part. So we have been the Lethbridge riding until we were divided in 1969, when the city had grown large enough to have two ridings. Lethbridge-West and Lethbridge-East were at that time created.

When they divided Lethbridge, they chose to divide us along 13th Street. When you were asking about natural boundaries: at some point, yes, the river will be the natural boundary. But to me right now 13th Street is an incredibly natural boundary; 13th Street was originally created as Westminster Road. It is one of the oldest roads in our community, and it's actually an old range road. It has been a divider even before there was a Lethbridge. The original plan for Westminster Road was to go from coulee to coulee. It has always been a separating road. It was named Westminster Road deliberately, being named after the Westminster district of London, England, so it is actually named after Parliament. So how apropos that we actually divide our Lethbridge-East and Lethbridge-West ridings by the Parliament of Westminster.

7:40

It makes a lot of sense, and that boundary is natural to Lethbridge not in a geographical way but in an understanding way. The city uses 13th Street to divide almost all of our neighbourhoods. London Road on one side, Victoria Park on the other; Westminster on one side, Senator Buchanan on the other; Legacy Ridge on one side, Uplands on the other: 13th Street is used by the municipality as a boundary, and it's still used by the province as the boundary.

In 1969 when the two ridings were made for the 1971 election, west Lethbridge had just started to be annexed and was just starting to grow. That's where the 13th Street came because west Lethbridge was not very large definitely at that time. I have no doubt that as west Lethbridge is growing – and, yes, it is the fastest growing part. We have this weird thing in Lethbridge. We don't have an east side in Lethbridge; we have a north, a south, and a west because west Lethbridge is so new. But as the west side keeps growing, I don't doubt that at one point we will just talk about east and west Lethbridge, and the east and west ridings will make sense much more in that context. That's how we get today to the two ridings: as I said, 116 years of only being within the city itself.

You also have to understand that Lethbridge, though: not only is our riding separate from the area; Lethbridge has always been a little bit separate from the area. We actually had the rural areas of Lethbridge back in 1918 threaten to boycott Lethbridge. We were the only city in Alberta, not the only community but the only city in Alberta, that voted to stay wet. We wanted to keep alcohol when they voted for prohibition. You know, Edmonton and Calgary: no problem going dry. Lethbridge said: let us keep booze, please. And some of our rural communities who did not want alcohol threatened to boycott us and not let their young people here. That is just one of the many ways that we have stood out from the rural areas.

We have three postsecondaries in Lethbridge, which makes us a very different community than many of the surrounding areas from a population area. We have had all sorts of ways that we stand aside, and to me that boundary of keeping it only within Lethbridge makes not only sense today, but it makes historic sense, and it truly reflects how different we are from those surrounding communities.

I know that earlier you asked Mr. Coffman about Coalhurst. I recently did a history of Coalhurst for the community, and, yeah, we're not the same. We both shared a coal mining past, but in many other ways – the thing about the city is that we've always had very strong rules. Historically if you wanted to not follow the rules, you would have lived in Hardieville and Coalhurst – right? – so the values, the personalities of the communities developed in very different ways and remain so today even though they are as close as they are.

I wanted to, again, provide you that context and give you a sense of why the ridings work for Lethbridge historically and today.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Ms Crowson. Do you have a printed version of that? Sorry. Could you share something with the commission?

Ms Crowson: I could. I'd have to fix it up. It's just notes for myself right now, but I certainly can provide you the history of how we got here. Yeah.

The Chair: Please do. You would confirm that Lethbridge west is the growth portion of Lethbridge?

Ms Crowson: It is, especially because we always compare north, south, and west. East and west kind of grow the same, but west is growing a little bit faster, and like I said, I assume that at some point

that boundary will be moving to the river. I don't think it's there yet.

The Chair: Okay.

Any other questions?

Mrs. Samson: Excellent. I learned a lot.

Ms Crowson: And if you ever want a tour when you're down in Lethbridge, give me a call.

The Chair: She does a great cemetery tour.

Okay. Thank you so much.

Mr. Jeffrey Deurloo.

Mr. Deurloo: Yeah. I included a slide deck for this.

The Chair: Okay. Great.

Mr. Deurloo: Hello. My name is Jeff Deurloo. I am a GIS technician and developer that works at the Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute. My technical background: I have a bachelor's degree in computer science and geographic information science. I am very into, like, maps and location data and all that, so this will be a very technical presentation.

As we get into this, the one thing that I am going to request from the committee is that the city boundaries are respected when drawing city boundaries. For Lethbridge, specifically, I want two constituencies completely contained within the city. No sharing with bedroom communities.

Yeah. It doesn't fill for whatever reason. Thank you. Thank you.

The Chair: We're in good time, so there's no reason to rush through your presentation. We're well ahead of schedule, actually.

Mr. Deurloo: Okay. Good. It is a very dense presentation. In rehearsals I'm like: oh, God, I have to really rush to get the seven minutes.

Anyway, I see a city boundary as a clear and understandable boundary that should be respected and followed. I also kind of see that – I know that we have 25 per cent deviation as the standard. I think 10 per cent is probably a bit more – yes, it is a bit tighter. I think the previous committee did a pretty good job of getting a 10 per cent deviation. That would be, like, the 50,000 to 60,000 point. Lethbridge's population, 110,000 divided by two: that is smack on the deviation, very, very close. As someone that lives on the south side of the city and in Lethbridge-West, I just feel that I have more in common with anybody anywhere inside the city than anywhere outside.

A quick map of the situation in Lethbridge. Yes, we have the boundary between the two ridings. That will probably have to move. That's okay because the west side is growing much faster than the east. But, again, the central point I do want to keep hammering over and over again: respect the city boundaries. Lock that in place. Do not deviate.

Before I get into how exactly I would do it, I'm going to quickly go over the situation in the other areas around the province. Again, rounded to a single decimal point, Lethbridge is exactly 2.0, and then Red Deer currently is also roughly 2, Strathcona county also roughly 2. Then for the smaller cities, in my opinion, I would like one urban and then one blended constituency just because they're a little bit high. I think St. Albert and Grande Prairie, the constituencies they have right now, are the template that probably should be followed for communities like Airdrie and Medicine Hat.

Then, very quickly, for the cities of Calgary and Edmonton, dividing their Statistics Canada July 2024 by your average riding

size, you get, you know, 28.6 and 21.7 for Calgary and Edmonton respectively. You can fit at least 28 constituencies in Calgary and at least 21 in Edmonton, so that's two more in Calgary, one more in Edmonton. If flooring that, so taking only 28 and 21, is what it would take to ensure that none of the constituencies in those two cities are crossing outside the city limits, I think that's an acceptable trade-off.

Now going back into Lethbridge. Because I am a GIS person, I'll kind of walk through how I would split it. Previous boundary commissions, as kind of discussed, used 13th Street. They also used Stafford Drive. If you go north to south, you use Stafford Drive, and then when you hit St. Basil's, it switches over to 13th, and it goes 13th all the way down south again. I think it's just a matter of finding a different switchover to go from 13th and Stafford.

Going into the city. Since that quarterly Statistics Canada data only goes to the city level – it doesn't really have census block subsidy as far as I could see – I used the '23 municipal census for this little exercise. At that point the city had a population of 106,000. If my math with the census tracks, the west riding had 56,000; the east riding had 50,000. In that scenario, we'd be moving 3,000 people. Because that's a difference of about 6,000, add 3,000 to east: that would make the numbers balance.

I'm just going major road by major road, like, east-west roads. From St. Basil's the next major one I would probably look at is 9th Avenue North. Using that, you'd be moving, like, about 1,200 people over. Not quite enough. Go down to 5th Ave, you'd be moving about 2,600 people. That's pretty good. But, you know, I'm going to go a little bit south to the highway. That moves about 3,500 people, and that is a little bit more than enough to handle the 3,000 that we're looking to move if we're using the '23 municipal census as our guide.

As a quick summary, the blue line there is what I would suggest the boundary would look like and the green line is the current boundary as it currently exists. Yeah. That basically covers the ground of what I wanted to cover.

7:50

The Chair: Do you mind just going back and putting that back up?

Mr. Deurloo: Yeah.

The Chair: Thank you. Keep going.

Mr. Deurloo: Yeah. That's basically the main thing I wanted to cover, just using the highway. The cool thing is that it's such a clean and elegant way of handling things. Like, the north side would be using Stafford, the south side would be using 13th, and the populations would be, as far as I could tell from the municipal census, pretty balanced. That's what I would suggest.

I also admit that because I was looking at this and I was looking at like, "Oh, God, I'm going to run out of time," I did come up with a quick suggestion for the surrounding areas and mapped it out and then cut it out for my presentation altogether, but really, really quick, the process was: okay; let's glue together Taber-Warner and Cardston-Siksika to see if we have two. Like, we have 47,000 and 50,000; the sum is about 97,000. To get to your 10 per cent deviation, you need at least 3,000 and no more than 23,000. Is there any community nearby outside that hits that? Well, Strathmore has 16,000 people, so if you grab that, put that in, the combined will be about 3,000 over, so it's like 113,000 total.

Then there were, like, a whole bunch of splits, but the split I came up with at the end is that you split it north-south. The south riding has Cardston county, Blood reserve, county of Warner, entire MD of Taber, Forty Mile county; call it Cardston-Taber-Warner. If the math is correct, it should be 56,000 people. Then the north riding

would be the entirety of Lethbridge county, the entirety of Vulcan county, Siksika reserve, the portions of the current Cardston-Siksika that sit inside of Wheatland county, plus grabbing Strathmore to make the numbers work, 57,000 people. I made a map for that, and then I was like: oh, I'm not going to have time; I got to scrap that.

Mr. Clark: Send that in. We'd love it.

The Chair: Send that to us. Talk to Aaron about how to send that.

Mr. Deurloo: Yeah.

I would dub the northern riding Little Bow and revive a name from the 2010 commissions and earlier.

Mrs. Samson: We'd like to see that.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Jeffrey. Very detailed and innovative, especially if we're going to move the boundary at all within the city.

Any questions from the panellists?

Mr. Evans: I have one question. We've heard lots of comments on – I liked your drawing the line farther out past 13th and Stafford, but you'll agree with me that once you hit 16th Avenue, 13th Street becomes a nonfactor, anything south.

Mr. Deurloo: Yeah. It curves around Scenic and then it just kind of takes a straight line. I'm just saying: preserve that line as it is.

Mr. Evans: Right. We're just making an arbitrary line.

Mr. Deurloo: Yeah.

Mr. Evans: Isn't the natural geographic boundary the river? You've got significant growth. Potential and future growth, projected growth, actually doubles in the dirt on west Lethbridge. The growth is going to be accelerated there.

Mr. Deurloo: I think you're probably about a decade away from moving the boundary to the river just because, like, right now it's about a 60-40 split.

Mr. Evans: Bear in mind that this doesn't get addressed again for at least . . .

Mr. Deurloo: At least eight years. Yeah.

Mr. Evans: And more likely nine, so what we do today: we need to be projecting into the future of where we think things are going to be.

I think they were pretty brave when they made the dividing line 13th way back in the day because west Lethbridge had next to nobody there. You had a university. You had the very rudiments of a community being developed over there. What are your thoughts in terms of us being that type of forward thinking, bearing in mind that this isn't going to be addressed for probably eight to nine years?

Mr. Deurloo: Like, I don't necessarily hate it. I think you'd have to consider how much of an over – if you want to overcorrect for west, I think you still have other options before you hit the river. Like, you're using Stafford at the highway in my proposal, but Stafford goes all the way to 6th Avenue South. That would be the first thing I would check, and then at that point, instead of using 13th Street, you might say: okay; the river on the south side, south of Whoop-Up Drive, Stafford north. You can do this in, like, pieces.

You don't have to jump all the way, using the river the entire way, just yet.

Mr. Evans: There's not a big population west of 13th Street in any of that. But to me, notwithstanding the history, there can't be a difference in the sense of community on the west side of 13th Street versus the east side of 13th Street. In fact, that area in what we would say is the downtown core: that is a community and with the same community interests. So if we want to look at things from a microcommunity perspective – I'll say, like, a cell perspective but not a terrorist cell. They're going to have – you know, there are numerous microcommunities within even the downtown core.

The Chair: Greg?

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Sorry. I've just got one quick question. I'm going to just actually point at the map, if you don't mind. Apologies for the sound quality. Again, the advantage of having a couple of Lethbridgers on the panel.

This area here is basically that. If this blue line was basically the river there, does that – so I've got a bit of GIS magic, and that tells me that that's about 5,000 people. I'm just kind of curious. Is that a natural sort of grouping, or is that larger?

Mr. Deurloo: Well, yeah. That is a neighbourhood, Senator Buchanan and Staffordville. I suppose you could glue them all together. Obviously, I don't have the entire census in front of me at this second. It's possible because, like, you can clearly see in the base map that I am cutting through one of the neighbourhoods, Senator Buchanan, there. This was something that I just kind of quickly threw together that seemed like a pretty easy solution. Yeah. Like, Scenic is a very good north-south line to use even though there are not very many people between Scenic and the river. It's just a few seniors' homes and a couple of apartments.

Mr. Evans: Yeah. I'd live there.

The Chair: Julian, do you have a question?

Dr. Martin: Yeah.

Thank you very much, Jeffrey. You know, I followed along with your prose version of the GIS work that's in your head. I actually followed that, and what I would like to suggest to you is: don't feel bounded by a 10 per cent variation. Try on a scenario that's 15 or even 20. I mean, just do those thought experiments because the act does give us the latitude, which, obviously, we would wish to use very sparingly. It does give us the direction that: okay, fellas; it's normal to use that variation. It's not obscure. It's not in the legislation as a concession to incompetence by the commissioners.

Mr. Deurloo: Yeah. And, obviously, when you're putting municipalities, you're not going to have, like, a clean onto the 1,000.

Dr. Martin: Obviously right, and it would be madness to try for that kind of mathematical parity.

I'd be interested, if you are going submit to this commission your general sketch that you described for us, in how you would move all those pieces of territory. Do a version where you use a larger variation as well.

Mr. Deurloo: Okay.

Dr. Martin: Thanks.

Mr. Clark: And perhaps smaller. I mean, give us sort of the perfect. I'm just interested if you're willing to do it because it's really interesting work, and you've obviously got some . . .

Mr. Deurloo: Yeah, I am very interested in this kind of stuff. I know the written deadline is basically passed. I've only really done it with, like, the two that have surrounded the city because, obviously, I'm not going to cover all 89 ridings in a 10-minute presentation. That's kind of ridiculous. Yeah.

Dr. Martin: We would be particularly interested in the territory that you did describe.

8:00

Mr. Deurloo: Yeah. Okay.

Dr. Martin: I think the reason you're presenting it and the reason why perhaps you modelled it in the first place is trying to deal with some issues that have Lethbridge pretty much at its centre.

Mr. Deurloo: Yeah.

Dr. Martin: You know, again, for us to be able to see a scenario that provides a greater context and the ripple effect of moving boundaries: that's very helpful stuff.

Mr. Deurloo: Okay.

The Chair: Okay. Jeffrey, thank you very much, and please – don't tell anybody this – just get your written stuff to Aaron Roth. I know you may have missed the deadline for the written submissions.

Mr. Evans: Justice Miller is giving you an extension.

The Chair: Yeah.

Mr. Deurloo: Sounds good.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you so much. Thank you for all the work you put into it, obviously.

Okay. We have one more presenter before the break, and I see he just arrived. Rob Miyashiro. Just in time. Welcome.

Member Miyashiro: There's a storm brewing out there. I thought I was going to get blown away.

Mr. Roth: It's 4 to 2.

Mrs. Samson: It's 4-2? Thanks.

The Chair: Okay. Good.

Member Miyashiro: Not quite bad at all.

All right. Thank you to the commission for hearing my presentation today, and oki, which is the Blackfoot word for welcome. My name is Rob Miyashiro, and I'm the MLA for Lethbridge-West. I'm currently the MLA, and I say "currently" because I don't feel that my position as MLA entirely defines who I am, nor does it reflect my journey to how I got to the present. I'm a lifelong southern Alberta resident, born in Lethbridge and raised in Taber. Well, can't say I grew up in Taber. That would be debatable. I attended the University of Lethbridge, and I resided in Lethbridge for about 45 years, almost equally split between Lethbridge-East and Lethbridge-West and spread around to the north side, west side, and the south side.

I was a human services professional for over 40 years in southwestern Alberta providing services and supports and

developing new programs in the fields of children's services, disabilities' employment, mental health, and seniors. While I was in the seniors' sector, I was the executive director of the Lethbridge Senior Citizens Organization for 17 years. My workplaces included Picture Butte, Cowley, Kainai First Nation, Lethbridge, and I also had a really cool position that was regional in scope, so I got to travel around southwestern Alberta.

Commissioners, I've also participated on over 60 boards, working groups, and committees, local, provincial, and national. I also served two terms on Lethbridge city council from 2013 to 2021. I'm also very proud to state that I was the first and only Japanese Canadian and Okinawan Canadian elected to Lethbridge city council. I'm one of the only few Japanese Canadians and Okinawan Canadians ever elected to a provincial Legislature in Canada. I'm telling you about this to give you a sense of who I am and also to lend credence to my claim of knowing my community and my region.

As Councillor Crowson probably told you, the provincial constituency boundaries pertaining to Lethbridge have only included the boundaries of the city of Lethbridge – have only included the boundaries of the city of Lethbridge – since 1909. There are four important reasons I'd like to highlight to maintain the boundaries for Lethbridge-West and Lethbridge-East. I'd like to elaborate on that.

Firstly, the diverse nature of our population. In the past 10 years the demographic makeup of Lethbridge has changed dramatically. We have the largest Nepali Bhutanese population in Canada, and we now experience secondary migration of this group from other parts of the country. Lethbridge accepted the largest number of Syrian refugees beginning in 2016, with more Syrians arriving steadily to the present. Lethbridge has welcomed almost 600 Ukrainian refugees since 2022. We have seen an influx of newcomers from many African nations to our community and, I dare say, my neighbourhood, Legacy Ridge, which is split by Lethbridge-West and Lethbridge-East boundaries. We're home to people from at least seven different African countries. Lethbridge is also home to a large population of immigrants from all parts of India as well as Japanese Canadians, Chinese Canadians, and Filipino Canadians. Of course, we're home to many urban Indigenous peoples, mostly Blackfoot from the Kainai and Piikani nations.

Secondly, representation of diverse voices matters. I explain the growing diversity of our population to provide context for the concept of representation: like community represented by like community. It's important that residents can (a) see themselves in their elected officials, (b) be confident that elected officials understand their needs and will act in their best interest, or (c) be confident that elected officials will treat them fairly relative to others in their constituency.

To further illustrate the first point, after I left the city of Lethbridge city council, I was approached by someone who asked me if I knew what she missed most about me being on council. I said, "Must be my great debating skills and repartee." She said, "No." What she missed was that she no longer saw herself represented in our elected officials in the city. She was Japanese Canadian. This is an important aspect, I believe, of our democratic values and how representation works for people in our community.

The third thing is diversity of an urban setting. The diversity of our community is a feature that enriches the entire community. Now, as I love food, as people here might know, I can say with all honesty that the diversity of a community's restaurants is entirely reflective of the ethnic makeup of its residents. Where we once had Italian, Japanese, and Chinese food as our most exotic culinary offerings, Lethbridge now has dozens of ethnic restaurants. Unfortunately, because of geography or community makeup or

settlement patterns, this type of diversity of ethnicity and food is not present in rural areas and smaller urban municipalities closer in proximity to Lethbridge. Combining any part of the city of Lethbridge with the rural areas or smaller municipalities would really do nothing to ensure appropriate representation for residents of Lethbridge.

The fourth thing is population. Both Lethbridge-East, which is approximately 48,000 people, give or take – it's probably more now – and Lethbridge-West, which is approximately 50,000, are really close to the provincial average that was cited in the 2016 to 2017 Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission for riding population. But there are ridings, like Edmonton-South and Edmonton-South West, that have exploded to up to 80,000-plus while Edmonton-Ellerslie and Calgary-North East are also well over the average. So perhaps the focus needs to be on providing adequate representation for these large urban ridings rather than creating rural-urban, or urban, constituencies.

One thing I'd like to note . . .

The Chair: Sorry, Rob. I was gesturing. Sorry. Just pause there. I want that clicker because I want to show a point that you just made. Keep going. Keep going.

Member Miyashiro: Okay. I thought you were like: stop it. I can take a hint.

I want to point out something that Jeff was talking about when he was talking about boundaries. What the commission might not be aware of is that we are almost at the western edge of the city limit growth in west Lethbridge. In fact, a new subdivision that was just approved on the west side of 30th Street takes us right up to the border with the county, up just by Sunset Acres. Mountain Heights – not Mountain Heights; further south of that. Watermark, I think it's called, is also moving out that way. But on the southeast corner of the city we have large residential developments that are beginning, started about three years ago. The Southbrook neighbourhood: the second – literally, the second – that the lots were all serviced, they sold lots and started building houses. This is no word of a lie. If you go towards the southeast corner of the city on the highway out on highway 4, you will see almost a fully developed residential neighbourhood that was not there three years ago, including the school. Maybe just three years ago.

I think when you're looking at the internal boundaries of what Lethbridge-West and Lethbridge-East could look like, the fact that it looks like there's a lot of land in the west: it's relatively encased by the county to the far west and a bit to the northwest. Also, the northwest corner of the west side in the city's boundaries is designated as economic development area. It's not residential. It's more for light industrial, commercial.

Mr. Evans: Sorry. What area was that?

Member Miyashiro: That's the north. It's called the west Lethbridge economic development area. It's south of highway 3 on the northwest corner of our city limits on the west side.

The Chair: Near the Y?

8:10

Member Miyashiro: It's way north of that. Right directly south of highway 3.

Mr. Evans: Yeah. So where that concrete . . .

Member Miyashiro: Right by there. Yeah. That area where the concrete plant landscaping is is constituting the beginning of what

was designated as the west Lethbridge economic development area. So that's not designated . . .

Mr. Evans: Is that the boundary, the road that runs directly west from there?

Member Miyashiro: Yeah.

Mr. Evans: Okay.

Member Miyashiro.: So it'd be everything north of Walsh Drive. I can't remember what that was.

Mr. Evans: Yeah.

Member Miyashiro: And right to the highway. You can tell from there because just west of the cemetery on the west side there's a large electrical substation, and that was purposely built there to accommodate any new more commercial development than residential.

I think that's important for the commission to know, that unless the residential development on the west side grows just a bit to the west but more to the south of where everything is, it might not grow as fast as some of the stuff in the southeast corner of the city, which is – people want to be on the south side, right?

The Chair: Can I get the fourth point again? I lost track of it.

Member Miyashiro: Yeah. Sorry. My fourth point was more about population. We talk about roughly – if you look at our populations on west and east, they are very close to what the estimate should be or the target populations are whereas I know some of my colleagues in caucus there, their ridings have almost as many people as the city of Lethbridge. My point, I guess, to that one was that I think these discussions are important because we're looking at future development for electoral boundaries, but really the urgency, I think, from talking especially with my colleagues and with people in Calgary that are northeast in Calgary: they're dealing with huge numbers. So we can kind of look at things like Lethbridge and say, "Well, that might be nice," but I think the urgency is for proper representation in those larger urban areas.

The Chair: Can I stop you there, Rob?

Member Miyashiro: You can stop me there.

The Chair: We've got about five minutes before break, so let's pose any questions from the panel to someone that really knows about boundaries. Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you very much. I, actually, was particularly taken by your theme of the diversity of new communities, in fact, that have come into Lethbridge in the last decade pretty much. Any anthropologist will tell you that food is culture, and I think it's an interesting way to assess a community and its growth over time. I thank you for the whole suggestion although it must be said that anywhere in Calgary you can get anything you want from any country, so I don't know how far this line of measurement could take you.

But your other point, to contrast that, was what you would get in, you know, 20 miles into Taber or 20 miles into Siksika. I think that was your general point, was it not?

Member Miyashiro: Yeah. The point was that to combine a more rural area with any part of Lethbridge, if you were even looking at increasing the size of a riding in Lethbridge just to encompass more people in the rural – you know, we all know how widespread some

of the rural ridings are. I mean, Lesser Slave Lake is, like, 16,000, 17,000 people, a five-hour drive from corner to corner.

Dr. Martin: Maybe 28,000. That's still low.

Member Miyashiro: Right. But it's just to say that we have the kind of community and the kind of constituencies in Lethbridge – the type of population and the type of representation, I think, that would be required are a little bit different because we have changed demographically. I think that's important. It's important for me to say. It might not be as important for the commission, but it's important for me to say that that is something that I talk to constituents about, that they want to know that there is someone representing them.

And it is about the food, Dr. Martin

Mr. Clark: I look forward to coming back and trying out some of these restaurants.

Thank you again for your presentation. I guess I'll ask you – I couldn't see you behind the pillar, so I don't know if you were here for some of Jeff's presentation, some of that back and forth. Just maybe remind me again: where is the growth in Lethbridge? You'd mentioned southeast. I guess I'm just thinking that if we're going to tweak in terms of perhaps moving a boundary a little bit one way or a little bit another, as it stands now, west is a little bit bigger and east is a little bit smaller.

Member Miyashiro: Right.

Mr. Clark: Is that logical in your mind, that east actually has a greater growth potential and therefore it makes sense this way, or is there a need to perhaps adjust to accommodate for greater growth in the west?

Member Miyashiro: Thanks, Mr. Clark. West Lethbridge has at least four or five new neighbourhoods being developed right now, right?

Mr. Evans: That doesn't include the new development on the Lethbridge University land.

Member Miyashiro: Exactly, right?

Mr. Evans: They've given it the go, but nothing has happened yet. Yeah. I don't know how big that development is going to be.

Member Miyashiro: The Canyons is almost at their limit now with roads. Like I said, Watermark hasn't been developed. It's just a school and the fire hall there. So there's some room for growth there. Copperwood has a little bit of room for growth. Garry Station has a bit of room, not a lot. Again, there's a new development plan on the west side of 30th Street that would take it right to the county line. Country Meadows is another one that's moving towards that entry. Then once you get to that, you're up against the county on two sides.

On the north side, which is mostly part of the east, there's enough development space that's been approved in north Lethbridge for residential development for probably 30 years. Yeah. There's lots of growth. BlackWolf, too, is just getting under way. Right up to the county line on the north end of Lethbridge on the north side there's enough room for one, too. There's been one big area structure plan done for that area.

Then in the southeast, like I said, where Southbrook is, there's room for growth because there's a subdivision that's going in south towards on Six Mile Coulee. Then there's Southbrook, where the

new school is, and they're all pushing out to the southeast towards Wilson Siding.

In terms of land mass I think you want to look at – without annexation issues on the west side, there's probably a similar amount of land ready to be developed, maybe a little bit more on the west side. So, yeah, looking at those issues.

The Chair: I think we'll have time for one more question. Then we're going to have a break because we've been sitting here for almost an hour and a half.

My clicker isn't working. I was trying to get to the map, so if somebody can help me with that.

Another question.

Mr. Evans: What are your thoughts on the geographic boundary of the river in terms of west and east?

Member Miyashiro: Right. Well, like I was saying, too, if you wanted to split out historical Lethbridge-West neighbourhoods out of Lethbridge-West...

Mr. Evans: What do you mean by that?

Member Miyashiro: ... I think that that's slightly problematic for me being the ...

Mr. Evans: Oh, the MLA. But if you weren't the MLA?

Member Miyashiro: Yes. If I wasn't the MLA, you still look at historically what neighbourhoods are grouped together. Downtown has been a part of, really, Lethbridge-West because that's how it identifies and that's where the downtown area is. When you move further to 13th Street for Lethbridge-East, that still makes sense. I know Jeff was talking about Stafford Drive and all the weird jog at, you know, St. Edward Boulevard and all those things. I don't think that's as problematic because most people will know during an election what side of the road they're on. They're just told where they are, right?

I think in terms of future growth there are a lot of coulee top areas on the east side of the river. When you're looking at the growth and you see the river as the natural boundary, I'm not sure how many years out that'll be because all of this stuff – I don't know if you can see this. Did I just move something? Oops.

The Chair: That's a natural break time.

8:20

Member Miyashiro: I'm messing with your stuff.

If you look at – let me just show you. Like I said, here's where some development is, but here is where the giant amount is going to take place, right in here because there's nothing right here right now. Yeah. This is where the big development is going to take place here, a lot of this part in here because the university is right there, right? There's lots of room for development here, but for the foreseeable future the developers have focused more on the stuff that are going up to the boundary, just past 30th Street. Like I said, this part right here is designated as the west Lethbridge economic development area, so there's not going to be any residential there. If you look at it that way, they're not going to build houses this side up; this part is already developed, actually, right up to about there.

Mr. Clark: So hand to heart, which is going to grow in the next five to 10 years? Lethbridge-West or Lethbridge-East has more people at the end of the day in terms of growth?

Member Miyashiro: Lethbridge-West will have more people because they have more people now.

Mr. Clark: Sorry. Will the growth be even between the two, or is one going to grow more than the other?

Member Miyashiro: I think we're going to see a lot of growth in the southeast, so in Lethbridge-East, in the next 10 years. I'm not sure when they're going to top out their development.

Part of the issue is, too, that the city doesn't want to have too many development fronts at one time, right? It just stretches your resources too much. We had to build a new fire hall in the southwest corner in order to accommodate growth. That means the next fire hall has to go into the southeast to accommodate the growth there. So there's a point where the city is going to just say – they're trying to put the brakes on for development where it makes most sense and it's sustainable. And a lot of you know this, that when we start putting fire halls in and stretching the resources in the city, then your taxes are going to go up, and then there's no way around that, right? There are no subsidies for fire halls and for firefighters.

The Chair: Susan wants to shorten our break by asking one last question.

Mrs. Samson: This is a really short question. You can deal with this later.

When I'm looking at Lethbridge-West following highway 3 at the top of the map there, if you want to look at that, why is that line so weird? Like, why isn't it following the highway clearly? You know what I'm saying?

Member Miyashiro: I know what you're saying.

Mr. Clark: Is that a city boundary?

Member Miyashiro: Yeah. North of highway 3 east of the river is all parkland, right? Right where the river is and that corner of – here; I'll show you. Right here, just so you know.

Mrs. Samson: Oh, okay. It's a geographical ...

Member Miyashiro: Yeah. Just remember 13th Street, Stafford Drive, coulee top river valley development. There's nothing going to go in there, right? Tollestrup gravel is right in here, ball diamonds, a waste-water treatment plant. It looks like there's a lot going on right in here, but really it's not developable.

Mrs. Samson: Yeah. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you for your well-thought-out and very relevant presentation, Rob.

We're going break now for about 10 minutes. We'll be back at 8:36.

Member Miyashiro: Thank you very much for your time.

[The hearing adjourned from 8:24 p.m. to 8:36 p.m.]

The Chair: Okay. We have now had our evening break. Our next presenter, and we have five presenters, is Mr. Scott Paul.

Mr. Paul: Good evening, commissioners. My name is Scott Paul. I'm a retired lawyer, now author and storyteller. I've lived in Lethbridge for 32 years, raising two daughters here, and purposely retiring here as well. I'll echo the sentiments of many of the

previous presenters. I love Lethbridge, and it's a place that I'm connected to and call home.

I prepared a small written submission, that I submitted online, but I feel humbled because I heard such good presentations earlier. My written submission was brief, concise. It essentially said: populationwise, why are you even looking at Lethbridge? You have bigger fish to fry, in my mind. To use a legal phrase that I would use from time to time, down here it's *de minimis*. You have significant issues to deal with, and while you may be tempted to tinker, I would encourage you to not for the very reasons that have been stated by previous presenters.

In place of what I was going to submit, or repeat, and I didn't want to repeat, I'm going to offer up a story. I grew up in a small farming community near Brooks, a place called Rainier. One of the panel members will know where Rainier is because I went to high school with John in Brooks, where we were bused from. My father raised cattle, grew hay, and farmed land that had been broken, homesteaded many years before.

We had a community school, one that I'm very proud of. It turned a hundred years old three years ago. It's called Alcoma. In Rainier that part of Alberta was homesteaded by pioneers coming from Tacoma, Washington, settling in Alberta, a lot of them, anyway. They wanted to recognize their roots, and they called the school Alcoma: "Al" for Alberta, and "coma" for Tacoma, where they came from. When I graduated in grade 9, because it only went up to grade 9, in 1976 we had a graduating class of 17 students. It was a vibrant farming community, but over time that has changed, and it's reflective among my classmates at that time. Many of us moved on. Most of us moved on. A few stayed to farm the land, but not many. We moved to Calgary. We moved to Lethbridge. We moved to Vancouver. One man moved to Switzerland.

When I go back to Rainier, when I talk to my classmates who remained on the farm, we don't talk about things like public transportation, bike lanes, overcrowded schools. Their interests are far different than the ones I deal with daily. They're talking about commodity prices, irrigation, input cost. They're also talking about: will Alcoma school survive? There's been declining enrolment, and their funding keeps getting pulled back because it's tied to school population. So we have very different interests, and although we still connect at a personal level, a nostalgic level, we don't connect on the more primary issues that are local to our communities.

There's a rural reality, and there's an urban reality. I've heard very compelling arguments against the hybrid model, and there's a flip to that, not just the urban perspective. I think of Alcoma school, a declining population, and I would want an MLA fiercely and fearlessly promoting that school and trying to maintain that school because it's such a vital cog to that community. Yet if we pull that into an urban riding, if we pull outlying rural areas into urban ridings, we start to take away. We water down both the community and that MLA's agenda to push in Edmonton for funding for that school. I want to see Alcoma in another 50 years. I don't want to see that school be taken out, and I think effective representation by MLAs committed to that community, that diverse group of interests is so, so important.

As you consider the larger picture – and I think the larger picture lies north here. For Lethbridge, if you chose to tinker, I would hope that that would not include a tinkering including outside neighbouring bedroom communities. I chose to retire in Lethbridge. I could have chosen to retire in Coaldale or in Coalhurst, and from an economic point of view it's probably cheaper to live there, but there's a reason I retired to Lethbridge.

It was brought home to me by the speakers before when Maria Fitzpatrick was talking about the Canes and the Bulls. People identify with that. Belinda Crowson, who talks about a historical

boundary, the Westminster Road. I'd never heard that before, yet intuitively I understand that. Intuitively, when you have neighbourhoods in Lethbridge, that 13th Street does demarcate the neighbourhood. And then when Rob Miyashiro talked about the diversity of ethnic restaurants, that speaks to something which I don't think you will find necessarily in Coalhurst or Coaldale or those outlying regions.

So I would urge the commission to leave Lethbridge ultimately alone, leave these lines alone, and move to the bigger issues, which are in Calgary, the exploding growth, the exploding growth in Edmonton.

I'll add just a couple more things. I was a divorce lawyer, and I had clients across southwest Alberta, Pincher Creek, Crowsnest Pass, Coaldale, Coalhurst, Lethbridge, Cardston, Magrath. They brought different issues to the table. Notwithstanding that the common themes are custody and child support and dividing up property, the way they approached that and the communities they came from were very different. I recognize that as a lawyer. I didn't recognize Lethbridge-East versus Lethbridge-West, but outside there are different interests, values. I believe that Lethbridge is distinct, and I would encourage you to keep the lines written as they are.

I think there is some danger in trying to project population growth. I think Mr. Miyashiro has indicated where population growth can occur, but we don't have a crystal ball. We don't know what's going to happen. We have relative parity between the two, and I would encourage the commission that the most significant work you will do will be north of here. I don't want to discourage you, but I would almost say: leave us alone.

Those are really my comments, and I would just leave it at that, subject to any questions you might have.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Paul.

Mr. Evans: I'm interested, Scott, in your thoughts on community interest. You heard Mr. Coffman. I don't want to put words into his mouth, but essentially community interest was defined by municipal boundaries, and those had a significant demarcation of where those community interests began and ended. Do you agree with that?

8:45

Mr. Paul: I think for the most part I would. If we look at celebrations that are marked here in Lethbridge, I think that you will find a greater diversity in those community events than you would find in outlying communities. They will be different.

You know, I met Betty McKay*, and she's from Brooks. I was talking to her just yesterday. They have in Brooks a bull-a-rama, which I've never heard of. It sounds very interesting. They park big trucks around a hotel up there, the Brooks Hotel, and there's a bull riding event right in the middle of the town.

I think our celebrations reflect our different communities, and I think that you will find that in outlying areas here. I'm not sure where you live, John. I know you were living outside of Lethbridge for a while. I suspect that you would find that the celebrations that mark your community, that make your community are different than the ones here. We may all celebrate a Canada Day, but even in that, we celebrate it differently. In Lethbridge we have a swearing-in ceremony for new citizens. That's a big part of our community each year.

I would tend to accept Mr. Coffman's argument on that.

Mr. Evans: The example that comes to my mind is that if you go east of Taber and you take Grassy Lake and you take Burdett and you take Bow Island and you take a significant segment of the

*This spelling could not be verified at the time of publication.

population there, many would refer to them as Mennonite origin. Their cultural assimilation, the fact that they're so similar that they don't seem to be governed by municipal boundaries, and the same might be said for the LDS communities in the south: Raymond, Stirling, Magrath, Cardston, even extending into Warner and farther.

Though there are some factors – and I think that the legislation gives us the ability to look at those – that transcend political lines, 13th Street is just an arbitrary line that was put in place and has been there for some time. But it seems to me that there's almost a different mindset in terms of west across the river, one side or the other to some degree, having lived in both.

Mr. Paul: Yeah, there may be, yet I don't see any reason to move beyond what we're doing now. The old maxim is that you don't have to fix it if it ain't broke. I guess, tonight I have a greater appreciation of what Lethbridge is because we've had some fine speakers describe both the historical, geographical, and that wonderful presentation by the man with the GIS. I don't see compelling reasons to change things.

Any other questions from the panel?

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Scott. Appreciate it. Yeah. We'll look forward to your book.

Our next presenter is Keith Gardner.

Mr. Gardner: Hello, everyone. My name is Keith Gardner, like you just said, and I want to, first of all, take some time to thank you folks for coming down to southern Alberta. The work you're doing right now is the work of democracy, and that's really important, especially in today's day and age. It's not nothing, and I want to just say that I appreciate it.

Funnily enough that you mentioned Stirling just a moment ago, that's where I grew up. I spent my life until I was 20 in Stirling. My parents still live there. They raised my nephew there, and I still go back there pretty frequently. I moved into Lethbridge to go to university, and I've had the ability to live in Ottawa and Edmonton before I moved back to Lethbridge about six years ago to raise my daughter here.

Before I get too far into biographical details of my own life, I want to make my main submission clear right off the jump here. I think that Lethbridge should maintain at least two constituencies which are entirely contained within the boundaries of the city of Lethbridge, so that map that's displayed right there, that's just fine with me, and I think that that's the way it should stay. Here are some reasons why I think that.

The city of Lethbridge to me, especially having grown up in the neighbourhood, in the region, I think that it does represent a distinct community of interest separate and apart from other communities in southwest Alberta. We've had lots of conversations about, you know, Coaldale and Coalhurst. We've mentioned places like Stirling and Cardston and Magrath and Raymond, and I would say that Lethbridge is pretty fundamentally distinct from those places. I could even draw an argument that those places are pretty distinct from one another, too. If you're in Raymond on a Friday night in the fall, you're going to know that there's a big football game going on. You're not going to see that in a place like Magrath or Stirling. It's much more in the water in a place like Raymond than it is in those other places.

Residents of our community here in Lethbridge face challenges that aren't experienced by families like my parents in Stirling, families like my own when I was growing up in Stirling. We have to think about ballooning housing costs. We have to think about

downtown social disorder in this community. In Stirling those things aren't an issue. There's no downtown to speak of in Stirling.

Lethbridge is also identifiably different in its population dynamics from the surrounding communities. We're much more diverse in terms of our cultural backgrounds, our economic participation, our occupational profile. I had a chance to look at some of the statistics that are aggregated by the province on their big data dashboard. If you have a chance to look at that, it's fun when you get to see the big spikes in population and other stats.

Just on the note of cultural and economic diversity in Lethbridge: Lethbridge is significantly more diverse than these outlying communities. When you think about the proportion of our community that is of Indigenous heritage, we have about 6.6 per cent of our community is Indigenous. You compare that to a place like Raymond, it's about 3.5 per cent, 3.2 per cent in Picture Butte. We also have about just shy of 7 per cent of our community speak a language other than the two official languages. If you go to a place like Fort Macleod, that's 4 per cent. If you go to a place like Raymond, that's 1 per cent. Very, very few folks don't speak English or French in those communities, whereas we have a very thriving linguistic diversity in this community.

Finally, I think it was Rob who mentioned that he used restaurants because he thinks a lot about food, which is great, but about 15 per cent of our community here in Lethbridge identifies as a member of a visible minority community. If you go to places like Stirling, where I grew up; Coaldale; Coalhurst; you're seeing those numbers slip to below 5 per cent and, in many cases, 1 or 2 per cent.

All of this is to say that taken together as a city, Lethbridge is a very different place than the places that surround it. It's very unique and I would argue discrete from those places, so having a boundary that involves Coaldale, Coalhurst, Sterling, Raymond, whatever it is in a riding that also includes big chunks of Lethbridge, that really, I think, takes away from the representational capacity of the system to, say, have a member of a Filipino community or the Nepalese community have a serious shot at having an MLA that looks like them or at least someone who speaks meaningfully to their needs and their cultural identities.

On the flip side, if we think about it from the perspective of people in Stirling or Coalhurst or Coaldale or wherever it is, incorporating outlying communities into constituencies in which Lethbridge is a major part would kind of compromise those communities' ability to be meaningfully represented by their MLA. I think this is kind of Scott's point, too. You know, I was actually thinking about schools, too. I think about how differently people like my parents in Stirling think about schools. My parents take care of my nephew, like I mentioned. He's about almost exactly the same age – they're six weeks apart, my daughter and my nephew. My daughter goes to LCI here in town. That school is full to bursting. It needs renovations desperately. Stirling is not Alcoma, but it is not a large place. The concern has always been: will there be enough young families to continue supporting a high school in the community that I grew up in? When we consider schools in areas of provincial jurisdiction and the ways that those are approached in a major city or a mid-size city, at least, like Lethbridge versus a smaller community like Stirling or Coalhurst or Raymond, that presents representational difficulties for the MLA who would be representing both of those areas.

I think this is going to be my last point. If mid-size cities like Lethbridge get drawn into constituencies with large rural areas, I'm concerned that it'll exacerbate some of the existing rural and urban divides that we see in the province right now. For a long time rural-urban divides have really driven politics in this province. There's always going to be an element of that. My point is that after the

commission, after you folks are done your work, I have no doubt there will be lots of seats in Edmonton, there'll be lots of seats in Calgary, and there will be lots of seats that are primarily rural, but if we do not have seats that represent the unique, discrete interests of a mid-sized city like Lethbridge or even extrapolating to places like Red Deer, Medicine Hat, or things like that, you're losing that set of interests.

Last point. If seats like this one don't exist, there'll be a stronger incentive for the parties to pick a side without understanding that there are many Albertans for whom rural or big city are both uncomfortable descriptors for them.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gardner.

Any questions from the panellists?

Mr. Gardner: I felt like I just regurgitated everything everybody else said.

Mr. Clark: That's the disadvantage of going last.

Mr. Gardner: Yeah.

Dr. Martin: But it was well done.

Mr. Gardner: Yeah.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

Mr. Gardner: Thank you.

The Chair: Cameron Mills.

Mr. Mills: Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak with you here today. My name is Cameron Mills. I'm a proud Lethbridge resident. I'm also raising my three boys here in town along with my wife. In a professional capacity I work for the town of Coaldale, where I'm the director of growth and investment. I'm not speaking to you here today in that capacity or as a representative of that community, but it does frame if you will sort of the lens through which I look at the world, working in a capacity where economic development is my principal priority. Probably my singular identity is literally baseball coach. I did miss my son's game, for which I'm the head coach, this evening, and the text messages from my wife and other coaches suggest that the team missed me greatly. We did not do well. The Oilers did win 6 to 3, though. Balance is important.

Balance is really the theme through which I would look at this particular issue. If I may, I'm just taking a look at the broader region and the electoral districts in terms of how that works. Unlike Lethbridge, Medicine Hat combines rural and urban representation through the Brooks-Medicine Hat and Cypress-Medicine Hat districts. I believe that this promotes a more integrated and co-operative approach for regional planning and economic development for that region. Proof of this lies in the recent publication of the southeast Alberta economic opportunity strategy and implementation framework. Municipalities in that region were provided with a \$200,000 grant from the province to promote regional co-operation and economic development. That was between Medicine Hat, Redcliff, Bow Island, Foremost as well as the counties of Cypress and Forty Mile. My preference – and I'm likely not going to make a ton of friends here in the gallery today, but that's okay. We can disagree.

By redistributing electoral boundaries in Lethbridge in a way that also brings urban and rural under a unified electoral umbrella, I believe that our region would be much better positioned to pursue a more integrative approach to regional development and collaboration, especially as it relates to the development of the

agrifood value-added processing sector and realizing the full potential of what has been branded as Canada's Premier Food Corridor.

My proposal is to merge the existing Lethbridge-East and Lethbridge-West with surrounding rural areas to create four blended ridings, shown here as Lethbridge-Livingstone, Lethbridge-Little Bow, Lethbridge-Taber and Lethbridge-Cardston. Doing so will better serve the regional economic interest, acknowledging Lethbridge as the hub of the regional economy and tying Lethbridge to the food production corridor to the east, to the resource and tourism economies of the west, to the very important Coutts border crossing to the south, and to the major transportation corridor to the north connecting Lethbridge and the region to the rest of the province.

Simply put, Lethbridge's current electoral division risks entrenching urban-rural divides by carving out the city into isolated segments that do not include the rural communities that rely on Lethbridge as a regional service hub. This structure can create tension or disconnection between the needs of Lethbridge and the interests of surrounding municipalities like Coaldale, Lethbridge county, and Picture Butte, all of which contribute to and depend on the region's broader economic success.

As an alternative, the proposed new model ties Lethbridge into the developing agrifood manufacturing economy, known as Canada's Premier Food Corridor, to the east; provides Lethbridge with a direct tie to Alberta's main border crossing with the United States to the south; connects Lethbridge with the resource development and tourism economies of the west; and connects Lethbridge with a voice representing the massively important transportation corridors to the north.

Additionally, such a model would eliminate what I believe is an unnecessary effective representation issue in the form of Cardston-Siksika as a riding. This riding currently stretches from the border all the way to east of Calgary, making it entirely too large and fragmented to offer effective representation to those living within the riding. It groups dozens of communities that are disconnected from one another and ignores real world economic relationships that exist outside of that riding.

To conclude, the proposed realignment of boundaries as depicted here isn't just a geographic improvement; it would serve as a strategic signal to the province that southern Alberta is serious about growing its agrifood economy as one integrated region centred in Lethbridge. As many of you probably know, Lethbridge already supplies potable water to numerous surrounding municipalities, including Coaldale, Picture Butte, Lethbridge county, and others.

It also remains the educational anchor of southern Alberta. Students from across the proposed new divisions pursue studies at the University of Lethbridge and Lethbridge Polytechnic. Our industry in those areas relies on those institutions to train their workforce. Many of their graduates enter careers in the agriculture and food sectors, contributing directly to our shared regional economy. These educational pathways reinforce the need for a boundary system that recognizes and reflects how deeply interconnected our communities are.

Finally, Lethbridge serves as the health care hub for all municipalities in these proposed new divisions, with care centred around the expanding Chinook regional hospital. Lethbridge will soon also be educating doctors at the University of Lethbridge with a focus on expanding access to rural medicine specifically, with graduates who are intent on providing health care not only to Lethbridge residents but residents across these four divisions and beyond.

That is why I believe it is critically important to bring the Medicine Hat hybrid model over to Lethbridge and break down the existing urban-rural divide that risks standing in the way of maximizing our region's potential.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Mills.
Greg.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Thank you. Appreciate that presentation, and thank you for putting together the PowerPoint slide.

Part of our role here, both through legislation as well as the core reference cases that guide our work, in particular the Saskatchewan reference – one of the elements of that in describing voter parity is that “factors like geography, community history, community interests and minority representation . . . need to be taken into account to ensure our legislative assemblies effectively represent the diversity of [the] social mosaic.” I guess I’m curious how you feel that carving up Lethbridge into four pieces, especially given the context of what else we’ve heard today about the unique nature of Lethbridge as a city, satisfies that requirement.

9:05

Mr. Mills: I don’t fundamentally believe that there’s a significant difference between the people in the rural regions relative to the people of Lethbridge. That’s my perspective on it. I understand that there’s perhaps more ethnic diversity within the city of Lethbridge itself. That is true within Lethbridge. It’s also true within regions of Lethbridge.

It’s also true that other areas are diversifying at a significant rate. Taber has led the charge with respect to Alberta’s rural immigration program, for example, within the region. Within those capacities, I believe that the benefit of addressing regional representation outweighs the potential benefit of, you know, perhaps visibility concerns that were raised here this evening. To put that into perspective, one of the issues that I think is incredibly important to consider in terms of the success of Lethbridge itself is that, as was mentioned, Lethbridge provides water, for example, to surrounding communities. Water is something that the province has significant jurisdiction over.

If you’ve driven to the east of town, you’ve driven through Coaldale. It’s growing significantly. It’s about 10,000 people now. To the east of Coaldale within Lethbridge county you’ll see the McCain french fry plant. That plant has recently received a \$650 million investment from the McCain corporation, their largest investment they’ve ever made into a plant. That’s going to fundamentally double the size of that plant. The reason I bring that up is that the McCain plant which is located east of Coaldale draws its water from the city of Lethbridge. To put it in perspective of how much water it draws, the McCain plant uses fundamentally the same amount of water in a given day as the town of Coaldale, a town of 10,000 people. It is a very significant customer, and that represents one plant.

The province’s economic strategy involves growing the agrifood corridor and finding, you know, potentially upwards of 10 additional McCain plants to open within the broader region between Lethbridge and Medicine Hat, which represents billions upon billions of dollars of potentially local or foreign direct investment into our region. On the flip side of that water issue, though, the city of Lethbridge is in charge of, you know, providing that water. They’re the only ones with the capacity to treat and produce water at that scale, for which we’re very thankful to be customers, but in order to do that, they need access to water; they need rights for water.

Within the region I believe the figure is that approximately 97 per cent of the water rights are held by the rural jurisdictions. Lethbridge and the other urban jurisdictions represent 3 per cent of the available water rights. In order for Lethbridge to grow, it needs access to those things. The water issue is one issue amongst many where both the urban and rural need to work together in order for everyone to benefit.

The Chair: Father Time is not kind to us. I’ve got two more presenters and 20 minutes.

Mr. Mills, your presentation is very interesting. I’m going to ask: could you stay in the audience?

Mr. Mills: Of course.

The Chair: Let’s do the last two presenters, and if we have time to engage your dialogue tonight – I think you’ve touched a nerve and there may be some questions. I’ll just excuse you from the podium now.

I’ll call on Tamara.

Mrs. Miyanaga: Thank you to the commission. I’m Tamara Miyanaga. I am from the MD of Taber. I farm north of Taber. I’m a proud U of L alumnus. I reside on a third-generation mixed farm with potatoes as our primary crop. The family was interned during World War II and lived in a wooden granary at a time when the Japanese couldn’t own land. Currently the farm is run by three cousins who are trained as engineers, accountants, and irrigation technologists. We farm near the north boundary of Taber-Warner. I share those details so you understand that most farms reflect a strong academic and research side.

I’m the first female reeve for the municipal district of Taber, that boasts a population of 7,924 with a median age of 27.4, a youthful municipality. Through council motion, due to our concern about the impact electoral boundaries have on the residents, we have a request of the commission.

The MD of Taber has the Oldman River running through it, which is the dividing line for the current provincial ridings of Taber-Warner and Cardston-Siksika. Two ridings and double representation in the municipality have been very beneficial. Rural communities value their legislative representation. As mentioned in other presentations, urban value their uniqueness, but the same holds fiercely true of rurals, and it is not ideal to grab areas just to meet the population threshold. MD of Taber is diverse culturally, socially, and economically wide. The MD includes the hamlets and the communities located within Barnwell, Taber, Vauxhall, Grassy Lake, Hays, and Enchant.

Alberta and Canada’s housing demands have seen an outflow to rural areas. The hamlet of Grassy Lake shrank to a small 300 population, but within the last 10 years the last lot was sold, and the population has ballooned to 1,000. The MD of Taber is building a subdivision of 48 lots. We are unique, and we implore the commission that the electoral representation must follow the legislation and take in much more than the population. We need representation that reflects the rural lifestyle.

When oil declined, compounded by the unrest of the pandemic, agriculture provided economic stability. The immense physical size of rural ridings is demanding on the elected Member of the Legislative Assembly. Diversity within the riding is incredible, as noted by Councillor Crowson when she referenced that the city of Lethbridge is not the same as Coalhurst. Residents of Vauxhall on highway 36 and rural residents residing in the north end of the MD of Taber, which is currently represented by Cardston-Siksika, are drastically different than Strathmore. It will dilute the representation

and concerns of the area, which provides economic stability to the province, if we just grab rural boundaries to meet the population threshold.

The federal electoral boundaries review provided possible riding realignment options. It allowed for discussion and suggestions on the impact of the change. In the end, due to public impact, it altered the proposed boundaries. This process is challenging. We ask the commission if the proposed boundaries will be available to Alberta residents for comment prior to the final draft being presented to the Speaker.

The Chair: In answer to that question: yes. It's my failing that I didn't outline the process at the beginning. We're mandated by the legislation to provide an interim report by the end of October. That interim report will be filed with the Speaker, put in the *Alberta Gazette*, and available to the public. In the succeeding five months the public can have input and response to it, and in late March of 2026 we have to then submit our final report. You do have a window.

Mrs. Miyanaga: Thank you. Yes, that is actually very important to the MD of Taber and our residents.

The Chair: Thank you.

Any questions of this presenter?

Dr. Martin: I'm going to blame Mr. Mills for this because he sparked a thought, and I'm going to ask it of you instead. Taber is growing. Wonderful. Lots of issues as you scale up. I'm glad you're there to help oversee that. I wanted to ask a bit about the economic geography, so to speak. I wanted to ask about the connectivity to Taber of some of the surrounding villages. Think of Vauxhall, for example. Is that where people from Vauxhall – they go to Taber, right?

Mrs. Miyanaga: Not necessarily.

Dr. Martin: Where do they shop?

Mrs. Miyanaga: They have a direct route to Lethbridge. They go to Brooks. Rural people are very mobile, and they'll go to where the best deal is or where their economics make sense.

Dr. Martin: Then Taber's economic – is it an economic magnet for the surrounding countryside?

Mrs. Miyanaga: Because it has the largest population, in the MD of Taber, it has some natural opportunities that we don't have in the other municipalities. They have great recreation, retail has increased, so people do naturally come. We have three large implement dealerships, so people do make Taber a central hub. But our neighbours to the west in Coaldale, to the north, Brooks: those centres see lots of activity as well.

9:15

Between the town of Taber and the MD of Taber and those other rurals we work really hard, but it is not lost on me, the last presenter, that we need to have a better relationship with the city of Lethbridge. But I do catch my breath when I see that diagram.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Sorry. You don't like the four sort of . . .

Mrs. Miyanaga: I do worry that you could have four representatives from the city of Lethbridge.

Mr. Evans: I have a question.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Evans: Tamara, in terms of your – where would you change the boundaries to achieve the goal that you're talking about with respect to Taber? Bearing in mind some of the comments that Mr. Mills made, because, I mean, that economic corridor aspect is interesting.

Mrs. Miyanaga: I don't think you have to get caught up in municipal boundaries. I think rural people – and I do count Coaldale, Taber, Bow Island, Brooks in a rural segment. We all quite pride ourselves in that fact. So I don't think you have to worry about that municipal boundary. You could look at a bit of population, because I recognize that that's one of the primary factors, but I don't think you should reach out to a Strathmore just to build the number.

I'll speak personally. This is not – the other comments were council approved and verified. Personally, Cardston-Siksika doesn't make sense, so we struggle with that because our residents are represented by them with Vulcan. Somehow we need to fix that, and I believe the next speaker will speak more eloquently to that.

Mr. Evans: How would you change? Let's think about – I don't know if we could put it up on the screen, but if you look at the Taber-Warner constituency, would you change the east boundary? And would you change the north boundary?

Mrs. Miyanaga: Okay. We could go north a bit more. Brooks probably is more natural than Lethbridge. But, again, this is my own personal, so I want to be very careful. We really want to see what those electoral boundaries look like before we have a big comment.

Mr. Evans: I'm thinking about, like, the community interest, sort of the commonalities between.

Mrs. Miyanaga: Well, we see it federally, the challenges of having – in our Bow River riding we have from Chestermere, Strathmore, Brooks, Taber, Bow Island, and it's immense, so it is a challenge for the MP. We need more than that. I mean, our requirements with the province – the province deals with municipalities so intensely, and if we don't have that connectivity to the Legislature, I very much worry that urban concerns will become the priority of whichever government is elected, so I'd like to keep it more rural.

The Chair: Can I just confirm that you are the reeve of the MD of Taber?

Mrs. Miyanaga: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Chair, can I just squeeze in here?

The Chair: Sure.

Mr. Clark: Previously there was a Cardston-Taber-Warner, if I'm not mistaken.

Mrs. Miyanaga: That's right.

Mr. Clark: More of an east-west orientation. Notwithstanding sort of not specific, is that a more natural sort of alignment than the north-south in terms of the way Cardston-Siksika is? I know you're not in Cardston-Siksika, but is it a little more natural to go east-west for you, or is that . . .

Mrs. Miyanaga: Again on a personal note, yes.

Mr. Clark: Yeah, just you personally. You take the reeve hat off. Yeah.

Mrs. Miyanaga: This long, narrow: no. I do represent the residents who are north of the Oldman River, so it hasn't been a natural fit.

Mr. Clark: So just to make clear, that boundary, the Oldman River: the county of Taber is on both sides?

Mrs. Miyanaga: Yes.

Mr. Clark: I see. Okay.

Mrs. Miyanaga: So there is beauty in having two MLAs.

Mr. Evans: Does it stretch into Scandia, your MD?

Mrs. Miyanaga: No. Bow River.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Right there.

Mrs. Miyanaga: Our north boundary is the Bow River.

Mr. Evans: Okay.

Mrs. Miyanaga: Thank you.

The Chair: So the takeaway for your presentation: you really want to see our interim report. Okay. Good.

Thank you.

Mrs. Miyanaga: All is well.

The Chair: That takes us to Randy Bullock. Is Randy here? Oh, okay.

Mr. Bullock: Good evening, everyone. Am I the last speaker tonight?

The Chair: Yes, you're the last scheduled speaker.

Mr. Bullock: Okay. Great. Well, thank you. I appreciate this time being allocated to me. My name is Randy Bullock. A little bit about myself. I grew up in west Lethbridge and, like Tamara, I'm also a U of L alumnus. I forgot about that, but that was a long time ago. Currently I'm a resident of Cardston county. I have lived in Cardston county for the last 17 years, and I am also the chief elected official of Cardston county. I'm acting as the current reeve, and I've been the reeve for five and a half of the last seven years. So I've been exposed to the changes that were made prior to the election in 2019, and I'm here to speak about the configuration of Cardston-Siksika.

With the permission of my council and the area residents, I'm here to express observations and concerns with this current layout. We like to call it the figure eight. Prior to the 2019 election the boundary was realigned in an obscure north-south layout which extends from the United States-Canada border northward 260 kilometres to the Strathmore area, as outlined here. This configuration does not represent the demographic of the south. Historically, when my father-in-law served as the MLA for two terms, the configuration was an east-west layout, just as you mentioned earlier. It was called Cardston-Taber-Warner.

It's already been said here tonight at this microphone that Albertans are connected by highways. Highways 5, 4, and 3: it's a big corridor of a lot of economic activity that connects our industries and our people.

I took the time prior to coming here tonight to reach out to other elected officials, both urban and rural elected officials, within Cardston-Siksika, and I haven't found one elected official that finds merit with the current layout, and let me tell you, I've talked to several, multiple councillors, reeves, mayors. They feel that they are underrepresented. We want our MLA focused on the needs of our immediate area. To make the MLA travel in such a large area – I said 260 kilometres; all I did was google that because I didn't really know the distance that he was going – makes it very difficult. I don't know how anybody could represent that many rural and urban municipalities. That's unfair to him. How does he engage with the people? How does he hear the people's needs? It just doesn't seem like it's feasible for him to do that under the current configuration.

We want something similar to the old east-west boundary. Cardston, Raymond, Magrath, Stirling, Warner, even the Blood Tribe: you know, that was all part of the other configuration, and this figure eight should have never happened to begin with.

One point I'd like to touch on: Cardston county is considered a have-not municipality. We're not flush with cash. We'd like to do many infrastructure improvements, and we're competing with larger, more affluent rural municipalities and urbans for the allocation of funding. We're competing with the MD of Taber, Vulcan county, county of Lethbridge. Those three municipalities have much bigger pockets than we have. So we're actively, continually lobbying our MLA to hear us because we need their help. We need grant money to survive. It would be nice if we didn't have to compete with the larger, more affluent municipalities. We've even heard our MLAs say: there's only so much that can go around; my area is so big; there's only so much to the pie. One mayor of a local town in Cardston county said: how does this hourglass configuration help us with regional planning and infrastructure? When it pinches off like that, the communities of people are not connected.

9:25

I think I've said enough. Please reconsider Cardston-Siksika as one area of needed change. Connect the people with a more efficient boundary, connect the people and their economies. If you're going to remember one thing from me, remember this: it's not too late to change the figure eight.

Mr. Clark: I like it. I'm typing that right now.

Mr. Bullock: I've talked to mayors, councillors, reeves. We know why it was done previous to the election. That's no front-page news. But I think I echo the concerns of hundreds if not thousands of people with this configuration.

The Chair: Why are you the only person speaking to this issue today? Why aren't there any other elected officials here from that riding?

Mr. Bullock: To be honest with you, I mean, I reached out to multiple. I came here tonight thinking that my voice would be heard, that I could make a difference, and I don't know if they felt the same way, because this is a public hearing. We know how public hearings go. There is the impression that you're here just to follow the protocol. Will they actually listen to us? That's another story. I guess I'm here tonight thinking that you'll listen.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Bullock: I think it's my duty as well. As a reeve representing about 5,000 people – that's not considering the towns' elected

officials that I contacted – there is an obligation to be here tonight as a reeve.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.
Other questions?

Mr. Evans: Yeah. I have a question. Randy, imagining you went back to the way it was, so east-west, how far east would you go? What would you think would be sort of the common-interest economic corridor?

Mr. Bullock: The alignment seemed to work. My father-in-law was the MLA for two terms. Bryce Jacobs was his name. He lived in Mountain View, Alberta. He was able to canvass that east-west corridor with no problem.

Mr. Evans: And it extended into Taber?

Mr. Bullock: It did. It included Taber, yes. Cardston-Taber-Warner. I mean, it doesn't have to be exactly that, but the southern towns are more interconnected with each other socially, economically. But when you go up to a pinch point like that, I don't know of any of my people that are going north up that way.

Mr. Evans: How far north would you go, in your mind?

Mr. Bullock: I know that one of the considerations is population, so that's for you to figure out. I honestly don't know what to tell you. I have heard the talk here tonight of mixing rural and urban. I don't know how I feel about that. I know that could work, but I guess I'm elected to represent rural Alberta right now. I'm not an urban . . .

Mr. Evans: Does Glenwood extend over to – I mean, I'm looking at it a little more blown up, but if that stands up north and you go to highway 3, you include Brocket and Pincher Creek, would that . . .

Mr. Bullock: That's in the MD of Willow Creek, actually. Yeah.

Mr. Evans: But we don't have to – we're not bound by MDs.

Mr. Bullock: Yeah. Well, yeah.

Mr. Evans: I'm more interested in the community interest aspect from your perspective, or the connectivity of and commonality of the various communities and the people that live in them.

Mr. Bullock: I think it's more east-west linear. To go up that far, I don't see the connectivity there with Fort Macleod. I don't.

Mr. Evans: Okay. That's what I'm interested in. Thank you.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Dr. Martin: You mentioned that many of your fellow reeves and mayors were conflicted about whether to come and make a presentation, but I hope you will, when you talk to them, tell them that we are doing more hearings, and there are more opportunities. There's going to be, you know, a virtual interaction phase as well as these kind of public hearings. We're definitely going to be down in Medicine Hat and the like, so tell them to show up.

Mr. Bullock: I have your e-mail, and to one of my fellow reeves on the phone yesterday I read every event that you're going to be at, so he most likely plans to come to Calgary.

Dr. Martin: Oh, okay.

The Chair: Brooks is open. Please send some of the rural people to Brooks. We don't want that mixed up in Calgary.

Mr. Evans: We could have a bull-a-rama.

The Chair: Yeah.

Mr. Bullock: What I'd like to know is – I received the e-mail, and not too many people were aware it was going on. Why did I receive the e-mail? Who else received the e-mail?

The Chair: Well, we can speak to that. I can speak to that partially. Every municipality, every reeve, every mayor of the province received a letter. Am I not correct, Aaron?

Mr. Roth: The municipalities.

The Chair: Yeah. Everyone got it.

Mr. Bullock: Okay. Probably it's kind of . . .

The Chair: It was right after Easter; late April, actually.

Mr. Bullock: Okay. That makes more sense.

My fellow councilmen said: go ahead and do it. I got text messages from them all day today: this is what you need to tell them. So I'm representing multiple people.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you. Yes.

Now, we're just past closing. I did cut off Mr. Mills partly because I just could sense the table filled with questions here. Are there any other questions of Mr. Mills? He came up with the . . .

Mr. Evans: I would love to see his proposal again and then ask some questions.

The Chair: Please come forward. Let me ask you this right out of – it's the chair's prerogative. Your model replaces five ridings with four, does it not?

Mr. Mills: It does.

The Chair: Okay. That's music to the commission's ears.

Mr. Mills: Correct. Southern Alberta would be represented by six ridings, east to west.

The Chair: Okay. And have you done the math on the population?

Mr. Mills: I have. I don't have perfect statistics, but my, I think, reasonably conservative estimates have each of those ridings between approximately 52,000 and 62,000 people, with Lethbridge-Taber being the smallest of the four. Cypress-Medicine Hat would grow because that would put Foremost and Bow Island into that riding.

The Chair: Okay.

From the left, Mr. Evans, questions across. One question per panellist.

Mr. Evans: Thank you. Yeah. I just want to know in terms of Lethbridge and Medicine Hat, just from a general perspective, where have you divided that? How have you divided up the city?

Mr. Mills: Within Lethbridge itself?

Mr. Evans: Yeah. And then Medicine Hat.

Mr. Mills: Medicine Hat is currently split in the same way. That's fundamentally the current. The current is this, and then Cypress basically just moved.

The way we looked at this was that Lethbridge-Little Bow would encompass – we use north of 6th Avenue; 6th Avenue, when you're in Lethbridge is Whoop-Up Drive. The main bridge that connects from east to west Lethbridge is 6th Avenue once it's on this side of the river, so 6th Avenue being the dividing line north-south, everything east of the river and everything west of Mayor Magrath Drive, which then turns into 26th Street North, so fundamentally north Lethbridge being within Lethbridge-Little Bow and Lethbridge-Taber encapsulating basically everything 26th Street and east as well as Mayor Magrath Drive.

The new subdivision that was mentioned as growing within south Lethbridge would be within Lethbridge-Taber. Lethbridge-Taber, again, is the smallest of these municipalities but also contains a relatively significant growth portion of Lethbridge and also has Taber and Coaldale, which are the largest of the small urbans within the region and also the fastest growing of those. That riding I would expect to catch up over time.

Mr. Evans: What did you estimate its population to be?

Mr. Mills: Approximately 52,300 for Lethbridge-Taber. Lethbridge-Little Bow would have been at about 58,200. Lethbridge-Cardston, which is basically south of 6th Avenue and west of Mayor Magrath Drive – that's the riding I would find myself in; I live down by the college – as well as the southern portion of west Lethbridge south of Whoop-Up Drive, and that would merge to the area that encompasses Pincher Creek, I believe, to the west as well as Cardston and those communities to the south, down to the border.

9:35

Mr. Evans: What were the streets again? Sorry.

Mr. Mills: That would be west Lethbridge south of Whoop-Up Drive, so south of that dividing bridge line, and on the east side of the river it would be south of 6th Avenue and west of Mayor Magrath Drive, which is also highway 5. And then Lethbridge-Livingstone would be the portion of west Lethbridge north of Whoop-Up Drive. The population estimate for Lethbridge-Livingstone would be 64,000, approximately.

The Chair: Thank you.

Susan?

Mrs. Samson: I'm going to pass.

The Chair: Okay.

Julian?

Dr. Martin: Well, thank you. It's fascinating to look at maps. We all – well, certainly speaking for myself, I'm obsessed by looking at maps, but I wanted to ask you about the economic geography that you allude to and surely must be a key part of your argument.

Mr. Mills: Absolutely.

Dr. Martin: So I'd like to hear a lot more about it, and you can't do it here tonight, but this kind of envisioning we see in the map comes out of a lot of economic planning, study, and struggling, I presume. I think the rationale has to be located in the economic geography, the magnet feature, as I expressed it to one of the other speakers. The magnet feature for the entire region has to be a key part of your argument to justify this. So am I right in thinking that

you see health and medicine and, indeed, medical research; you see irrigation planning and services; you see other farm and particularly agricultural side servicing as keying on Lethbridge as its service core?

Mr. Mills: Yeah. Absolutely. Obviously, the economic argument, I think, is pretty key, and I think it's pretty clear. As I described, if you look at the economy of the Lethbridge-Taber region, for example, it's centred around food production, particularly in the growth sector of agrifood processing, just taking a raw product and turning it into something value-added, which is something the province is obviously very eager to achieve. We share water across that region, we buy water, so we're very interconnected that way.

Same thing with Lethbridge-Cardston, again with respect to the idea that, you know, Lethbridge is the hub of the economic region. What happens with respect to, you know, access to the border down at Coutts, which is Alberta's primary border crossing, obviously impacts Lethbridge economically a great deal, right? So there's that connection there. Lethbridge-Livingstone: a number of speakers this evening have talked about the development of the eastern slopes of the Rockies. This would tie some representation from Lethbridge to the region which is also considering that, so the MLA tasked with that riding would be tasked with balancing the considerations of those communities.

I think what it fundamentally comes down to for me is this idea that there are really two ways of looking at it. I really do believe in the effectiveness of local government. I believe, as a Lethbridge resident, that our elected officials here in Lethbridge are doing a spectacular job representing local issues and dealing with them locally. I also think that they do a phenomenal job representing those local issues to the province. I know they engage in, you know, trips to Edmonton to speak to ministers about Lethbridge's concerns, and I think they've done very well for that.

I believe that it would be an opportunity for the province to look at the MLA's role as bridging those local concerns. We have very effective local representation that considers those local issues and only those local issues, but an MLA would be tasked with looking at things on a more broad perspective and understanding that the economy doesn't end where the city border ends, nor does the need for water end where the rural border ends, so having someone that can work with disparate councils and say, "Look, these are the broader regional issues that we have to solve, and let's solve them together." I think that's an incredible opportunity.

The Chair: You wouldn't be concerned, as I think a previous speaker was, under your model, of all four members of the Legislature living in the city of Lethbridge, would you?

Mr. Mills: I would not. It's certainly possible. It's also possible that none of them live in Lethbridge. To me, I trust the people that are elected to do the right thing fundamentally. I don't know all of the existing people in those ridings, but I don't really believe I have to. I know the types of people that tend to run for this office. I believe in them. I believe they're moral people. I believe that their job is to represent the interests of their riding and also the interests of the broader province, which is their mandate.

From my perspective, the same argument could be said if we say: well, it's really important for the MLA for Lethbridge-West, that represents a portion of west Lethbridge, to live in west Lethbridge. Well, then how can we possibly live with the Cardston-Siksika riding, right? Their representation is just as important as anyone else's. The reality is that we're always going to be drawing lines. MLAs are always going to have to travel to a certain extent. They're always going to have to represent diverse views. My experience in

working with MLAs as well as municipal councillors is that they generally do a pretty good job of doing that.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Clark: One quick question, then. More a point of clarification. You work in Coaldale?

Mr. Mills: I do. I live in Lethbridge.

Mr. Clark: That's really the essence of my question, coming back to the question of communities of interest. You live in Lethbridge, work in Coaldale. Why don't you live in Coaldale? What's the difference? Like, what is it about Lethbridge that says: I want to live in Lethbridge. There's obviously something different.

Mr. Mills: Sure. Well, there are a few things. Prior to working for the town of Coaldale, I worked for the largest real estate developer in the region. So when you were asking about where the houses are going, I was, you know, biting my lip because . . .

Mr. Clark: You know where they're going.

Mr. Mills: . . . I know. Largely in west Lethbridge, south Lethbridge.

Anyway, I took an opportunity to go work for the town of Coaldale. The town of Coaldale generally takes a little bit of a different approach to how we do administration. I won't get into it, but I had an opportunity to work with a really great team out there. I had just finished renovating a home a block away from my mother, who needed some care, in south Lethbridge from basement to second storey, and I will move when I die because I'm never doing that again.

But the other reality for me is, again, my role with the town of Coaldale as director of growth and investment. I oversee economic development, planning, engineering, as well as communications and government relations. I deal with all the grant work as well within my department, and we have a relatively small staff that works extremely hard for that community.

I find that I do my job best by not being a resident, and the reason I say that is that my job is to provide my elected officials with advice. Sometimes that advice doesn't always make everybody happy. I mean, everyone is aware of that. If there is an issue – that generally is the planning department – that's brought forward to the council like, you know, I'm suggesting we rezone a parcel next to someone else, if that person next to them was my kid's hockey coach, it would be very, very difficult. My job is to provide advice which is professional in nature, and I find that I'm best doing that without needing to worry about what I'm going to hear at the grocery store after I leave work.

The Chair: Mr. Mills, thank you very much.

We have one short question, and then we're going to conclude.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. I'm just a little slow off the hop because

I'm new to this. I think we all are. The concept that you're presenting, when we talk about a big region like that and we're talking about building together for economic reasons being one of the main goals, could we look at redrawing but leaving the city of Lethbridge alone? I know the population is there. The four types of squares aren't going to work, but could something like that? What we have – I agree with you – does not currently work. But could Lethbridge – would that be a consideration? Could you speak to that, where Lethbridge is a stand-alone city and represents its unique interests and the economic driver is the lower part, as identified there?

Mr. Mills: I don't think that would be as effective. Again, I look at this as an opportunity to look at the issue a little bit differently. I believe that Lethbridge is fundamentally tied to those other communities. I do not believe that it's fundamentally unique and different from those other communities. There are elements of the community that certainly are, just as there are elements of the community in Foremost that are different from the community in Bow Island.

9:45

Again, the reality is that, you know, my son plays on a baseball team here in Lethbridge with other players from as far away as Milk River, right? People come in. There are Milk River players, Claresholm, Fort Macleod, Foremost all within that region. That's one example amongst millions where these are people that travel in and travel out of the community. I look at it as being part of a broader region.

To me, I don't really think it would work as well. I don't think it would serve the goal of tying our economic interests together and promoting the sort of co-operation that I think can exist to really maximize our potential.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Mills, we've been going since 9 o'clock this morning, and we've gone over a little. Thank you so much for your presentation. Make sure that Aaron gets your PowerPoint and any brief summary of your presentation as well. If you could do that, that would be appreciated.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you to all the presenters. Thank you to everyone for coming out and for the thoughtful presentations and the enthusiasm with which you all presented. We thought we had a difficult job before this evening; you haven't made it any easier for us, by the way. But thank you very much.

I do encourage you, especially some of the latter presenters, to tell your people to go to Brooks. Don't send them to Calgary. We've got enough presenters in Calgary. Brooks and Medicine Hat have some time slots, and that's next week, Thursday and Friday.

Thank you very much.

[The hearing adjourned at 9:47 p.m.]



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

Edmonton

Monday, June 2, 2025
9:02 a.m.

Transcript No. 3

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission

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Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Edmonton

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Neal Gray

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Cori Longo

Dale Todd Sikorski

Searle Turton, MLA, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain

9:02 a.m.

Monday, June 2, 2025

[Justice Miller in the chair]

The Chair: Well, good morning, everyone, and welcome to our very first public hearing in the city of Edmonton. I want to welcome all those who are presenting, those who are present and will present and those who will come shortly to present. We have a full morning. As people will come, I will acknowledge them and thank them.

First of all, my name is Justice Dallas Miller. I'm the chairman of the Electoral Boundaries Commission, and I serve as a justice of the trial division of Alberta's court, the Court of King's Bench, in southern Alberta.

We have a total of five commissioners. Unfortunately, one is unavoidably absent today. He will be joining us this evening, and that's Mr. John Evans, KC.

But I want to introduce the commissioners that are present. To my left is Susan Samson, a long-time resident of Sylvan Lake, Alberta, and an experienced municipal councillor and politician, and she served a full term as mayor of Sylvan Lake. Susan was named citizen of the year of Sylvan Lake some years ago and received the Queen Elizabeth diamond jubilee medal in 2012; a dedicated volunteer in her community with a special focus on public health care.

To my immediate right is Dr. Julian Martin. Dr. Martin is a retired history professor from the University of Alberta. His degrees are from Cambridge University, and he, in his retirement, has volunteered on many committees in the Sherwood Park area. He's our capital region representative on the Electoral Boundaries Commission. He also has served and is serving on provincial tribunals such as the Surface Rights Board and the Land Compensation Board.

At the end of the table is Mr. Greg Clark, an entrepreneur and consultant focusing on knowledge management and information. We are fortunate to have Greg as an experienced member of the Legislature. He served the Calgary riding of Calgary-Elbow some years ago. He also is a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth medal. He currently serves on many boards but the most prominent one is that he serves as the chair of the Balancing Pool of Alberta, and he consults and advises organizations relative to proper governance. He holds an MBA and the Institute of Corporate Directors' designation as well.

We are your Electoral Boundaries Commission. I would ask that you hear me out on some basic requirements throughout the day. Please silence your cellphones. You don't have to turn them off, but please silence them so they don't ring.

Don't worry about the microphones. Cine Audio has made sure that that audiofeed will be taken care of. By the way, the audio version of the meetings will ultimately be posted on the EBC website. As well, *Hansard* is recording and ultimately transcribing the events of each public hearing, and those also will be placed on the EBC website.

As we get started, I want to go through a bit of – before I do that, I want to introduce someone that's very important to the commission. Aaron, would you just stand and wave? Aaron Roth is the administrator of the commission. He tells us where to go, when to go, and all that kind of stuff. If you have any written submissions or any documents you want the commission to have, just please leave them with Aaron.

Just to give some background to the work of the commission, first of all, we are an independent body established by the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, and ultimately we were appointed by the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. Under our mandate we must follow the dictates and the direction of the Electoral Boundaries

Commission Act. This current version of the act directs us as a commission to plan for 89 electoral districts or ridings. Alberta is expanding from the current number of EDs, from 87 to 89, and that will be in place for the next provincial election.

Just to give you some context of our timeline, first of all, we were appointed in late March of this year. We're already two months into the mandate. We had some meetings in April as a commission to discuss many things. We started the public hearings just last week, and we will be spending until the last week in June going throughout the province, hearing submissions in various locations. After the first round of public hearings we will of course deliberate, and we will work on issuing a report. I don't want to call it a draft report, but it will be an interim report, which will be tabled with the Speaker of the Legislature by late October. That will become public. It will be published in the *Alberta Gazette*, and there will be opportunity for the public to respond and give feedback to that report.

It is expected that after that report is out, we will have a further round of public hearings throughout December, January, February. We haven't specifically itemized the dates yet. Some of those meetings, no doubt, will be virtual meetings. We love Alberta, we love travelling throughout Alberta, but I'm not sure December and January is the most ideal time to travel, so we may be doing some virtual meetings at that point. Then, after that second round of hearings, we will produce a final report, that will be tabled in late March 2026.

Of course, everyone knows that when we move to 89 constituencies, there will be one member of the Legislature from each constituency or electoral division. The proper terminology that is used in the legislation is the "electoral division," but we often use the vernacular of "riding" or "consistency." And, of course, the voters in each constituency elect that particular member.

9:10

The last electoral commission was held in 2016, with its final report in 2017. A lot has changed since that last commission eight years ago. First of all, the number of MLAs or electoral districts has changed from 87 to 89, and the population has increased dramatically. If you look at the bar graph, the 2017 commission used a population figure of just over 4 million, and based on that population, the average number, if you perfectly cut up the province into 87 electoral districts, was 46,697. The target population per electoral division is in that range of minus 25 to plus 25. That was what happened in 1987.

If you look back at our population level, we are just under 5 million. We're required by the legislation to rely on the last decennial census of Statistics Canada. That was issued in 2021. Again, a lot has changed since then. So we have had the benefit of information and statistics from the Alberta Treasury Board Office of Statistics and Information, and they have given us a figure of 4.888 million currently. I know there are news reports of a higher population, but we are forced to rely on the most reliable data and the verified data, and we are relying on those figures of 4.888.

When we use that figure and we move to 89 electoral districts, the average, if we were cutting Alberta up into even-sized population of pizza pieces, it would be 54,929 persons per electoral district. And, again, the target range varies widely, from 41,197 at minus 25 to 68,661. That is the target range.

As you know, population growth has not spread out evenly throughout the province, so our task as an Electoral Boundaries Commission, given these two major changes of moving to 89 seats from 87 and considering a significant population increase, is to hear from Albertans and to receive recommendations as to how to allocate boundaries to provide effective representation.

“Effective representation” is the terminology used by the courts, by the legislation in terms of ensuring fairness and balance, and in order to reach that effective representation, we must take into account several factors that are listed in the legislation, that being the sparsity, density, or rate of growth of the population throughout the province; issues such as common community interests and organizations, which could include industry, culture, values of certain communities; geographic features throughout the province are also a factor that we must consider. Communication and transportation routes and access is a factor that we can consider. And, very importantly, we must work hard to create an understandable and clear boundary. That is not an easy task, but that’s an overriding obligation on us as a commission.

In addition, one other responsibility we have as a commission is to name electoral districts. So those of you who are presenting, feel free to discuss, or we may even ask you, information about naming constituencies.

Finally, we are tasked with considering any other appropriate factors or considerations. I know that these characteristics can be accused of being vague and ambiguous, but we have no other choice but to follow the legislation as it is written and come up with a report that meets the task of effective representation and takes into consideration the factors I’ve just listed.

Now we want to hear from you. We will have access to all of the electoral districts outlined on the PowerPoint as we go through the presentations, so if anyone wishes to have a particular riding put up, I’ll just mention that. We want to hear from you now. Yeah, I introduced everybody.

Okay. As time goes by, I want to start the list of presenters. Are both people close to the front presenting? Okay. The first presenter is Mr. Neal Gray.

Mr. Gray: Oh, I thought I was at 10 o’clock, but happy to go first.

The Chair: Oh, yes, you’re right. You are at 10 o’clock, but you’re also at 9:20. Is there a second Neal Gray in the house?

Mr. Gray: No. I had initially booked 9:20, and then I didn’t reply in time, and they said come at 10 instead.

The Chair: Okay. Sorry. If your presentation is really good, we might hear you twice.

Mrs. Samson: Mr. Gray, don’t keep me in suspense. Are you talking about a specific riding or just in general?

Mr. Gray: A bit of both.

Mrs. Samson: Thanks. And your riding is – I’ll just pull it up.

Mr. Gray: Edmonton-Mill Woods is where I live.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

Mr. Gray: Hello, everyone. My name is Neal Gray. I live in Edmonton-Mill Woods. I’ve lived there for about 22 years. A little bit just briefly about myself. I’ve been active in and around Alberta provincial politics for about 25 years. Full disclosure: my spouse, Christina Gray, is the current MLA for the riding of Edmonton-Mill Woods. I work for the Alberta NDP at my day job. I’m what they call a digital officer, so I do a lot of work with information that pertains to the 87 districts, so I know them pretty well. And then I’m just going to also declare that I am a member of my local constituency association. I’m a treasurer there. So I have experience both at the local and sort of macro levels.

What I’d like to talk to you about: first of all, I’d like to thank the commission for their work. In a previous life I worked for the RCMP. I know what it’s like to travel the province for work. I know you folks are away from home for a lot of this, so we all appreciate your efforts in that regard.

Let’s talk a little bit about the challenge you folks have of drawing maps and creating boundaries. There are a lot of competing interests in the act that you have to pertain to. One of the things that I think is really important is doing as little change as possible to the existing maps, and I say this to you because I find that people: it takes them a long time to engage with the electoral process, to understand what district they live in, who their representative is, and the more we change these things arbitrarily, the more we disconnect voters from their representation, from their district. So I would encourage you, everything else being equal, to make as few changes as possible.

Now, of course, that’s going to compete with your other needs. You’ve already mentioned that you have to add two new districts into the mix, and you also have to work to balance the population of the districts. I’d like to point out that the slide you showed already that showed the numbers for plus and minus 25 per cent is a very wide number. You’re dealing with something like 40,000 to 70,000 folks per district. I would encourage you to keep all 89 ridings as close to the median as possible.

I know the act has some special allowances for certain kinds of special districts, but in speaking with people across my life – friends, family, people engaged in politics – Albertans have a core commitment to fairness and the belief that most votes count for about the same. People want to know that their vote counts the same as somebody in the next town, the next village, the next city. If you introduce a bunch of districts that are 40,000 and a bunch that are 70,000, you’re really showing people that their vote is not equal to other votes, so I would encourage you to keep the median population as close as possible.

9:20

You had mentioned district naming, and I had done a written submission I will reiterate here on that topic. As somebody that works with these district names quite often, the practice of naming districts for politicians or other historical figures: I would strongly discourage that. The name is a chance for you to connect the voters to where it is that they live, where it is that they represent or their representative is from, so wherever possible I would encourage you to stick to names that have geographic descriptions.

The current practice seems to have involved, especially in rural districts, naming up to three of the largest municipalities, example ridings being Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. Those sorts of names are highly descriptive. People instantly know whether they’re sort of in that general catchment or not. Same for the city names, where you have the practice of Edmonton such-and-such or Calgary such-and-such. I would encourage you heavily to go with area names such as Edmonton-Mill Woods, Edmonton-Ellerslie, Edmonton-Glenora, where folks know where that is intuitively. Some of the names like Calgary-Klein, things like that, that are invoking more of a historical figure: Joe Voter has no idea if they live in Calgary-Klein or not. Again, discouraging that factor.

Having got those thoughts out of the way, I’d like to talk to you a little bit about south Edmonton and in particular Edmonton-Mill Woods. Got a slide on the screen there that shows you. Edmonton-Mill Woods is an area in southeast Edmonton. It’s made up of a handful of community leagues, and each community league has a handful of neighbourhoods, typically two or three within it. One

thing the commission chose to do last time in the interest of numbers balancing was to split up some of these community leagues down to their neighbourhood level, and that has posed a real challenge. Edmonton in particular . . .

The Chair: Can I just stop you there? I'm having trouble. It says "Mill Woods Ellerslie." There are two separate EDs with those names. So what do we have on the screen? Is it number 38?

Mr. Gray: Yeah. Kind of. This is an image I got that's, I believe, from the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues.

The Chair: Oh, sorry. This is a resource from different folks. Okay. Go on.

Mr. Gray: Yeah. You're right. There is Mill Woods and Ellerslie, and where you see those words on that image, there's, like, a pink band there. That's the Anthony Henday Drive – right? – and the transport corridor. It's kind of a separating line there between those two. But you're right. That is a confusing image.

The Chair: So Anthony Henday is the bottom boundary of Mill Woods.

Mr. Gray: That is correct.

In broad strokes, when talking about Mill Woods, what you can see a little bit on this map and better on some that I, unfortunately, wasn't able to get PDFs of is that Mill Woods has a lot of natural boundaries. On the north side you have what's called the Whitemud Drive and a lot of commercial property beyond there, so there are no residences to the north. Again, on the west side you're bounded by Calgary Trail and Gateway Boulevard, a large strip of commercial area. And then on the south you have the Anthony Henday Drive, the transport corridor. So there are these three natural boundaries, if you will. And because of when it was built, the population values, like, the housing costs, and the neighbourhood functions as a pocketed community. People live there. They work there. They play there. And in each of those community leagues there's a lot of similarity. The whole area was largely built in the late '70s, early '80s. It functions very well as a community of common interest is what I would say.

Obviously, you may have to play with things to get the numbers right. I was looking on your site, and the growth is estimated to have brought the riding basically to where it was last time. I believe it's 7 per cent above the median number. It was at the time of the last boundary, and now it still is.

If you decide you have to increase the Edmonton-Mill Woods riding, I would encourage you – on this image you'll see there's – it's hard to see; I apologize – a community called Ridgewood. That's the one that was split into separate neighbourhoods in the last outing. That's been confusing for the folks there because on one side of the street their MLA is Edmonton-Meadows; on the other side of the street it's Edmonton-Mill Woods. If you're looking to add to the Edmonton-Mill Woods riding, I would encourage you to just bring all of the Ridgewood Community League into Edmonton-Mill Woods.

The Chair: Do you have a sense of the population change on that?

Mr. Gray: I do. It's going to add, I want to say, about 4,000 to add the Minchau and Bisset neighbourhoods. The rest . . .

The Chair: Just for context our information says – it's not a percentage – the population was 50,265 in 2017.

Mr. Gray: Okay.

The Chair: And using our population figures today, it would be 58,726, so an increase of about 8,500.

Mr. Gray: Yeah. I saw that, too. I do find that puzzling, I will just let the commission know, because Edmonton-Mill Woods, unlike its neighbouring Edmonton-Meadows and Edmonton-Ellerslie ridings, is all pre-existing housing stock, and there hasn't been a lot of new builds there . . .

The Chair: No.

Mr. Gray: . . . so the notion that we've added 10,000 people is a little bit puzzling given that it's a fully developed community. I don't know how much your 2024 data is based on sort of general statistics or if there's some actual census work behind . . .

Dr. Martin: There is census.

Mr. Gray: There is? Oh, okay. All right.

The Chair: But I understand the puzzling nature of it. My in-laws lived there, so I know that community from 40 years ago.

Mr. Gray: Yeah. There hasn't been the trend of infill that you see in the more central neighbourhoods of Edmonton. They haven't hit us yet. Things are coming, but the number did surprise me a little bit.

So, yeah, I would encourage you to think about Mill Woods as that singular community. If you do need to expand, I would encourage you to expand by fulfilling the community league or, conversely, if the number needs to come down, again, look to those community leagues that are already split, and hopefully you can move those into one riding fully.

Speaking to the neighbouring district, Edmonton-Ellerslie, which is currently undergoing a by-election – we probably all saw the signs on the way in here – if you look at the drawings for Edmonton-Ellerslie, it's quite choppy at the parts above the Anthony Henday. There are little spikes because it has part of a community league called Southwood, and then it skips the next one, and then it pops back up in an area called Laurel. I think that was done largely for the numbers work, and it makes it a very disjointed community. My recommendation, personally, would be to find a way to get all of Edmonton-Ellerslie or whatever you choose to call it in the new design to be fully south of Henday because there's not a lot of commonality between neighbourhoods. South of Edmonton Henday, you're talking about stuff that was built in 2010 or later, largely, and when you go north of Henday, you're talking about communities that are 30 years old. They're very different housing stock, very different demographics.

I think that's largely what I came here today intending to say.

Oh, I will add this fact. Just pulling back out to big picture again, looking at your 2024 numbers, I did some quick math and just took the Edmonton seats and the Calgary seats, summed those totals, and divided it by the provincial total. I know you're adding two seats, and the easy thing to do would be to add one to Edmonton and one to Calgary. The numbers probably justify doing at least that, but when you actually divide the numbers, you see that Edmonton and Calgary probably both deserve closer to two more seats each. I would encourage you to look at – there are a lot of urban districts, I noticed, on the map you showed quickly earlier that are, you know, extremely below the median. Maybe there's a chance somewhere in the province for some amalgamation of districts and

that you can get Edmonton and Calgary a fair number of seats so that their voices are accurately reflected in the Legislature.

I know that's been a contentious issue in the past: how much do you give to the cities? But I think getting them up to where the numbers are today has got to be the bare minimum. We know they're just going to keep growing, and whatever you decide has to govern us for probably 10 years. I would skew towards at least mathematical minimum.

I think that's everything I came to say to you, folks. Again, appreciate your work. If you have any questions, happy to answer them.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gray.

I'm going to start with Susan here. Any questions?

Mrs. Samson: I'm good. Thank you.

Dr. Martin: Thank you very much, Mr. Gray. That's very helpful, and I like the groundedness of what you were talking about. It's a useful thought about community leagues. Very few of the Edmonton ridings have the same population, and so it's apples and oranges sometimes.

9:30

It's a useful thought about the community league boundaries and about housing stock. I agree with you that as it were old, Mill Woods is different than a lot of what has happened in the last 10, 15 years. But I'd be interested in your thoughts about how we deal with the inner city, because they are below the median in population. They are also losing electors. I mean, Edmonton-City Centre has lost 3,400 electors since 2020. It's also 60,000 people, and so you can see reflected there new immigration, students, all sorts of things like that.

All of which is to say that there's a very distinct difference between ridings at the periphery and those in the centre. I think it's most marked in Edmonton. I don't think we see that characteristic in Calgary as much, but the inner core of Edmonton is hollowing out. So there's got to be some adjustments, whether it's mid-town or what.

You know, that has to be part one of the things that we juggle as well. So, what are your thoughts on that?

Mr. Gray: Well, you folks can correct me if I'm wrong, but I believe that the act stipulates that your basis for things have to be based on population, not electors, right? So whether a district has 50,000 people and only 25,000 of those can vote versus 40,000 is irrelevant to you. You're carving it up based on population, not on electors.

Dr. Martin: Any other factors.

Mr. Gray: Yeah. So then I guess what I would say is that you may have to make changes to Edmonton-City Centre. I don't have deep familiarity with that riding even though my place of work is there. I spend most of my time living and as I do out on the south end of town, so my focus is largely the ridings in the south of Edmonton.

If you have to make tweaks and adjustments in the centre, it would be interesting, because I hear what you're saying about the drop in electors, but my gut tells me with all the new towers that the population must still be going up even as the electors is dropping. I don't have access to the data. That's just a gut feeling on that.

Dr. Martin: All right. Thank you.

Mr. Clark: I do have access to the data, in fact. We've got Edmonton-City Centre is actually up 5,000 population from 2016

to 2024, and, yeah, one of the things I think I agree with you: it is population. It says so in both our acts, as well as when you look at the reference cases in the Supreme Court back in '91 and some of the Alberta references, it ultimately works out that population is what we're working to. In my view, that's for a number of reasons. Children don't vote. Even if you're a new Canadian and don't have the legal right to vote, you perhaps go to postsecondary or have kids in school or use health care, and all those are provincial issues that are very relevant to our community.

A couple of questions for you specifically about Mill Woods. You'd mentioned the Ridgewood community, but you also mentioned Henday. Just so I'm clear as, unfortunately, not an Edmontonian, the Ridgewood community straddles both sides of Henday. Is that right or no?

Mr. Gray: No. Sorry. Whatever I said there, it must have got a little confused. Ridgewood is actually quite central to Mill Woods.

Mr. Clark: On the east side?

Mr. Gray: Yeah, of old Mill Woods. It's on the east side out there.

Mr. Clark: And, sorry, I just want to make sure I understand. Is Henday an important natural boundary? You feel it should ...

Mr. Gray: It absolutely is. The development is quite different in terms of timelines when it was built, property values, and just the demographics of the communities that have come up around it. So, yeah, I would suggest it is a significant boundary.

Mr. Clark: Okay. Yeah, and we're obviously going to have to do something about Edmonton-Ellerslie, the second most populous constituency in the province.

Mr. Gray: Yeah. I tried playing around myself with the notion of what you would do. I mean, you could easily, given Edmonton-Ellerslie's overpopulation and Edmonton-South and Edmonton-South West, you could just drop one of your two new ridings on that south of Henday and easily carve it up to meet the rules you go by. But of course, you only get to add two; you've got that problem in other parts of the province as well.

Mr. Clark: It's a challenge. Yeah. Thank you.

The Chair: We've kept you longer than we should have.

Mr. Gray: No worries.

The Chair: But I have one question.

Mr. Gray: Sure.

The Chair: It's a general theoretical question. Blended or hybrid riding: when I look at Edmonton-South, Edmonton-Ellerslie, and we take your proposition that, yeah, we're going to have to add some ridings in Edmonton, it would make sense or it may make sense that those bottom new ridings would be blended, hybrid.

Mr. Gray: What do you mean by that?

The Chair: Part urban, part rural. It's a question I'm asking almost every presenter, by the way.

Mr. Gray: Sure. I know that the government did change the rules so you no longer have to factor in municipal boundaries. I think that's a mistake. I think what you'll find is that the characteristic of folks, let's say, that live in and around Leduc versus those in

Ellerslie is very demographically different. Those folks are living a different kind of lifestyle, and I think that as somebody who's married to a representative it would be a real challenge for a representative to equally represent a riding that has both those urban and rural components packed together. I think it would increase the challenges tremendously.

I know that the commission, I believe, received some feedback on proposals to do that, maybe some of the cities in southern Alberta, and I think that would be a real mistake. I think you're basically going against the communities of interest specification in your act if you start trying to do a lot of those tie, hybrid-type ridings, so I would discourage that.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Gray. Really appreciate it. You can stay for the rest.

Mr. Gray: I will.

The Chair: The immediate next presenter has not arrived, but there's someone else. Cori?

Ms Longo: Yeah. Hi.

The Chair: Okay. Cori, ma'am, could you just identify yourself and spell your last name?

Ms Longo: Certainly. I'm Cori Longo. My last name is spelled L-o-n-g-o.

The Chair: Okay. Please come forward.

Ms Longo: Okay. Good morning.

The Chair: Good morning.

Ms Longo: Good morning. As I mentioned, my name is Cori Longo. My pronouns are she/her. I'm the secretary-treasurer of the Alberta Federation of Labour. Thanks for having me this morning, thank you for the opportunity, and thanks for all the work of the commission. Full disclosure: I'm bringing greetings on behalf of President Gil McGowan. He was called away urgently, so I'm filling in for him this morning. I'm not nearly as knowledgeable as Neal is, but having said that, I'm happy to be here regardless.

The Chair: So he will not be presenting later today?

Ms Longo: No. He won't.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms Longo: Thank you. So a bit about the Alberta Federation of Labour and the reason why we're here discussing this today is that in 1912 unionized miners and tradespeople came together to create the Alberta Federation of Labour. For over 110 years the AFL has fought to defend and advance the rights of working people. Every union and union member is affected, for better or for worse, by a broad range of economic, social, and political forces. With that in mind the AFL is deeply interested in public policy. We advocate for conditions that improve the lives of workers and their families.

I'm here today because the AFL has made an official submission to the Electoral Boundaries Commission. We did this because we believe that workers are best served when democracy is in good health. For democracy to be in good health, it is essential to have fair and free elections. Our concern about the process that the commission is following this year is that the government of Alberta has launched it too early. Given the explosive population growth Alberta has experienced in recent years, we believe it would be

more responsible to wait for data from the 2026 Canadian census. We believe that the commission will conduct its work responsibly and diligently, but we're concerned that the government, by launching this process prematurely, made the task more complicated than it needed to be.

So why does this matter? Alberta has been the fastest growing province in Canada for six quarters in a row. We have led the country in interprovincial migration for 10 quarters in a row. This is a population surge that the government encouraged through its Alberta Is Calling campaign, but now people are here and there are problems caused by a lack of preparedness. There are not enough doctors, not enough schools, not enough teachers, and not enough affordable homes. These issues will likely to be a major focus in a future election. Albertans need to know that every effort will be made to ensure voter parity the next time citizens get a chance to exercise their democratic rights.

9:40

We know that effective representation is a requirement for the commission's work. A proposed electoral division must not be more than 25 per cent above or below the average population of all the proposed electoral divisions. There are some limited exceptions to this, but overall those are the rules the commission must abide by. We are concerned that if the commission relies primarily on the 2021 Canadian census data, the most recent data available, there could be a significant number of electoral divisions that are above the 25 per cent average. These commissions are typically struck every 8 to 10 years, and the data selected in this report will have to last around the same length of time, so the consequences of the decisions made by the commission will last for a long time.

The only way the commission can get close to an accurate picture of Alberta's population is to use population estimates given by the province of Alberta. Comparing Canada's 2021 census of population for Alberta with the most recent Alberta population report, we noticed a difference of about almost 700,000 people. If those 700,000 people had their own city, it would be the province's third biggest after Edmonton and Calgary. According to Dave Courmoyer, a well-known observer of policy and communications manager with the United Nurses of Alberta, there are nine ridings that have had a population growth between 20 and 52 per cent since the current boundaries were drawn up in 2017. Four of those ridings are in Calgary, four are in Edmonton, and the remaining one is in Airdrie-Cochrane.

These are huge changes, and we at the AFL sincerely hope that the commission's final report will accurately reflect this. It is essential that Alberta's working families have confidence in this process. Given the rush of the Alberta government in launching the commission's work, it is essential to do extra diligence to reassure all Albertans that every voter will have an equal chance to have their voice heard. The AFL will be watching with interest the commission's work. This matters to every Albertan that will be of voting age in the next provincial election. It's about fairness. Our electoral boundaries must reflect the vibrant 5 million strong province that we have become.

Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

Mr. Clark: I just have a quick question. I recognize that you're not the first person who is on the list nor probably the person who necessarily wrote all this, so I empathize and apologize. However, there seems to be an inherent contradiction in your submission, and I noted this when I read the written submission. On one hand wait until we have the 2026 census, which then has quite a significant

lag, which would mean we're very unlikely to get it done in time for the 2027 election. Elections Alberta has a lot of work to do in the background. Also we have a substantial number of constituencies that are far over the plus 25 per cent limit as a result of the population growth. So, those are really two essentially entirely opposite sort of ideas. I guess maybe you could perhaps talk . . .

Ms Longo: Yeah. I don't know if there's a perfect answer to the situation. I think we're responding to the facts of the situation, the current situation that we're in. Unfortunately, as mentioned, I do think that this is a hasty response, and I think that if things had been planned a little bit more accordingly with more, I don't know, foresight, we could have maybe avoided this. But yeah. I don't think there's a perfect situation. I think we're here as the AFL just to share that concern.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

Dr. Martin: Thank you. I would like to speak a little bit about your claim that we're using the 2021 census. We are not.

Ms Longo: Okay.

Dr. Martin: Comparisons to it are interesting, but they're not persuasively relevant because we are using the July 1, 2024, numbers, which are an amalgam of federal, provincial, and municipal data sets from which – they are the most recent amalgam of data sets by which you can identify uniformly all the ridings in the province. That sounds a little tricky. There are more recent estimates, but they're partial. It's quite frightening actually what a sausage-making exercise a census truly is. One's expectation that a census would be a census and that's that is, I'm afraid, dashed by actually talking to the demographer.

I think we as a group had a lengthy discussion about the making of a census, which was quite alarming, it must be said, but only if you're using bleeding edge numbers. But stable, uniformly applied across the province numbers can be achieved only in some slight retrospect, and that's how we decided on July 1, 2024. So if you wanted to revise your arguments with that in line, I would encourage you to do so.

Ms Longo: Yeah. Okay. Thank you.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

Ms Longo: I appreciate that. Yeah. I kind of picked up on that when Neal was speaking and it wasn't quite in line with the notes that I was provided. But thanks. I will let our research team know that. Thank you.

The Chair: And in terms of the point that we're too early: we have no control. We have our legislative marching orders. We're over two months into our project. We can't put the brakes on. We're limited. We don't have that power.

Ms Longo: Right.

The Chair: So watch for our report.

Ms Longo: It is what it is. Yeah.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. I just want to echo my colleague's comments with regard to that it was a good presentation but with the numbers skewed, with the wrong date. I don't want to belabour that, but I also want to say that if we faced an election soon, then the representation for the voters is right out of whack. Even when

we're finished, in 2026, those numbers already will be out because of the growth in the province, and we don't meet again – well, we will never meet again. But the commission will not be set again for another eight years. It's an ongoing problem that, you know, I think, if anything – and that's outside of the scope of the work we do, but I think that might be something to have to look at. With growth the way we're seeing it in the province, maybe the push should be to look at it sooner rather than every eight years.

Ms Longo: Right. That makes sense to me.

Mrs. Samson: That's just a comment.

Thank you for your time.

Ms Longo: Yeah. That makes a lot of sense to me. Especially, like, I don't necessarily see the growth slowing down, right? This is going to be, like, an ongoing issue and having to adapt more quickly and move more promptly in response to it I think is necessary.

Mrs. Samson: Yes. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Longo.

Ms Longo: Thank you.

The Chair: Appreciate it.

Ms Longo: My pleasure.

The Chair: And please feel free to stay for the rest of the presentations.

Okay. Our schedule brings us – fast forward to just after 10. Mr. Searle Turton. Did I pronounce that first name correctly?

Mr. Turton: Yeah. Searle, like Merle with an "s."

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Turton: It's a weird name, for sure.

The Chair: Not at all.

Mr. Turton: Awesome. Well, thank you so much, first of all, for the commission's work. This is very important work, and it is appreciated more than you know. Again, my name is Searle Turton. I am the current MLA for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain. I have been serving since 2019. Along with my experience as an MLA I have served for three terms on city council for the city of Spruce Grove, working with many intermunicipal committees throughout the entire capital region, which gives me some fairly intimate knowledge, especially on the electoral boundaries, the way traffic and population move around the doughnut especially. Most of my conversation will be focused on the area of the province that I think is one of the coolest in the province, which is just west of Edmonton. I'm also open to help provide some input or feedback regarding possible discussions on the doughnut surrounding Edmonton.

Specifically, on my riding of Spruce Grove-Stony Plain. My riding has been one of the fastest growing ridings in northern Alberta over many years. Our current municipal population for the combined areas, the urban areas of Spruce Grove and Stony Plain is approximately 64,000 people. In the interim report that was put out in 2017, it was clearly articulated at that time that with the population growth in our area the riding of Spruce Grove-Stony Plain shouldn't actually be put together, but in the final report it was the decision of the commission to revise it and to put these two urban communities together.

9:50

Over the last couple of years, again, as I mentioned, Spruce Grove and Stony Plain have continued to grow, far exceeding the population allowances put forth by the commission. This is something that's also shared by many of the suburban communities outside of Edmonton, all fast growing. Leduc-Beaumont is another perfect example of that.

Regarding just the potential submission, and I have put this forth in a written submission as well with more articulated boundaries, so you can reference that if you need, I would recommend that the riding of Spruce Grove-Stony Plain is split. I'm going to talk about the two different parts. Again, for the reasons that I said, the population is growing too quickly and will continue to grow out of alignment from the benchmarks that have been articulated by the commission.

First of all, I would say the riding of Stony Plain should more closely mirror and be attached to Drayton Valley, further to the west. This would mirror the federal riding of Parkland. This riding is currently being represented by a single MP right now from the borders of Edmonton, including Spruce Grove-Stony Plain and Drayton Valley, so I think that there would be some good synergies there for the riding of Stony Plain to be attached to Drayton Valley in this regard because electorally there's already a tradition of that.

More specifically for the riding of Spruce Grove, again, just due to the high population growth that we are experiencing in the community, what I would recommend for the commission's approval is to have a Spruce Grove-Edmonton hybrid community. I think this makes the most sense about having a hybrid riding for a suburban community of a city like Spruce as well as Edmonton. This riding would include approximately about five minutes north of the Yellowhead to highway 633, which is also known as the Villeneuve highway, from south on highway 44 to the Adams Creek, and it would include the Edmonton subdivisions right by Winterburn Road west of Edmonton south towards Enoch, and then it would use 628, which is the Whitemud extension, as the southernmost boundary all the way over to Spruce Grove. This would put the proximate population at about the low 50s, which would allow room for growth at the Trumpeter area on west Edmonton. As well as this, Spruce Grove would then have the ability to grow into the same population level as other ridings in the province, again giving it some potential room to grow over the next several years.

The Yellowhead Trail acts as a natural conduit for residents in that area to be able to go north and south to enter the Yellowhead Trail and then enter Edmonton. As many people would know, residents in that area, the high-density subdivisions, are also included in the Spruce Grove part of the phone book as well. Many residents of Parkland village as well as those subdivisions are already closely connected to the city of Spruce Grove for education purposes, recreation, and there are natural synergies for those residents that also work in the Acheson Industrial Park as well. I think this riding can easily be represented by one MLA. It ties in the natural travel corridors of the population yet allows room for the growth of that area to continue to be in line with the other new subdivisions around the province of Alberta.

I know you probably have some questions, so I'll move it over to the committee.

The Chair: Spruce Grove alone: what's the population?

Mr. Turton: Approximately 44,000 people right now. The area between Spruce Grove and Edmonton is one of the highest density country cluster subdivisions, so if you can imagine subdivisions of 1 in 2,000 people. There are a significant amount of high-density

acreages in that area included with the Trumpeter area that is to the northwest of the Winterburn-Yellowhead Trail. That added population there would also help put Spruce Grove-Edmonton into that normal population range.

The Chair: Can we get the map up? It's for context. We're going to try and get the map up, the current map.

Mr. Turton: I forget that not everybody knows that riding west of Edmonton. In fact, I did too many years of going to high school in this area and bush barns.

Mr. Clark: While we're doing that, would you mind just sort of a general question?

Mr. Turton: Sure. Go ahead.

Mr. Clark: First off, thank you very much. Appreciate you being here. I should mention as well just one technical question. Some of the things you had mentioned there: are they reflected in your written submission in terms of sort of specifics around where the map should go, in your opinion?

Mr. Turton: They are.

Mr. Clark: Okay. Perfect. We've got that.

I'm just curious. If you could characterize the community of Spruce Grove itself and the community of Stony Plain, why do people choose to live there? What is it about those communities that makes them unique?

Mr. Turton: I don't have half an hour to answer that question, correct? Okay.

Mr. Clark: Never ask a mayor/past council member ...

The Chair: Yeah, exactly. It could be MLA ... [interjections] Yeah.

Mr. Turton: You know, Spruce Grove is growing for the same reasons that other suburban communities outside of Edmonton and Calgary continue to grow, like Cochrane, Strathmore, Chestermere, Leduc, Beaumont, Spruce Grove. We have all the facilities that young urban families wish to take advantage of. We have the advantages of coming to either Edmonton or Calgary for services, yet we don't have the big-city issues. It still has that small hometown feel. For example, a house that is in Spruce Grove is approximately \$50,000 less than in west Edmonton, which is only located seven minutes away, so a lot of families are thinking: hey, I can either have a house for \$50,000 less or \$50,000 more. The average age is much younger in Spruce Grove than it is in Edmonton as well. Again, these just all add to the quality of life.

Stony Plain is very different than Spruce Grove. You know, I always joke that you could take Stony Plain and put it by Hanna or really rural Alberta, and it would fit right in.

The Chair: Could you?

Mr. Turton: It would be probably a little cost intensive, you know.

You know, in Stony Plain you have the angle parking. You have very much that small-town feel. Stony Plain is the second largest town in the entire province. I will leave it as a political trivia question for you to decide which is the biggest town in the entire province. But at 22,000 people Stony Plain is significantly big. Spruce Grove continues to grow and outpace most of northern Alberta when it comes to growth projections, and that is why I am recommending that it is split in this fashion.

Dr. Martin: Thank you very much. I was intrigued by your remarks about growth in the area between Spruce Grove and Edmonton. You characterized it in two ways. One, about growth potential; I take it you mean residential as well as light commercial and the like. On the other hand, you characterized it as being a highly densified country acreages community. Are both of those true at the same time or in the same corridor along the Yellowhead?

Mr. Turton: Yes, absolutely. A fantastic question, Dr. Martin. The urban area of Spruce Grove as well as the urban area that is in west Edmonton, the Winterburn, Trumpeter areas, are really the two ends, and then in the middle we have the industrial park of Acheson, which both areas continue to go to for work, as well as the low-density acreages that are just beside the Yellowhead. If you go between Edmonton and Spruce Grove, you'll be heading through those high-density acreage subdivisions there as well as the new economic corridor, which will be highway 628. This is the Whitemud extension, and that is going to be one of the next big areas for residential growth in this area, and that is a key reason and potential economic driver for Spruce Grove.

Another point I just also want to mention is that there is precedent to have an elected official representing Edmonton as far west as Stony Plain. In 2006 the boundary commission that was put forth I believe at the time by Prime Minister Harper – we had MP Rona Ambrose, that represented as far into Edmonton as 170th Street all the way west to Stony Plain. So there already is a precedent in the doughnut surrounding Edmonton to have federal elected officials represent chunks of Edmonton and then represent the suburban communities outside. This has been done in the past. You look, for example – I know the previous presenter talked about Edmonton southeast. Mr. Lake as well has a reputation and a history of representing south Edmonton as well as Beaumont and Leduc. James Rajotte has represented Devon as well as southwest Edmonton. So this has already been a clear and proven background and precedent of having elected officials representing the outskirts of Edmonton but including parts of Edmonton as well as the suburban communities just outside of Edmonton.

10:00

The Chair: Well, federal is a completely different kettle of fish in terms of hybrid or a blended riding. You've come up with a solution to deal with population, but you're bumping up into a big philosophical issue of the hybrid or blended riding. What do you say to people who say: "No, we should not; in order to maintain communities of interest, we have to maintain urban ridings and non-urban ridings"?

Mr. Turton: Of all questions it's one that comes up in municipal land quite a bit, the kind of news of the experiences that I've heard from multiple mayors before, that residents don't know where boundaries are. They know where the services are. They know where the trade corridors are. They travel past those imaginary lines on a map to access services that they need for their families and businesses. That is why, for example, you have many communities that it's quite seamless from one community to the other. Maybe other than the Anthony Henday, there's not much of a difference in terms of the demographic between St. Albert and northwest Edmonton. You look at the differences between Edmonton-Ellerslie and Beaumont; it's five minutes. You know, I can get from my home in Spruce Grove to the Legislature in 28 minutes and 13 sets of lights, not that I've counted once or twice.

When you really look at the movement of people – see, that is the bigger question: where are people going for services? People in Spruce Grove go to the Costco by the River Cree casino. That is

only six minutes away. When it comes to arbitrary lines on a map that move and grow, those are less of a concern to where families are going. Hence, that's why I talked about the Yellowhead trade corridor. That's where people access. That has helped what ties people together versus having those lines on a map. And, to be quite honest, I think it actually works out better for legislators, to have more rounded views when representing different communities, representing different interests. I think it leads to better decision-making of the Legislature by having those hybrid-blended ridings.

The Chair: You may be surprised to know that we heard last week "no" to blended ridings several times.

Mr. Turton: Well, I'm sure there are quite a few different opinions on it, but I mean, I'm an elected official advocating for blended ridings. I think it will lead to better decision-making and better representation at the Legislature.

The Chair: Okay.
Susan.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. Thank you for coming out today. I would like more information on why we should look at taking Spruce Grove and adding it to Edmonton because I'm concerned that the residents who choose to live in a smaller community that is a town – I understand that they will do all their business and some of their major services within the city of Edmonton, but they don't choose to live in Edmonton. I wonder how they feel when they want to be represented when there are such problems and concerns in – you know, I'm not sure what the pressures are in Spruce Grove, but if it's health related, if there's a lack of money being injected into the schools, or something like that, how will their voice be heard when you're balancing big-city issues with a small-town community, where those people chose to live there because of the lifestyle?

Mr. Turton: Yeah. Good question. Again, as I talked about, people will go where the services that their families require – where those facilities are located. For example, the most popular sport in Spruce Grove, no surprise, is soccer. The largest soccer centre that is used by Spruce Grove residents is in west-end Edmonton. West Edmonton Mall is 12 minutes away from the borders of Spruce Grove.

Again, when you look at the Yellowhead corridors, when you think about in terms of the corridor approach, residents between Spruce Grove and Edmonton are constantly travelling back and forth. If you look, some of the highest traffic-density patterns are between 16A, potentially 628 if we ever get funding – that's my own issue – and then the Yellowhead Trail. Again, there is free movement between those two communities. It's no different from people in Beaumont using services in south Edmonton, people in Leduc or south Edmonton going to the Nisku industrial park. You know, the movement of people in five, six minutes is really not much bigger. I can get to Edmonton faster from my home in Spruce Grove than I can get to the other side of Stony Plain, yet the majority of travel patterns for people in Spruce Grove is towards the east, towards Edmonton, and many of the people in west Edmonton travel westward towards Acheson, which is Alberta's now second-largest industrial park for employment opportunities. There are transit and buses that go between the two areas, so I would say that they are as connected as you can be without actually being part of the city.

Mrs. Samson: What would the residents of Spruce Grove say if Edmonton annexed them?

Mr. Turton: Well, according to annexation you can only annex the residential growth. Having the industrial park in Acheson separating Spruce Grove, Stony Plain, and west Edmonton would prohibit annexation under the current rules. But that being said, you know, I think there is a reason we have separate identities for communities. I think this is a vast mosaic of different municipal identities, and I would support keeping those specific identities.

That being said, I think that there are always opportunities to grow together. I served on the transit commission for the city of Spruce Grove, worked very well with west end councillors Andrew Knack, you know, Mr. Walters in the past as well. I think that there's a lot of work that has been done about those seamless interactions between the two communities, but I am very appreciative that we are also separate.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Any other questions?

Well, thank you very much, Mr. Turton. Thank you for coming. Thank you for your well-thought presentation. If you can stay for the rest of the session, that would be . . .

Mr. Turton: I'll stay as long as I can before I get called into the Leg. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Jennifer Klimek. Good morning and welcome.

Ms Klimek: Good morning. Thank you for letting me – I've never spoken at one of these before. I'm just a retired citizen. I'm from Edmonton-Gold Bar. That's where I am.

I don't have many concerns about the boundaries of our riding; it will ebb and flow where it is. But I also have a rural background. I grew up near the Vermilion area and I have a lot of family out there, so I realize the political differences between urban and rural. I think that's one of my biggest issues here, making sure we deal with those.

I guess I'll start out by saying that I value my vote. It's important. I want it to have the same impact and weight as every other vote in Alberta, and I think sometimes when you get the ridings too dense, my vote doesn't carry the same weight as someone in rural Alberta. I know it's a challenge and it's your job to figure out how to do that, and I recognize that because of distance and things like that rural ridings cannot have the same number, but I think we have to try to deal with that in maybe more – just don't let the urban ridings get too big that we're so dilute. That's my one comment on the size of the ridings.

Having listened to the one before me, I disagree on hybrid, and that's where I want to focus on, the sense of community. I spend a lot of time with – my family is very political, and we argue over everything, and I keep hearing: urban people don't understand us; we're misrepresented; no one knows. I think there is some truth to that, because I still spend a lot of time with my family in rural Alberta, and their concerns are very different than mine. They're worried about their schools closing. They're worried about the hospitals. They're more worried about: why am I sending money to you to run the school for 50 people?

I think if you start hybridizing them and bringing them into a bigger riding, I worry that their voice will get so diluted that the majority will overwhelm them, and I think they need representation . . .

The Chair: Sorry. Who's they?

Ms Klimek: Oh. They, the rural people, you know. Okay. I'm going to speak on behalf of my family out there.

If we start bringing in smaller groups where they're completely amassed – say you take a little town and put it in with a big one. Rural economically think, like: why are we sending money to keep your school open? And maybe there isn't. But I think that when you have an MLA representing people that have the same issue – they may not all vote the same, but all the candidates are addressing that same issue. It's not getting diluted, where I'm worried about Edmonton because that's where the majority is. The little guy: no one understands his issue, where if that little guy has five candidates before him, they might disagree on how to do it but they're all looking at that issue.

10:10

I think you have to look at the nature of the community. If you go back to rural areas or racialized communities, if you split them out too much, they get diluted, so you should bring them together. Since they're all represented by this similar area, they can all address their candidates with their issues, and then that candidate, the elected one, could go in and forcefully fight for those issues. He's not dealing with the large urban population that doesn't want to spend money, and he's got this little pocket that says: "Wait a minute. What about us?" I think that's my big thing.

I don't think you're determined by where you go to shop. I have a family that drives to Edmonton once a week. They're worried about their hospitals, their whatever. The fact that you're driving to a municipality to do your economics or major stuff: it still doesn't deal with the issues at the table. So I think you have to be careful about saying: this community goes here, so they're part of it. I think we have to keep the representation so at least those issues are not being diluted, and I guess that's my biggest fear. There are fewer and fewer people out there in rural Alberta – we know it – but we've got to protect those interests so that they're actually being heard at the Leg.

I think that's essentially what I have to say to you. I don't want to belabour the point, but I think we want to keep the city ones not so big that, you know, your MLA is representing way more people and all of that. Maybe we need more cities. It was interesting when I came in and I heard what you said, Mrs. Samson, about the timing. I kept thinking: well, you know, we are changing; we've got to deal with that. We also have to anticipate where we're going. It's a challenge for you folks to do that, but we do know the cities are likely to get bigger. So how do we deal with that?

I guess my biggest fear, too – I watch a lot of TV – is that I would hope that we never gerrymander here to create things that make no sense geographically. The only thing you can think of: we want to pull that community in here because of whatever reason, they vote whatever way. Please, please, please do not let that happen. I think you've done a good job, but please, I think that's so important that they do represent the people.

That's all I have to say to you.

The Chair: Julian.

Dr. Martin: Thank you. If you're alluding to gerrymandering in the U.S.A., you'll notice that it's elected representatives that do that kind of work in their Legislatures. You know, our whole system is built to muffle that down as much as possible.

I have a question for you. You're a resident now of Edmonton-Gold Bar?

Ms Klimek: Yeah.

Dr. Martin: In the light of your remarks about not diluting rural voices and the like, what's your thought about it within the city of Edmonton? I notice that Edmonton-McClung, Edmonton-

Riverview, Edmonton-Strathcona, Edmonton-Gold Bar are all below the mean population at this time. There are loads of reasons why that would be. It's not pathological, but it's a quite normal thing for the inner parts of cities to not grow as fast as the peripheries. You're happy with your riding, but are you happy with the thought that you get a representative on fewer voters and fewer population than the people at the periphery? How would you recommend that we manage that?

Ms Klimek: Maybe the periphery shouldn't be so big. I mean, that might be why we need more urban vote ridings. If I were living in the outer area, I'd be saying: yeah, I'd take some of us and maybe pull in there or whatever. I know the edges of ridings move all the time, but I do agree. I think we have to try and keep them, and that might be that my riding becomes a little bigger.

But I guess you also face the problem – I mean, I look at Edmonton-Gold Bar. We've got a lot of industrial area. Like, it stops at Argyll Road for quite a ways. I mean, that's your challenge, I guess. How do you deal with that? Do I have something in common with the people of Edmonton-Mill Woods on electing? Hopefully, I do. I don't think urban stuff gets – I think our concerns are more similar within an urban versus rural. I just worry about, I guess, more if you take the edges of the city and grab those people in, they're going to get lost or could get lost or diluted because their concerns are . . .

Dr. Martin: So then if we have to do a bit of nip and tuck in the inner area, that seems reasonable to you.

Ms Klimek: Yeah. I'm not going to lay awake tonight worrying about that. I mean, I think a lot of it is that, for us, we have good access to our MLA. It doesn't matter where he is. I drive all over the city. I do worry that that's a problem for rural areas, and that's one of the reasons, I guess, they have less population. But I suppose with – we now have better ways, like, with digital stuff. We do have better ways for them to communicate. But I know my family never sees their MLA anywhere because it's too far for them to go, you know. So I guess you have to work with that, too, and that's your challenge.

The Chair: What electoral district is your family in?

Ms Klimek: They're in the Lloydminster area.

The Chair: Oh, okay.

Ms Klimek: So it depends where you are on the periphery on that, you know. But I know they have very different concerns about what's happening in Alberta. I mean, they're two different worlds in many ways. There are different issues, and I would hate to see them lose that voice because they get pulled into somewhere else. I would imagine – and I mean, I just listened to the individual before me – that maybe it's not that much difference on the periphery of Edmonton. But I tell you, you don't have to go too far out of Edmonton to realize it's a different world because of agriculture and smaller schools.

The Chair: Any other questions?

Mrs. Samson: Just one comment. I want you to know that we have heard in the previous road trip last week that residents are concerned about access to their MLA when they live in the rural areas, and as a commission we have that ability to recognize some of these key challenges when we write the report. I think there was at this time – we heard that loud and clear, and you may see that come out again . . .

Ms Klimek: Oh, good.

Mrs. Samson: . . . in the report with some suggestions.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms Klimek: Well, thank you for the opportunity.

The Chair: Thank you for your presentation. Please, you're welcome to stay, and I hope you stay for any other presentations.

None of the other pre-break – Oh. Well, it's perfect timing. We're scheduled for a break at 10:20. We'll be back in 10 minutes, 10:30.

[The hearing adjourned from 10:19 a.m. to 10:45 a.m.]

The Chair: Okay. The sands of time are going through the hourglass. We'll reconvene the commission. Sir, you missed the opening presentations. Mr. Dale Sikorski.

Mr. Sikorski: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. You're scheduled to present later this morning, but let's move you up sooner. Please come forward. We've already had a morning of a few very good presentations. You're the first person to present after our break, so thank you for coming.

Mr. Sikorski: Well, thank you. Hello. My name is Dale Todd Sikorski, and I am a resident of Edmonton-South West. My husband and I moved to the southwest community of Keswick in 2022. Prior to that for 32 years I lived and worked in the city of Camrose. One of the things I loved about living in Camrose was that it was a city with a small-town feel. It was wonderful being able to have a career in a city where I also had a family doctor, dentist, grocery stores, and easy access to other services and community resources.

When it came time for me to retire, my husband and I wanted to move back to Edmonton. We're both from here originally. We wanted to find a place where we could kind of capture that city with a small-town feel. We found that in Keswick, one of the many communities in the area known as Edmonton-South West. It's spelled Keswick, but it's pronounced "kessick." I guess it's an old English name. It's a very nice area, and I consider it akin to being like a small city. I'm very fortunate that I was able to find a family doctor, a dentist, and veterinarian all within walking distance, a relative walking distance, and I also have easy access to community services like a rec centre, grocery stores, clinic, and banking with just a short drive. It's really nice.

I'm sharing my experience with you because I wanted to give you my personal perspective as a citizen who's lived in two urban centres both of which were surrounded by large rural areas. I witnessed changes over time and have seen the challenges that come with population growth. I feel this is all pertinent to the commission's work when considering how to create the new electoral divisions in Alberta.

I also understand that the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act revised and updated the factors that the commission can consider when drawing new electoral boundaries. I have two requests. Number one, I would ask that this commission consider the significant population growth in Edmonton-South West when drawing the boundaries. Number two, ensure that any new boundaries continue to respect the existing urban boundaries.

During my time in Camrose I saw that city grow in population from around 13,000 to over 20,000. This was over the course of 30 years. That population growth was managed well by the city of Camrose as they carefully planned and improved the municipal

infrastructure and services in response to this slow and steady increase in population. We know that the city of Edmonton is expected to grow in population, but it will be significantly greater and at a much faster pace. According to the city of Edmonton's Q1 2025 economic update Edmonton's population grew 5.7 per cent between 2023 and 2024, which was its fastest pace since at least 2002. The Edmonton Metropolitan Region Board anticipates the Edmonton region to be the fastest growing in Canada, reaching 2 million residents by 2040 potentially.

Edmonton-South West is also growing very quickly. It is not just one of the fastest growing areas in the city of Edmonton; it's also one of the fastest growing in the province of Alberta. The provincial electoral riding of Edmonton-South West has the third-highest population growth in the province. I've witnessed this growth first-hand with the record number of new homes being built and families moving into the neighbourhood along with lots of road construction, new schools, and new businesses. Based upon the significant population growth that is likely to occur in Edmonton-South West, I feel it's important that we have good representation to ensure that our communities will be well served and well represented at the provincial level. Historically rural voters in Alberta have been overrepresented in Alberta's Legislature. Alberta should ensure that its Legislature seat distribution accurately reflects the population of Albertans who live in fast-growing urban centres like Edmonton-South West.

My second request is that any new boundaries continue to preserve community integrity by respecting the municipal boundaries in the city of Edmonton. Drawing from my own personal experience again, I'd like to compare the city of Camrose with the surrounding rural area of the county of Camrose. While the city of Camrose's population steadily increased, the county of Camrose had a population that remained relatively unchanged during most of that time. The city of Camrose and the county of Camrose did have agreements and frameworks in place for accessing services such as transportation, water, emergency services, and recreation, and they collaborated well for the most part. However, despite the collaboration, from my experience and perspective, it was clear there were very different priorities at play and challenges for each of the communities. In the city of Camrose we were dealing with issues such as housing density, public transit, and in the rural communities it was often about land use and road maintenance.

In Edmonton-South West the priorities are very different from those in rural areas. Our population growth has led to an increased demand for new schools, better transportation corridors, and a greater need to build a new hospital. The rural areas are looking to protect environmentally significant areas and attract new businesses and investment. I realize that these are just a few and that there are many more priorities for each of the areas. Some of these issues are much more complex than I am prepared to speak on, and I know that they require proper consideration and attention.

I feel that combining urban and rural areas, then, would make it incredibly challenging for any elected MLA to effectively represent such disparate interests. I wonder: would an urban elected representative truly understand the lived experiences of a rural citizen and vice versa? I don't think so. I can also imagine that citizens would have greater difficulty accessing their representative's office and resources if it were not located within relatively close proximity to their residence. By placing an MLA's office beyond existing urban-rural boundaries, citizens would also lose that important connection that is really important to democracy and fair representation.

I'm not keeping track of the time. I know it's seven minutes, so I'm ...

The Chair: It's okay. Yep.

Mr. Sikorski: Okay. In closing, I am a citizen of Edmonton-South West, and I'm advocating to ensure that this commission follow the principles of good governance and democratic fairness. I understand the importance of the work that this commission does. I'm very grateful to have the opportunity to speak here and to ensure in some small way that Albertans have an electoral map that justly represents our growing population. My formal request is that the commission adhere to the principles of representation by population while also respecting the boundaries of municipalities.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Sikorski.

Do we have the Edmonton map? If we can bring that up.

Mr. Roth: Do you want the whole city?

The Chair: Yeah.

Any questions? Starting on Greg, then Julian.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Justice, and thank you so much for being here. Unfortunately, not being an Edmontonian, I'm not that familiar with the neighbourhood and the communities and the sort of natural flow of things. If you were sitting on this side of the table and were tasked with redrawing Edmonton-South West, which is, by my understanding, at least in the top one, two, three, four – it's the fifth fastest growing of our constituencies. It's over the 25 per cent variance, so we know we need to do something. Do you have any suggestions about what belongs with what or perhaps even what doesn't belong with what in your constituency?

10:55

Mr. Sikorski: I don't have any specific suggestions. I know that the river does separate the two portions. It's very long, so that seems to be a natural physical division to me. I know that there is more growth going up north of the river out towards the west, and then in the area that I live in, which is south of the river, heading south, there is also growth in Keswick and Glenridding, for example.

The Chair: And you're south of the river?

Mr. Sikorski: I am south of the river, yes. Almost to the very limit. You know where Rabbit Hill is?

Mr. Roth: I think I know where it is, but I can't see it translated onto this map. Anyways.

Mr. Sikorski: Oh, I should have brought a map. Oh, you've got it.

Dr. Martin: While we're trying to find your riding, I would just tell you that Keswick is named after a village in the English Lake District.

Mr. Sikorski: English Lake District. Like Windermere.

Dr. Martin: That's right.

Mr. Sikorski: Oh, it's all part of the same ...

Dr. Martin: Yeah. Yeah. It's the same developer's consciousness at play.

Mr. Sikorski: Okay. All right. I just got back from England. I was in Chichester and Norwich, and of course the "w" is not pronounced, so I figured there was some kind of a connection there. Awesome. Thank you.

Mr. Clark: I'm sorry. Again, while we're getting this up, if you don't mind, I still have – you talked about blending rural and urban. I guess, again, I don't know the Edmonton and the surrounds all that well, but what I see here is that Devon is right on the doorstep there, but it seems like it's quite rural, and it looks like agricultural outside of that; not a lot of population. Can you maybe just speak to that? You don't live in Devon, obviously, but if it were to incorporate parts of outside of Edmonton, what would the impact of that be? Is there a significant difference, then, between Devon and Edmonton, and if there is, can you tell us how you'd characterize that?

Mr. Sikorski: You know, I'm not as familiar with Devon, having only driven by it because of the proximity where I live, so I'm not quite sure. I mean, I've only looked at some of the Parkland county priorities that they're working on in that area. Edmonton-South West: like I said, I have a very strong stance about the need in Edmonton urban areas. In terms of the rural I haven't, as I mentioned, a deep understanding of the need there. I guess I'm concerned that by extending what is already a very large riding further to the south and including a large rural area, I think it would just become much more difficult for people living in that area to have access to an MLA who would be able to listen to their concerns, to be available if there was a need for representation or issues that come up. I'm not sure if that answers your question.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Thank you.

The Chair: Let me ask you what seemingly might be an irrelevant question. Do you own a vehicle?

Mr. Sikorski: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. Is it fair to say that some people in your electoral division may not? I'm just guessing based on the fact that you said that you're within walking distance of all your services.

Mr. Sikorski: Yeah. That worked out very nicely, that I can walk if I need to. I know that we do have a little bit of transit. Because we're very far out, I know that some sections are not well served by transit. There are sections that are very nice and walkable, and people can get to a transit station relatively easy, I think, but, yes, because it's also very long and we have Terwilliger Drive, that extends out, there's a lot of traffic there as well. There are a lot of people who commute to different parts of the city, and I know some people who work in the north end and even people who work south in Devon as well, so outside of Edmonton.

The Chair: To your knowledge, are there people, residents in your community, Keswick, that can survive without vehicles, households without vehicles? That's fine. If you don't know of any, that's fine.

Mr. Sikorski: Perhaps.

The Chair: My second very random question. It's obvious that something has to be done with Edmonton-South West. It's patently obvious. In 2016 the population was 46,000; in 2024, 76,000, so it's increased by 30,000. It is one of the faster growing areas.

Do you have any suggestions for a name? We can't call it Edmonton-South and Edmonton-West and divide the name that way. Any suggestion for a name for one or two of the ridings that will come out of that?

Mr. Sikorski: You know, I'm not sure. That's a good question I haven't even thought about.

The Chair: We have names, so that's why I'm asking. If you can think of some, don't hesitate to send them in.

Mr. Sikorski: I know that some of the names – like, I see Edmonton-McClung. Presumably that's named, you know, after Nellie McClung. I'm not sure if there is any precedent to naming after significant people who have made a contribution.

The Chair: I don't think we can name it Edmonton-Sikorski.

Mr. Sikorski: No. I'm not advocating for that, but that's very kind of you.

Yeah, perhaps something like that. I'm not sure.

The Chair: But that's a challenge we have, so think about that.

Mr. Sikorski: Okay.

The Chair: Susan, do you have any questions?

Mrs. Samson: Yeah, just a comment. There might be a play when renaming electoral districts to stay away from individuals, historic individuals. The previous presenter said it well in that it should be identifiable to the people who live there. You can appreciate as a newcomer: who are those people, Rutherford and such, you know?

Mr. Sikorski: Right. That's a very good point, and you know what? I think you're absolutely right. To build that connection between the citizens and their constituencies, I think it's really important that it's readily identifiable, so I would be in support of that.

Mrs. Samson: Right. You know, the other thing: living in a very large urban centre, how often in, let's say, the last year did you physically see your MLA?

Mr. Sikorski: A few times, actually. I did have to go see him for a notary. I had a legal document, so he provided notary services. I did see him – oh, and last year was my parents' 60th wedding anniversary, so I got a certificate.

Mrs. Samson: Nice.

Mr. Sikorski: Yeah, that was very nice.

And then I think I've seen him at a couple of events as well in the community.

Mrs. Samson: Right. Do you find him or her easily accessible at the constituency office even to get through those kinds of things?

Mr. Sikorski: Yeah. His name is Nathan Ip. He's a very good representative, a very nice fellow, and I really appreciated, you know, being able to access the services his office provides.

Mrs. Samson: Right. Thank you very much for your time today.

Dr. Martin: Thank you for your presentation. I wanted to ask. You spoke warmly about the local access to a bunch of services. Now, is that along Windermere at that whole area just south of the Henday, which is a big shopping area?

Mr. Sikorski: A little further south there is – do you know Ellerslie Road?

Dr. Martin: Yes.

Mr. Sikorski: On Ellerslie Road: that's where my doctor and my vet are located. Just before it changes to Hiller, though, there's a

small commercial section there, and my dentist is just two blocks further south.

Dr. Martin: Well, the reason I ask is just because I'm curious about, you know, the build-out of commercial and professional services in there. Do you think it has grown adequately to support the mushrooming population, or do you find yourself still driving into Edmonton-Whitemud somewhere?

Mr. Sikorski: Like I said, I'm very happy I have a family doctor that is in walking distance. I could not believe my luck when we moved here. I know there are other people who have to travel further for family doctors. Dentists: not as much of an issue. That's fine. Rec centre: I'm very lucky. The Terwillegar rec centre is only about a 15, 20-minute drive maybe from my house, and it is a great service for me and my husband. Banking: very close by. Grocery stores: lots of services there. The businesses that are opening up: I'm very much in support. I am very grateful. We have a variety of restaurants as well.

11:05

Edmonton-South West is a wonderful community to live in because it just is, like I said, kind of like a small city. We don't have to travel very far outside. Specialist appointments and hospitals are the time when we would have to travel longer distances.

Dr. Martin: If I may just follow up, this then adds colour to your earlier remark about finding a community feel, just as you had when you were in Camrose.

Mr. Sikorski: Yes.

Dr. Martin: Do you find – I mean, it's obviously a barrier, and you mentioned the river in that respect. Do you ever find yourself connecting with, as it were, the northern half of your electoral district?

Mr. Sikorski: I have been there sometimes for coffee, meeting friends, so it's not a barrier unless the traffic sometimes on the Henday gets very busy. Because I'm retired, I don't have to travel during rush hour, so usually when I get together, it's not really an issue very much.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

The Chair: We have time, so I'm wanting to continue the conversation. My mental picture – you mentioned Terwillegar – is that this electoral district is a mix of older, established neighbourhoods, and there must be a lot of new development itself. Is that right?

Mr. Sikorski: Yes. The area I live in, that's where there's a lot of development. The north . . .

The Chair: And you live south of the river, right?

Mr. Sikorski: Yes. South of the river. Closer to the river those homes have been a bit more established, like Windermere. As we've built out further south, those are where the newer communities are. When you go north of the river, there are some communities like Jamieson Place, I think, that have been there a little bit longer, probably since the 1990s or so, but now as they start moving further west, River's Edge, Edgemont, those places are very new, and they are growing very quickly. There's a lot of development going out that way.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you.

Any more comments or questions?

Well, Mr. Sikorski, thank you very much for coming and for participating. You're welcome to stay and hear other presentations as the morning goes by.

Mr. Sikorski: Yeah. I think I will stick around for a bit. Thank you. Thank you very much.

The Chair: To our next presenter, Mr. Jasvir Deol.

Mr. Deol: Yes, sir.

The Chair: Thank you very much for coming. As you probably were notified, we had a time limit for presentations, but we're not enforcing that so strictly because we have time, so please take your time and identify yourself and tell us what you want us to hear.

Mr. Deol: Sure. Excellent. Thank you. Good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I think I should actually introduce myself.

The Chair: Please. Please.

Mr. Deol: Thank you. Jasvir Deol. You said it right. I'm the MLA for Edmonton-Meadows.

The Chair: Oh, okay. Welcome.

Mr. Deol: Thank you once again for the opportunity to speak today. Before I offer my comments, I want to sincerely thank you. I thank the Alberta boundary commission for undertaking this important task and for the opportunity where voices from across the province can participate and provide feedback.

Electoral boundary redistribution is the cornerstone of a healthy democracy. It ensures that representation keeps pace with population growth and that every voice, regardless of community, background, or geography, is effectively heard, respected, and valued. It's essential that this process be fair, transparent, and accountable to Albertans. No Albertan should feel their voice has been lost or diluted due to boundary changes.

Communities, whether urban, rural, or ethnic, must not be merged in ways that erode their distinct identities or shared interests. That's why this commission's work must go beyond numbers and take into account the cultural, linguistic, and social ties that bind communities together. The redrawing of electoral maps must reflect where people actually live and where the province has seen the most rapid growth.

I don't know if you are recording this conversation, but I can submit my written submission as well.

The Chair: Please do. Please check with Mr. Roth, here.

Mr. Deol: Then you don't have to take all the notes. Thank you.

Municipal boundaries, communities of interest, and natural geographical features should all be considered carefully to ensure effective and equitable representation. Community identities matter. That includes existing municipal boundaries, community organizations, First Nation reserves, Métis settlements, and city neighbourhoods, particularly in Edmonton and Calgary. These boundaries help define who we are and how we connect with our neighbours. It is important that they remain intact, wherever possible, so that residents feel their voices are generally reflected in their elected representation.

Geographical features, existing road systems, and the practicality of maintaining understandable and coherent boundaries are also key. The commission should prioritize grouping communities with

shared values and challenges – cultural, economic, and geographic – so that the resulting ridings are representative and effective.

I want to draw a little bit of your attention specifically to the riding of Edmonton-Meadows, which I have had the privilege of representing for the past six years. Since the last boundary review south Edmonton has experienced significant growth. New neighbourhoods and community leagues have emerged, and the area's population has surged. Today Edmonton-Meadows includes 11 neighbourhoods: Aster, Bisset, Daly Grove, Jackson Heights, Kiniski Gardens, Larkspur, Maple, Minchau, Silver Berry, Tamarack, and Wild Rose. These are supported by five community leagues: Burnewood, Ridgewood, Edmonton Southwood, the Meadows, and Fulton Meadows. The community of Laurel is part of Edmonton-Meadows in the municipal area but not the riding.

Those communities share deep cultural ties, family networks, and social cohesion. It is crucial that these bonds are preserved and not fragmented by boundary changes. When I ran in 2019, Edmonton-Meadows was already one of the most densely populated and multicultural ridings. Since then it has grown around 20, 25 per cent of the average population for the riding. The average age is just 36, and a large percentage of residents, almost 20 per cent, are between the ages of five and 17. More than half of the population speaks a language other than English at home.

To serve this diverse population, my office employs multilingual staff and uses ethnic media to engage the community. We have taken a unique approach to budgeting and outreach to ensure we can meet our residents where they are culturally and linguistically.

The needs in this riding are significant and distinct. Educational infrastructure is urgently needed, especially new schools and early learning programs tailored to the young, diverse population. Health care access must include culturally appropriate and multilingual services. Immigration support is a major issue, and our office acts as a vital bridge for newcomers navigating challenges in their own language.

Small businesses are booming. When I was elected, there were a few commercial spaces in the area. Today new strip malls have emerged across the riding, symbolizing vibrant local economic growth. These entrepreneurs deserve continued and appropriate representation.

I would just like to note that when I came into office, my predecessor was living outside the boundary, like, not in the riding, because there was no choice. Now, you can see, choice has been immense.

I would like to conclude. In summary, I ask the commission to ensure that Edmonton-Meadows remains wholly intact and fairly represented. The community has grown not just in numbers but in identity, cohesion, and vibrancy. Fragmented it would diminish the collective voice of thousands of Albertans who have built their lives there. Once again, thank you for your time, your service, and your commitment to a process that truly reflects democratic values of this province.

Thank you.

11:15

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for your presentation. Most interesting. When I look at the map – it is the map that is up there – you've got lots of room for growth. Am I seeing that right? The part to the east...

Mr. Deol: East.

Mrs. Samson: Is there an outlying structure plan in there yet? What are they proposing in that area?

Mr. Deol: There is still, like, a lot of room, not as much as we had in the last six years. But there is room, you see, to the far east, east of 17th and closer to the Anthony Henday side. You know, the [inaudible] is quite a bit developed already. Tamarack Common is there now. You can probably see on the map, like, north of there. There is still room, but it won't be probably as much as it has grown in the last six years.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: Our numbers show that in 2017 the population of your constituency was just under 52,000, 51,776, and according to the population figures we're using from 2024, it's up to almost 68,000, so 67,736. You're okay with those numbers?

Mr. Deol: Yeah, this is all right. It's close to 70,000.

The Chair: Okay. I'm not sure you've checked the numbers, but I'd be curious to know: if we took 17th Avenue – and don't take anything from what I suggest; this is a scenario – and we made that the eastern boundary, what would be lopped off in terms of – I think I'm reading that as 17th Avenue. Is that right?

Mr. Deol: Seventeenth Street.

The Chair: Seventeenth Street. Okay. If we use that continuously as the eastern boundary, do you know what population would be lopped off?

Mr. Deol: Basically, you know, the multicultural fabrics of this riding will be compromised big time...

The Chair: With that boundary.

Mr. Deol: ... with that boundary. There's more of, if you are looking at it in that way – I have the older neighbourhoods to the west of my riding that have a bit of a unique, different identity compared to the riding east of 34th Street all the way to the Anthony Henday and part of Laurel, even now. They share very similar values and similar challenges and requirements when it comes to issues like immigration and newcomer communities settling.

The Chair: You mentioned languages other than English. What's the predominant two or three languages?

Mr. Deol: Predominant is Punjabi, and there's Hindi, Urdu, Tagalog, and Mandarin.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Clark: I am curious on just a slightly different angle. You mentioned MLA budgets and, I guess, building on what Justice Miller was talking about in terms of a variety of different languages. One of the things, though, that we've heard is that if we're going to bridge the large geographic areas of rural Alberta with the need for perhaps multiple constituency offices to enhance access to those constituents – this is outside the scope of our work, but I guess I'm just curious – from your perspective as an MLA do you feel like there's a need to enhance rural MLA budgets to accommodate for the vast geography they have versus the relatively small geographic areas in the cities? Or is there another consideration?

Mr. Deol: I can speak, actually, for my riding. It's not about the geographical area only. Like, it's about the people who live – the population and the numbers, and, as I spoke, identity is important. We have multiple ethnic media outlets, right? This is a unique need in this riding, in the city and province. I had two challenges when I got in the office. The area was newly built. The real estate was very high. So compared to some of the other ridings, we have to work with a budget. The second is that we do outreach our communities, right? The large geographical area probably wouldn't have that. That could be maybe five, 10 times larger in area but might not have the same challenges. I've got to make sure my part-timers speak, you know, are multilingual, full-time is multilingual. We reach to all the ethnic media outlets. We are in the community of every, you know, language-speaking background or culture.

One of the examples: you know, I'm from a Punjabi background. When the Filipino community was struggling to see – like, they wanted to see where they are reflected in the city's cultural fabric, where they are and where they can see themselves. My office was the one – I started not in my riding, but it is in my community. I started writing that campaign and I guided them, and eventually two years after they had their own part like that that reflects the community as part of, you know, our society I think.

Mrs. Samson: Excellent.

Dr. Martin: Thank you very much for your presentation. I, like everyone in this part of the province, have been watching the growth of this district with excitement and a little bit of anxiety, and I'm sure that the work in your constituency office is never slow.

I want to ask you a really hard question, because you have argued that we should respect community interests and boundaries. Fair point, but the population is such that it attracts our attention for another reason as well, so you put us between a rock and a hard place. I'm going to throw it back to you. If we had to do some nip and tuck on where the boundaries are, how could you possibly do it?

The Chair: And feel free to go to the map and show us, too.

Mr. Deol: Let me see. The two things I could probably, you know, think about it: my neighbour riding Mill Woods probably is not growing as fast as my riding has grown, right?

Dr. Martin: Well, that's true.

The Chair: Sorry. Which one?

Mr. Deol: Mill Woods.

The Chair: Oh. Yeah. I thought I heard you say Ellerslie, and I'm thinking...

Mr. Deol: Ellerslie is also next to my riding.

The Chair: Yeah. Yeah. Okay.

Mr. Deol: I don't exactly know the statistics and the numbers, but in case they end up expanding, the only place they have to expand is to Edmonton east. I also have, you know, a different community identity when you see – I don't know what those areas are called. It's above 23rd, it's west of 34th Street, and it's between 34 and 50th Street, near some area. That can be looked at, but if we leave the east part of the riding intact, it will not affect the identity and

cultural identity of the riding and the shared values of the people in the riding.

Dr. Martin: Now, I'm going to press you on the point. The area you pointed to is, like, just east of the hospital – right? – but what about 23rd Avenue? I mean, it just seems like a strange little thing that was done mathematically. Obviously, it's going to mess with a community of interest no matter what we do in Mill Woods generally, so I'm asking a very difficult question. This area down here.

Mr. Deol: Yeah. Definitely, you know, that can be looked at, but I don't know what's going to happen with Laurel. You know, I also sometimes see that boundary there. Laurel just was taken out in this part. I also live there, just by...

Mrs. Samson: You can't take that off, then.

Mr. Deol: But you know, if we wanted to look at the riding's identity and their challenges and their need, their voices can be effectively added, definitely. That is something we looked at.

11:25

Dr. Martin: Yeah. I suggest it's a very hard case, but you've argued for communities of interest...

Mr. Deol: The other thing that has happened...

Dr. Martin:... that are densely connected in terms of footprint. Something has to give.

Mr. Deol: Yeah. I know. The interesting thing that has been happening for the past two, three years – I have two gurdwaras, you know, around this area. One is in the north, and one is south of 23rd. A lot of new population is settling around these places. Still, like, you have to look at something when you look at how to divide the population growth equally into the riding, I think. Yeah.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

Mr. Deol: If you go to the east side to create the boundary of 17th Street, that wouldn't work at all. Definitely, you have to look at something...

The Chair: So your preference would be to his suggestion rather than mine.

Mr. Clark: You used to use 23rd Avenue as sort of a cut-off.

Mr. Deol: You can.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Okay.

Dr. Martin: These guys are from southern Alberta.

The Chair: Susan, anything else?

Mrs. Samson: Did you say you lived in that – did I understand you?

Mr. Deol: I live in Valleyview.

Mrs. Samson: Well, I just don't see that as possible, gentlemen.

Mr. Clark: We apologize in advance.

Mr. Deol: No. The constituents who elect us have the preference.

The Chair: If we have any real estate agents presenting later today, we'll be sure to pass their information on to you.

Well, thank you very much, Mr. Deol. This is very helpful. While all presenters are equal, we do really value presentations by the members of the Legislature because you deal with this on the ground and you give a perspective that we value very much. Thank you for coming and your presentation, and we'll look forward to the written version of that. Make sure that Aaron gets that.

Mr. Deol: Thanks a lot.

The Chair: Please remain for the rest of the morning if you can.
I'm not sure if we have any other presenters.

[The commission deliberated]

[The hearing adjourned at 11:41 a.m.]



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

Edmonton

Monday, June 2, 2025
1 p.m.

Transcript No. 4

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission

Justice Dallas K. Miller, Chair

Greg Clark

John D. Evans, KC

Julian Martin

Susan Samson

Support Staff

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Philip Massolin

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Rhonda Sorensen

Christina Steenberg

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Clerk

Clerk Assistant and Executive Director of
Parliamentary Services

Administrator

Manager of Corporate Communications

Supervisor of Communications Services

Managing Editor of *Alberta Hansard*

Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Edmonton

Public Participants

Roxanne Carr
Kerry Day
Cynthia Fedor
Charles Gachnang
Christina Gray, MLA, Edmonton-Mill Woods
Terry Howlett
Nam Kular
Neil Singh

1 p.m.

Monday, June 2, 2025

[Justice Miller in the chair]

The Chair: Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to this afternoon's session of the Electoral Boundaries Commission in Edmonton. This is our first day in Edmonton. We had a full morning this morning.

It's my understanding that we have one presenter already here. Mr. Gachnang, if you want to come forward. Yeah, you can have a seat here, sir.

Mr. Gachnang: Right here?

The Chair: Yeah. We limit the presentation time to seven minutes, but by the number of people in this room we're prepared to grant you a little more time.

Well, first of all, I should do a little bit of an introduction so that you know who we are, okay? We are the Electoral Boundaries Commission of Alberta. My name is Justice Dallas Miller. I'm the chairman of the commission.

To my left is Susan Samson, a long-time resident of Sylvan Lake, Alberta. By the way, I'm from southern Alberta, which is the Lethbridge, Medicine Hat area. I serve as a judge down there. We think of Sylvan Lake as central Alberta, okay? Susan is an experienced municipal politician who has served a four-year term as mayor.

Now, was it two terms you served, you said?

Mrs. Samson: Two terms, three years each, so I'll just say six.

The Chair: Okay. Six years as mayor.

Susan has been named citizen of the year in Sylvan Lake and received the Queen Elizabeth II diamond jubilee medal for community service. She is a dedicated volunteer in her community with a focus on health care.

We are not here with a full complement. We're missing one member. Mr. John Evans will be joining us this evening. He's a lawyer in southern Alberta.

To my right is Dr. Julian Martin, a retired history professor from the University of Alberta. Julian has volunteered on many committees in his region of the province, being the Sherwood Park area, and served on provincial tribunals such as the Surface Rights Board and the Land Compensation Board.

At the end of the table is Mr. Greg Clark, a Calgarian entrepreneur and consultant focusing on the information and knowledge sectors. Greg also served as an MLA for one term from a riding in Calgary, Calgary-Elbow, so we're really pleased to have someone with that experience on the commission. Greg, too, is a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II platinum jubilee medal, and he currently serves as chair of the Balancing Pool of Alberta and consults and advises organizations relative to proper governance.

We are the Electoral Boundaries Commission. There are a whole bunch of other things I normally would go through, but because the group is small, we can have a bit more of a dialogue. First of all, we are an independent body established by the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, and we've been appointed by the Speaker of the Legislature. We are embarking upon a process that takes about a year in length, and we're two months into the process. One of the main things that we have to factor and we have to consider is that we've been given instruction through the legislation to expand the number of electoral districts in Alberta from 87 to 89. So by the time the next provincial election rolls around, there will be 89 electoral divisions up for grabs.

Our timeline is such that in late March we were appointed by the Speaker. We've had a couple of meetings in April as a commission ourselves, and then last week we started our public hearing session. We'll be going until June 23 for public hearings. We're going to be across the province. We'll be here in Edmonton one more day tomorrow.

Our task will be such that within seven months of our appointment we have to supply what has come to be known as an interim report to the Speaker of the Legislature. By late October we will have to have that report in to the Legislature. The public input that we receive at these public hearings is very important in that process. Then we will continue to have some hearings after our interim report is released, and those hearings will be specifically to receive input and feedback to that first report. Then finally we wrap up our task by submitting a final report in late March 2026 to the Speaker of the Legislature, and if the Legislature is happy with it, they will approve it and pass appropriate legislation to reflect the contents of our report.

As you know, each electoral division or riding or constituency elects one Member of the Legislative Assembly, and it's only individual voters in that constituency that have a right to elect a member. To give a bit of historic perspective to this whole process, the last Electoral Boundaries Commission report was issued in 2017. That report was based on a population of just over 4 million people. Our report will be based on a population significantly increased, and that's going to be 4.88 million people. In 2017 there were 87 constituencies or electoral districts. The population was 4.062 million people. That brought about an average of 46,697 for each electoral district. The target is not that 46,697, but the target population is that range of below 25 to plus 25, and those figures are obvious there.

As I said, two things have changed for us at this stage. The population has increased significantly, such as 4.88 million-plus, and we have 89 electoral districts to deal with. The average, then, for each riding would be 54,929, and the plus-minus, then, would bring it to 41,197 to 68,661. The challenge that we're faced with is that the population growth that we've seen over the last eight years has not been uniform throughout the province. It's been in various pockets. We have to deal with that in terms of creating the new electoral divisions.

Our task as a boundaries commission is not to cut the province up into equalized pieces that have one person, one vote, but to make sure that our boundaries that we recommend provide for what the case law has described as effective representation. The factors that we will be considering are the relative density and sparsity of population throughout the province, the whole concept of community interests, common community interests and organizations. This morning we had a really interesting presentation that reflected those concerns. We'll also be considering, because it's not only city and the country and more so in the country, geographical features as to where the boundaries should go. As well, communication and transportation factors across the province will be a factor.

The overriding goal, though, is to provide understandable and clear boundaries. That will be the challenge for us as a commission. We have a catch-all phrase whereby we can consider other important factors. The legislation allows us to consider those, a more open-ended approach.

Our whole task is to hear from the public. As I said, we had a very full morning. We started last week in the southwest corner of the province, Pincher Creek and the city of Lethbridge. This week we're in Edmonton. We're going to outlying areas as well. We want to hear from people who are interested in giving us input.

Mr. Gachnang . . .

Mr. Gachnang: Charles is fine.

The Chair: Okay. Charles, thank you very much for attending. I see you've got some notes. If you have anything in writing you want to leave with us, please leave it with Mr. Aaron Roth, who's the committee clerk.

Don't feel restricted to seven minutes. You can start.

1:10

Mr. Gachnang: Thank you very much, commissioners. It's a real pleasure and an honour to be here. Thank you so much for letting me speak. Justice Miller, I may be repeating some of the things you just mentioned, so bear with me, please, sir.

My name is Charles Gachnang, and I'm here to advocate for the preservation of the name of the Edmonton-Mill Woods provincial electoral district. My aim is to demonstrate that maintaining the integrity of the Edmonton-Mill Woods district aligns perfectly with the principles of effective representation. Edmonton-Mill Woods is more than just a geographical area; it is a mature, fully built-out community with a strong, cohesive identity. This is a community where neighbourhoods have grown together and where residents have identified strongly with its Mill Woods name.

The Electoral Boundaries Commission Act mandates that while population parity is important, the commission shall also take into consideration other crucial factors for effective representation. These include

- (c) common community interests and community organizations . . .
- (d) whenever possible, the existing community boundaries within the cities of Edmonton and Calgary . . .
- (g) geographical features, including existing road systems, and
- (h) the desirability of understandable and clear boundaries.

My position for the Edmonton-Mill Woods riding is rooted in these very considerations.

Shall I continue?

The Chair: Yeah, please.

Mr. Gachnang: Preserving common community interests. The 2017 Electoral Boundaries Commission final report itself recognized the importance of common communities of interest when it recommended renaming Edmonton-Mill Woods-East to Edmonton-Meadows. This was precisely because the proposed riding contained only a small portion of the Mill Woods neighbourhood but most of the Meadows neighbourhood. This precedent highlights the commission's understanding that electoral boundaries should reflect actual community identity, not fragments. Edmonton-Mill Woods as it stands embodies a coherent community of interest. Edmonton-Mill Woods has established neighbourhood boundaries and community structures. Unnecessary destruction of these established boundaries would create confusion, lose local representation, and undermine the sense of community that residents have built over decades.

The 2017 report noted Edmonton-Mill Woods' population of 50,265, which was 7 per cent above the provincial average of 46,803. This variance is well within the plus or minus 25 per cent permitted by the act. For a mature, built-out area like Edmonton-Mill Woods future population growth is anticipated to be slower, meaning the current variation is sustainable and does not necessitate such drastic boundary changes. Fragmenting Edmonton-Mill Woods would have a detrimental effect. It would erode community identity, create confusion, weaken effective representation. An MLA representing a fragmented district might struggle to address the diverse and potentially conflicting needs of newly divided communities.

My conclusion and call to action is this. The Edmonton-Mill Woods electoral district in its current form represents a cohesive community with a rich history and strong cultural identity. Its population variance is well within the legal parameters, and there is no compelling reason to change its boundaries.

Please permit me to speak on some overall electoral boundary issues as well. The process of redrawing electoral boundaries is a monumental undertaking, requiring a delicate balance of legal mandate, demographic reality, and community considerations. It is a process that touches every citizen and shapes the future of our democratic representation. I understand that the commission must navigate a multitude of factors including population shift, geographical features, and the preservation of community interests, all while adhering to the principles they'll find in the electoral boundaries act.

While acknowledging the commission's diligent efforts, I wish to highlight some key challenges that often arise during this process, which could lead to public concern and impact the perception of fairness. The perception of gerrymandering. While gerrymandering is often associated with partisan manipulation, even unintentional boundary decisions can lead to the perception of unfairness. In a highly polarized political climate any boundary change, no matter how well intended or legally sound, can be scrutinized and interpreted through a partisan lens. This perception can erode public trust in the electoral process itself. The commission's transparency and clear rationale for decisions is crucial in mitigating those concerns.

The core tension of Alberta's rapid urbanization. Urban areas advocate for more districts to reflect their population surges, while rural areas emphasize unique challenges of representing large geographic constituencies and their economic contributions. Historically, Alberta's electoral system has faced criticism for favouring rural areas, leading to situations where a rural life may have a higher impact than an urban one. The commission's challenge is to achieve voter parity with the legal limits of the act while also considering the participation of rural representation. Redrawing boundaries especially in densely populated urban areas for historically cohesive rural communities carries the risk of fragmenting the existing communities of interest. This could divide neighbourhoods that lose local identity and make it more difficult for residents to identify with their electoral district and their representation.

The goal. The act explicitly encourages considering common community interests and community organizations and existing community boundaries, and adhering to these principles helps ensure that the electoral districts are not statistical units but reflections of genuine social and cultural community. It's already an understandable political boundary.

The practical impact. Complex or illogical boundaries can lead to more confusion regarding their electoral districts, polling stations, or even which representative to contact for local issues.

The ideal. The desirability of understandable and clear boundaries is not merely an aesthetic preference but a practical necessity for an accessible and efficient democratic provision. Using identifiable geographical features like major roads or rivers can create this in this regard.

The work of the electoral commission is vital for the health of Alberta's democracy. By openly acknowledging and addressing these inherent challenges, the commission can further strengthen public confidence in the fairness and integrity of our electoral system. I absolutely commend your commitment to a transparent and consultative process, and I trust that your final recommendations will reflect a thoughtful balance of legal

considerations, ensuring effective and equitable representation for all Albertans.

Thank you sincerely. If you have any questions, let's do those now.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, sir.
Yes. Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you, and thank you for your presentation. That's a very laudable presentation of values and principles. But let me put a hard case to you, sir. Edmonton-Mill Woods has too many people in it now. Testament to its success, perhaps, but with our delicate sensibilities we are still faced with a population problem. We were talking this morning with the MLA for Edmonton-Meadows, who recognized that this is a torturous problem because he, too, spoke a great deal about communities of interest, as one might expect, yet he recognized the difficulty that we have with some of the – you know, he's got too many people, plus we've got some funny boundaries, and if you have too many people, where would you change the boundaries if required?

Mr. Gachnang: Specifically?

Dr. Martin: Yeah.

Mr. Gachnang: Edmonton-Mill Woods has sort of gone north-south, so I think there is some . . .

The Chair: Sir, we're just going to try and get the map up on the screen so you can have a reference point.

Mr. Gachnang: Right. I'm going to use 23rd Avenue as my point of reference. In the last few elections 23rd Avenue was sometimes part of Edmonton-Mill Woods and sometimes not part of Edmonton-Mill Woods. So I think there is some ability to go south of 23rd Avenue. If you wanted to add on south of 23rd Avenue, I would say that that's a possibility of expanding. Then Edmonton-Ellerslie, which would be south of Edmonton-Mill Woods: you would have some flexibility in moving that up because people living south of 23rd Avenue are still considered part of Edmonton-Mill Woods.

The Chair: Sure. Okay. So are you suggesting – sorry, you weren't finished. Go ahead.

1:20

Dr. Martin: I guess not. The very first presenter we heard this morning suggested that there's a distinction to be made, in his mind, between old housing stock, you know, neighbourhoods that have been there the longest as it were, sort of north of 34th for sure but also down to 23rd Avenue, and then he suggested there was a difference in the community profile as well as the real property characteristics in the eastern part, which is now Meadows, and south of 23rd Avenue. Is that your experience as well?

Mr. Gachnang: Yeah. I could even be more specific and say that where I live, within 1 kilometre, if you go from what could be considered almost like inner city, so even within a one kilometre distance, you could see quite a divergence. So even within the Edmonton-Mill Woods area, that would be untraditional. You can see a diversity within a thousand metres.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

The Chair: Great questions.

Mrs. Samson: I have just one question. When we look at the map, there are a couple areas of growth. In the northeast corner there's not a lot happening there, and then in the area of the hospital.

Mr. Gachnang: Yes.

Mrs. Samson: And that's where in being a resident in that area or in the Mill Woods electoral division, is it correct that we would expect to see more growth in those areas?

Mr. Gachnang: Well, again, this is about the convergence of many things. Obviously, this is often tied-in with Edmonton's infill situation and things like that. The area that you're talking about around the hospital, sometimes called Tawa, T-a-w-a, is generally speaking – generally speaking – more multiple family dwellings, small apartments, and things like that. Whereas, if you go north of that into what would be wood-built communities, let's say the community of Hillview, you are looking at more single-family dwellings. So, yes, one would imagine more growth in that area just because it's more apartments and probably more families moving in, so that would necessitate greater numbers, without a doubt. Yes, ma'am.

Mrs. Samson: Okay. Thank you.

Dr. Martin: If I could, the northern part is Jackie Parker Park, so we're not developing that, I don't speculate.

Mr. Gachnang: No, it's not enough green space, actually.

Dr. Martin: And immediately south of the hospital, that's a shopping mall. Yeah?

Mr. Gachnang: Yes. And there's anticipated growth there with – again, I don't have the exact plan. You're looking at about a 12- to 13-storey structure. What you see now as the shopping centre will be reconfigured into a high-rise.

The Chair: Really? What's the expected timeline?

Mr. Gachnang: You'd have to contact the – like any project, you're looking at years, not months.

The Chair: I thought I understood you to start out by saying the name. Did I understand you correctly? Part of our job as a commission is to recommend names. Did you say anything about the naming of it?

Mr. Gachnang: Well, I realize that there's some flexibility in the boundaries. Again, federal politics has nothing to do with provincial politics. But our Edmonton-Mill Woods was changed in the southeast, and it did create confusion, and it took away some of that identity because for decades we've worked on Edmonton-Mill Woods. So that is sort of where I'm coming from is that I noticed that there was confusion with the federal. I just didn't want to see the same thing happen here at the provincial.

The Chair: So keep it at Mill Woods.

Mr. Gachnang: Keep it at Mill Woods. Yes, sir.

The Chair: Am I correct in understanding that to your east, which is now Edmonton-Meadows . . .

Mr. Gachnang: Edmonton-Meadows. Yes, sir.

The Chair: Was it called Edmonton-Mill Woods East before 2017?

Mr. Gachnang: Again, I was under the – it had the word “Mill Woods” associated with it, but it never became official. I believe there was talk about that.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Gachnang: That immediately created that confusion because Edmonton-Meadows is Edmonton-Meadows, and then you put this Mill Woods part in it. So I think the commission quickly realized that that probably is in the best interest of Edmonton-Meadows to not be part of it. That was part of the confusion.

The Chair: Yeah. Okay.

Mr. Clark: It was Mill Creek after 2010. Mill Creek and then Mill Woods. I imagine we have good reason that we perhaps don’t want two Mills-something.

Mr. Gachnang: That’s right. Fair enough.

The Chair: Even I would be opposed to that, with the last name Miller.

Mr. Gachnang: That’s right. Do you hyphenate or don’t hyphenate, right?

The Chair: Yeah.

Okay. Any other comments or dialogue with Mr. Gachnang? Okay. Thank you so much. If you have an extra one, if you want to leave it with Aaron, that would be helpful.

Mr. Gachnang: Thank you, too.

The Chair: Good afternoon, ma’am. Are you Kerry Day?

Ms Day: I am.

The Chair: You are scheduled for 2:50 this afternoon, but we are a very flexible group here.

Ms Day: Well, I’ll try to be flexible, too.

The Chair: Okay. So just take your time, and when you’re ready to start, we’ll hear you. We have said publicly that we limit the presentations to seven minutes with three minutes of questions, but as you can see, we’re flexible, and we may give you 7 and a half minutes.

Ms Day: Okay. Well, I hope the questions don’t drag on until four o’clock.

Mrs. Samson: We don’t have anything better to do.

Ms Day: Well, anyway, I’m really glad to be here. I think this is such an important thing, and I was expecting the room to be full of people.

The Chair: So were we.

Dr. Martin: They’re all coming tonight, I’m sure.

Ms Day: Well, anyway, you know my name. I was born in Edmonton. I grew up not very far from here in south Edmonton. In fact, one of my great-grandfathers farmed in an area just north of Southgate, so although I’m a very urban person, I have some rural roots in central Alberta as well.

My first provincial election was 1975, which is 50 years ago. You’re now figuring out my age. The Progressive Conservatives

had ousted the Social Credit in ’71, and in that election, they were further reduced to four MLAs. The population of Alberta was 1.7 million people and there were 75 MLAs, so they each were sort of responsible for about 23,000 people. But what was really interesting to me, and I didn’t know this at the time, but in looking back I discovered this, the number of MLAs had actually been increased by 10 between 1967 and 1971, so there was a large change in the number of MLAs at the time, which I thought was quite interesting.

Now, clearly a lot has changed, and going forward I understand we will have 89 MLAs with – forgive my math, but that works out to, in my opinion, around 55,000 to 56,000 people per electoral district.

The Chair: Ma’am, the PowerPoint says you’re almost dead on.

Ms Day: Oh, good. Well, I’m 2,000 off, but you know. Anyway, the question there is what the population is, and I’ll get to that later. Okay?

Anyway, many of the people who voted for that big change are dead, because I was probably one of the younger voters, and so I would submit that the population of Alberta has had a pretty much complete turnover in my lifetime. Of the people that are here today, many of them were not born here. There may be, you know, boomers such as myself and our children, but there are millennials and different generations and we are certainly farther from the rural place that we were.

You may check my stats as well, but from my calculations about two-thirds of Albertans live in Edmonton and Calgary, and I’ve also seen stats that suggest that if you include the satellite communities around Edmonton and Calgary, that the numbers are more like 80 per cent and 20 per cent.

1:30

Now, the reason I’m here is because the recent federal election and even the American election have really highlighted to me the importance of process and preparation for elections between elections, and so I really think the work that you’re doing is so important. In fact, I think Elections Alberta could really teach our American neighbours a lot.

It’s not just about avoiding interference, or voter fraud, or campaign finance; I think that’s what really makes it in the media. My concern is that there’s a declining voter turnout and people who think their votes do not matter or are perhaps worth less than the votes of others in other electoral districts. Certainly in Edmonton, anyway – and it could be because we tend to be in opposition – there’s a common phrase that basically says: an urban vote is worth about half of a rural vote. You know, that’s not true for every electoral district, but it is certainly true if you were to compare a particular electoral district with another. That, I think, has an effect, and it’s your job to try and limit that effect.

I mentioned earlier that I think there’s a data integrity problem that you’re facing because you rely on the 2021 census, which will be six years old. Is that not the most recent?

Mr. Clark: We have good news.

The Chair: Yep. Go ahead. We’ll . . .

Ms Day: Okay. Anyway, this is my concern because certainly the 2021 census would be six years old by the next election, but I’ve certainly seen numbers that suggest Alberta’s population is already probably over 5 million. Your number is lower than what I saw most recently. Edmonton and Calgary are growing at a rate of 100,000 people per year. I also think it was clear in the last report that there were trends identified that have continued. The issues that

were raised in that report have sort of been confirmed by reality. So I would just encourage you to consider whatever data is available to you.

One of the sources of data, I think, is the electoral list. My concern is that all these new people may not be on those lists, that there perhaps needs to be some additional effort to make sure that they are because if they haven't had a chance to vote, they may not have thought about it, and really they're entitled to representation now, not just at the next election. They may not even know who they're supposed to be turning to.

Anyway, another reason that I'm here, I think, is that I was a little bit concerned by the more recent changes in the applicable legislation. I confess that I am a retired lawyer so not everybody may have focused on it in the same way, but I didn't think that an increase in two seats was sufficient, nor did I like the fact that there seems to be four special districts, which seems to be up from two. And when I say "special districts," those are the districts where the populations are significantly below the provincial average and more than 25 per cent, I would think. I was able to identify two, but I'm still not sure who the other two are. I think the legislation used to say, "It may be up to four," and then they changed the wording around that to sort of specify that it would be four.

I would like to state that I think there are lots of alternatives to counteract the size geography issue in the modern era. There's social media. You can have multiple offices. You can have multiple voting locations. You have advanced voting. You even have special ballots. So the arguments that were put forward to justify that in the past, in my view, are weaker.

I talked earlier about voter turnout. Between 2019, where the voter turnout in Alberta was 67.5 per cent, it dropped in 2023 to 62.4 per cent, but that was actually high for Alberta. Alberta had had a previous problem where we sort of bottomed out in 2008 at around 40 per cent. I was sort of pleased with the fact that things were getting better, when all of a sudden they took a turn. I think we need to make sure that effective voter representation and parity isn't reacting to concerns around whether a vote is an equal vote.

Now, when I looked at the voter turnout from the last election, I couldn't see any indication that rural constituencies, despite their larger size and perhaps geographic challenges, actually have a lower turnout. The average seemed to be about the same. There were some exceptions. I think Fort McMurray had a fire going on. I mean, that's a pretty good excuse. But we need to make sure that those criteria in section 15(2), I think it is, of the act are applied appropriately, and I leave that in your capable hands.

I would like to speak as well to the issue of communication particularly after redistribution. As I say, I think that this isn't just an election-time issue. People need to know who to call. I actually live in Edmonton-Riverview in a little section south of the freeway, which is Patricia Heights, Rio Terrace, Quesnell. I've actually been moved around a bit, and in the past I've had double mail. I've had no mail. In fact, quite recently in the federal election, which isn't your problem, I had people calling me for signs and money when I in fact had no longer been in that riding of Edmonton-Centre, you know, for three years.

It caused me to look into the federal system, and one of the things I noticed on their website is that they actually after redistributing go through the results of the prior election to confirm that the boundary changes would have had no impact on the results. I didn't see that in your materials. They go into it on a poll-by-poll basis and say that if they changed the boundaries, the results would have been unaffected. I think the transparency around that would actually be helpful because people would then say: well, this boundary change wouldn't have changed the results.

I think the elephant in the room for me, I guess, is that I believe there's a bit of an appearance of rural bias in Alberta these days. It's very important to me that the proposed changes don't look like they principally benefit the current government or particular MLAs, and I leave that in your hands as well.

There was another phrase that I thought was important in looking at the other prior report, and that was: communities of interest. It's one of the criteria that you are to consider if you are in fact not going to redistribute something or if you're planning to move the boundaries. It seemed to really think in terms of geography, towns and reserves and Métis settlements and roads and that sort of thing, but I'm really wondering whether it isn't time to sort of also consider demographics. That would be age, Albertans, new Albertans, new Canadians', ethnic groups because I think effective representation, which is the objective of all of this, really requires resources correlated not just to the number of people but to the people who actually live there.

One other point really relating to the case law, which is going back to my lawyerly training in the past, is that I noticed that some of these cases were quite old. In fact, the Saskatchewan reference case is from 1991, which is, as you will recall, before cell phones, before the Internet, before social media, before Zoom meetings, before distance work, before advance voting to any degree. I think that some of those population issues that were mentioned in there have therefore become less critical and can be compensated for in ways other than having these really large areas.

Just to conclude, I guess, there was a quote in the Alberta reference case, which is from 1994, which says that a system which dilutes one citizen's vote unduly as compared to another's runs the risk of providing inadequate representation to the citizen whose vote is diluted and that effective representation, it said later on, needs to reflect the diversity of our new social mosaic.

I think Alberta has a very different social mosaic than it had in the past. The solution, I think, is that any change needs to be tested with the view that it's in the best interest of all Albertans, not just a particular constituency. It might be slightly more awkward for someone, but unless it really advances the interests of the whole, I think that just has to be dealt with.

1:40

I do think as well that money can't drive the decisions, but money perhaps has to be used to compensate for the effects. If people end up having unusually large constituencies, they may need additional money. If people live in constituencies that are challenged by geography, perhaps they need more money. But I don't think the number of MLAs should actually be determined by that factor or your work, for that matter, because I don't suppose you control the purse after you've made the decisions about what should happen. That's it.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Ms Day. I appreciate your comments, and I think that you, in a sense, posed a question or two to us . . .

Ms Day: Right.

The Chair: . . . which I think, between all of us commissioners, we'll be able to answer. But maybe we should just allow us to ask you questions first.

Ms Day: Sure. I'll try to answer.

The Chair: Starting with you, if you have any, Susan.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. I just wanted to make a comment on your presentation, which was very good, and thank you for that. You talked about electoral votes and how that plays into the big picture. I agree with your comments, but we are, by the act, using only 2024 Canada census information, and we base the decisions on the electoral divisions on the population of that area because, in fact, everybody in that area we assume sooner or later will vote. So that's who we're counting now. Even those who are not eligible to vote will eventually become Canadians, we hope, or they will get old enough to vote. So that's how they're all brought in together, and there is quite a difference in the numbers that we're dealing with, but it is all Canada census 2024, every individual in that district.

Ms Day: Well, 2024 is a lot better than what I thought because I really thought it was 2021. So I'm glad to hear that, but I still think 2024: have we actually even seen the results yet? Yes. Okay.

The Chair: By way of clarity, you missed the introductory part of what I presented. The act specifically says that we have to rely on the most recent decennial census of Canada, which, you're right, is 2021. Something I didn't know until I took this job is the Alberta Treasury Board updates that regularly, and Statistics Canada does a much more extensive survey of the population than just the census every five years. So we are using a figure, which is in this slide, 4.888 million, which is the validated figure of the last decennial census plus the information garnered and verified by the Office of Statistics and Information of the Alberta Treasury Board. That's as of July 2024, as Susan said, so that's the population figure we're using.

Now, after we met as a commission and had advice from statisticians and economists, some news reports came out and said that Alberta's population is 5 million. That causes some confusion, but we can't help that. We're relying on the bar that was reached and validated by July of 2024. So that's the number we've got, and that's where she . . .

Ms Day: So the act refers to the census, but you are relying on information coming from Alberta Treasury to update that.

The Chair: Which is also coming from Statistics Canada.

Ms Day: Okay. All right.

The Chair: It's a very detailed analysis, so we're satisfied, yes.

Ms Day: That's good. That's good. I mean, certainly more current is better, and I would expect you probably get presentations from the AUMA and the city of Calgary that talk about trends. You know, what's clear to me, and having looked at the last report, is that although they were trying to rely on the current data, they were also trying to extrapolate a bit about the way things were going.

The Chair: That's easy in some electoral districts or divisions but not necessarily in all of them.

Ms Day: Right. Because you don't want to be right just for a moment; you want to be right when, actually, the election takes place.

The Chair: So we're on a bit of a timeline. We were appointed in March of this year, and we're stuck with what the legislation says, so we have to take the statistics as they come, and we have to report as required. I don't want to say it's a moving target, but there's some fluidity to it. I hope that answers your question.

Ms Day: Yes, it does. That's good. Actually, you know, I think my comment stands; it's just that I'm glad to see that you've already actioned it, actually, because I was thinking that you needed to look at the StatsCan numbers, which were different than they are.

The Chair: Okay. Any other questions? Julian?

Dr. Martin: Yeah. Thank you. Personally, I don't think lawyers ever really retire. You just give up paying a licence fee.

Ms Day: Well, I used to say a recovering lawyer, but then people kept getting the wrong idea.

Dr. Martin: I wanted to draw on your legal frame of mind. You've spoken a great deal about voters, which I think all the case law I've looked at dwells upon. In this act we are asked to look at populations, which is a very different pool of persons. So while I fully approve of your analysis of equity for voters and the like, it can't ever be our paramount focus here, annoyingly to my mind, but nonetheless I'm very taken with your thought that communities of interest reasonably today should include demographic features and age cohorts in particular and so on and so forth. How would you ask us to use that data?

Ms Day: Well, I think it ties into your obligations to populations, really, because, you know, you have information about the electoral list and you might even be able to extrapolate the age of those people to a particular group, but people have perceptions about what Alberta is like. I think they might think that Edmonton was younger, or Edmonton and Calgary were younger than rural Alberta. It may not be true. I'm not saying it's true. I'm just saying that there are perceptions and certainly concerns expressed that young people have to leave rural Alberta for the big cities or what I call the rural cities, which are the cities in rural areas that are getting bigger themselves, for opportunities.

Those people need an opportunity, and I'm concerned sometimes that those groups may not vote in the same way. I think certainly I've seen data that suggests older people vote and younger people don't with the same frequency. It's, I think to some extent, because of their faith in the system, and we need to augment their faith in the system. It needs to be as important to vote as it is to post some critical comment on social media, needs to be much more important.

Dr. Martin: Again, you talk about voters, but we're asked to, you know, turn a blind eye to voters.

Ms Day: Well, I think at the end of the day, you may – you know, you could have districts where the population was the same but the number of voters was very small.

Dr. Martin: Oh, that would be true.

Ms Day: That could be for a number of reasons. It could be because the electoral list was not adequately augmented, or it could be that the population there is younger and they haven't made the list yet, and certainly it's the obligation of an MLA to act in the best interests of all of those people, but they still take their marching orders from the people who vote.

Dr. Martin: There's a theory of representation lurking behind here that we have not fully discussed among ourselves, but we have MLAs who are elected by the electors and then are charged with looking after everybody in the population, not just the electors. Fair. But I don't think the case law is helpful, because the case law is all

about voters and equity among them. The challenge we have is about populations.

Ms Day: Yes. I think that's true.

Dr. Martin: Oh. Okay. Good. I'm not a lawyer, but I was present in reading the law.

Ms Day: I think that's true. But I'm not sure we necessarily know enough about populations, you know, other than what we get from the census or Stats Canada or how they vote.

1:50

Dr. Martin: Elections Alberta.

Ms Day: I mean, I think MLAs certainly need to remember that they represent not just the people who voted for them but all of the people who didn't vote for them . . .

Dr. Martin: True.

Ms Day: . . . even though they voted.

Dr. Martin: Or even those who can't vote.

Ms Day: And those who can vote, for sure.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, by the way, for this. I really appreciate you coming. I'm curious. Maybe I'll steal one of Dr. Martin's questions that he likes to ask, and that is that Edmonton-Riverview itself is somewhat below the population, I think by my calculation around 8 and a half or so per cent beneath the average. One of the great challenges we have, of course, is balancing all of that out. Obviously, it straddles the river. That is a little bit unique for Edmonton. There are some on the north and some on the south side. But I guess I'm curious. If you needed to bite off a little chunk here and there and tweak Edmonton-Riverview, which communities sort of belong together? Where are the natural break points? Is it the river, or are there other considerations?

Ms Day: I don't think the river is a factor at all as long as there's a road across the river. Having lived on both sides of Edmonton-Riverview – I grew up in Parkallen, then I moved to the west side of the river and lived in Laurier Heights for a long period of time, and now I live in an area which has been moved in and out of Edmonton-Riverview, so I was at one point in Edmonton-McClung, I think it was – it doesn't really make a difference to me.

I think it's clear that sort of the central urban areas will need some tweaking, too, unless the city of Edmonton and the city of Calgary actually reach their objective of increasing the density in those places, right? Otherwise, I think they tend to remain fairly stagnant unless there's some significant public policy way to make them more dense. They have intentions, but I don't think it's actually arrived yet. So you might have to tweak the boundaries within the central parts of the city to accommodate the significant growth on the perimeter.

I think people, you know, on the perimeter of the city probably have more in common with the people in the centre than they do with the people in the rural communities 10 miles in the opposite direction. You know, I think they're probably driving downtown for work.

The Chair: We're going to have to move on.

Ms Day: Yeah, for sure.

The Chair: We have other presenters. I have one question for you, a more general question. Part of the task of our commission is to provide names for the electoral divisions. I assume, looking at the map of Riverview, you're completely content with Edmonton-Riverview being named that. Do you have any comments about any other districts of the city?

Ms Day: No. Actually, to be honest, I found the focus on naming sort of funny. I mean, I just didn't think it mattered that much to me. It doesn't matter to me what it's called.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms Day: It matters to me how it works. That's my comment.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you very much, Ms Day. We appreciate it.

Ms Day: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Our next presenter is Nam Kular. Mr. Kular, we said that we would restrict presentations to seven minutes. We're a little more flexible given the list today, so don't necessarily feel bound by that. We will have some questions, I'm sure, of your presentation.

Mr. Kular: As you can see, I came with a big list. No. Just a little bit of misunderstanding. We thought it was going to be more of a presentation and kind of questions and answers from you guys and kind of give our input versus presenting. But that's okay. I still wanted to come and listen in and put my points across and ask a couple of questions and kind of give you the scenario of where I live and what we think and feel might be of importance to you guys as you draw these boundaries or redraw these boundaries.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Kular: I've been in Beaumont for about 11 years now. Currently it's the Leduc-Beaumont riding, which is partial – Leduc county is cut off and is part of the other riding. So Leduc county is partial and then the city of Leduc and the city of Beaumont, currently called Leduc-Beaumont riding. I've grown up and I've lived in south Edmonton for 30-plus years, including 10 years in Beaumont.

My point was that living in Beaumont – even though it's grown in population immensely, as you guys probably know and see, it feels like a city. It feels like it could be part of Edmonton. But the reality is that the people of Beaumont, myself, the reason we moved out there was that the people that we're interacting with are not necessarily city people. Not that there's a good thing or a bad thing to the city. But that being considered, the population interactions in Beaumont in and around are more so of rural people and the facilities they use and the work environment and the facilities that are in and around that area.

If we look at, then, the south part, the southeast part of it, particularly in Edmonton, Ellerslie has also grown in population. I mean, there's no comparison, right? It's like, I think, at 85-some thousand, and it should be around the 47,000 or 45,000 or whatever that originally was.

The Chair: Can I just interrupt you and ask you a question? Does Leduc-Beaumont border Edmonton-Ellerslie?

Mr. Kular: Yes, it does.

The Chair: Directly to the south?

Mr. Kular: Yeah. Directly to the south.

The Chair: Okay. Good.

Mr. Kular: And some of the land from the city . . .

The Chair: We're going to find that. Mr. Roth is going to find that.

Mr. Kular: Yeah.

If we look at now the population mix – there's a twofold question. If we look at the population of that particular riding, Edmonton-Ellerslie, which has grown, because it's the southern part and that's where cities grow. Sure, Edmonton-Meadows does have, I think, a 40 per cent immigrant population, but Edmonton-Ellerslie has a 47 per cent population of immigrants. The growth is obviously more because there's land to grow and build on and do that, so a lot of new population is living there, but not necessarily is that population eligible voters. They could have work permits, they could be students, and they could be just permanent residents that are not planning on taking citizenship or are just in the process of it. How do we consider that portion?

The other part of it was that now that if we think Edmonton-Ellerslie has grown and Beaumont's grown, I didn't want Edmonton to be attached with Beaumont just because the population number works out, per se. Beaumont should be separate, maybe with the rural areas and split between, whatever, Leduc county or maybe even some of Devon or some under Sherwood Park would make more sense versus if we said, hey, this 25,000 population of Beaumont, and then we cut a chunk of Ellerslie off at the bottom. They're, you know, attached at the hip in terms of the locality and where the boundaries cut off. I think what we've seen previously is that the polls are different, people are different, the style of work, and the population cohort and how they interact are different. In terms of just including Beaumont with an Edmonton population would be, I think, an unfair riding.

The Chair: Obviously, we have to do something with Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Kular: Yeah. That's right. A hundred per cent.

The Chair: Are you saying: oh, please don't cut Edmonton-Ellerslie two-thirds, one-third, and then throw Beaumont in with the one-third of Edmonton-Ellerslie?

Mr. Kular: That's exactly what I'm saying.

The Chair: Okay. I think I picked that up. I think that was clear.

Mr. Kular: Then the other portion of it was that with the population, I understand, there are eligible voters that are, you know, over the age of 18, citizens versus eligible voters that are nonvoters but they live in Ellerslie, right? Then we have to compensate. We can't put two MLAs in there just because the population is bigger, but maybe we do need two MLAs in there because the population is bigger even though the eligible voters are a smaller portion of that population. Beaumont also now just being on the south side with Leduc and the airport and the Amazon – I don't have the latest numbers on Beaumont. Beaumont does also have an increased immigrant population just because of where we're situated in terms of work and location to the airport and the south side to Edmonton.

The Chair: The numbers are up there; I just can't read them. Is it about 46,065? Is that where it is?

Mr. Kular: That's right. But what I'm trying to get at is the immigrant population that is not eligible to vote; they're not Canadian citizens.

The Chair: That breakdown. Yeah.

Mr. Kular: Yeah. I think there's been an influx of the immigrant population into the Leduc-Beaumont riding as well.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you for your dialogue presentation, which I forced, I guess.

How have Beaumont and Leduc got along in that constituency for the last two elections? Like, it's two unique, urban . . .

Mr. Kular: Very well. We did the presentation to the federal electoral boundaries board as well, the commission. Originally Beaumont was supposed to be, just because of the population size, thrown in with Sherwood Park just because the number of population worked. Say 100,000 was Sherwood Park and then 20,000 for the federal. So we made presentations with the MLA boards, and I was on the board of the chamber of commerce for Beaumont, and we said that Beaumont does not reflect the same population, the same voting as for, you know, on a daily – the core of the population was Sherwood Park. It would rather stay with Acheson, with Leduc, with Nisku, with the rural population.

2:00

So, yeah, it worked well, and we made sure at least we tried, and it worked, but now we are – the federal constituency is Beaumont, Leduc, Wetaskiwin, and further down south with the rural population rather than just making the southeast Ellerslie population with Beaumont or Sherwood Park, because that riding was also quite big. Edmonton-Wetaskiwin had, you know, I think twice the number of population required by the law constitutionally.

They worked well. I think we tracked quite well with the southern rural Leduc, Nisku population than we do with the Edmonton population.

The Chair: Great. Thank you. I've been monopolizing the questions here. Are there any questions?

Mrs. Samson: No. I'm good, thanks.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Clark: I'm curious, and thank you very much again. I really very much appreciate your presentation and your perspective. It's obviously a growing area. Where would you say the growth pressures are? Is it more in Leduc, more in Beaumont? I've got a little bit of magic data tools here on my computer. I'm sort of trying to draw little boxes and determine kind of where the people are. Clearly, they seem to be concentrated in Leduc and Beaumont. It's the vast majority of the constituency, but are there areas in Leduc and Beaumont or in between where there are growth pressures?

Mr. Kular: Yes. So if you look at – I'm going to point my pointer here. Can you guys see this here?

Mrs. Samson: Yeah.

Mr. Kular: So this straight down here was part of the annexation lands that the city of Edmonton had taken from, at the top here. So the population core growth is north of Beaumont here because it's closer to Edmonton, and then the population grows to the west of

Beaumont because it's closer to Nisku, and the Leduc population is closer to the airport. And as we come into Leduc, the population growth has been just around the east side of Leduc here, because that's where the land and the services and the schools are here. It's been to about on the west side of Leduc here, just being closer to the airport, the Devon area, the Calmar area, and not so much to the north because it's more industrial with Nisku.

Mr. Clark: So if we needed to amend these boundaries, and it looks like we probably do just given how much over the percentage it is, is there a part you feel would naturally make sense in a different constituency and, conversely, a part that's really important to stay together?

Mr. Kular: Yes. So if we look at – you know, you could have the Devon area and the rural areas just south of Edmonton here, not to say that riding could be a rectangular piece here with Beaumont all the way to Devon. Then if we look at Beaumont and kind of southeast here, New Sarepta, just north of Wetaskiwin and Millet here, and we could, you know, maybe cut it in between Leduc and Beaumont and have a little bit of that pie shape that's going down to New Sarepta and some of that area along with some of the Leduc county area here that's closer to kind of south of Beaumont, the Vistas and Royal Oaks, that population.

If we look at the population of Leduc county just in these kind of 3, 4 corners, they're using the Beaumont schools. They're using the Beaumont grocery stores. They're using the Beaumont rec centre facility. They're doing their daily business from a perspective of sports, from a perspective of shopping, going to school in Beaumont rather than actually going all the way to Leduc per se. Edmonton-South is too far away from schooling, from facilities such as rec centres or anything like that. If this is portioned here, then you could kind of go down kind of southeast here, or you could go across to Devon and then you'd get some of that Leduc county. Right now, Leduc county is split, I think, into two for sure, maybe even three ridings.

Mr. Clark: So you're suggesting perhaps go a little bit more of an east-west orientation than the north-south, and then Leduc and Beaumont being in separate constituencies is . . .

Mr. Kular: Yes. It solves your population problem, and it still keeps Beaumont separate, out of the city.

The Chair: Off the top of your head, do you know the approximate population of Beaumont, the urban area, and Leduc?

Mr. Kular: Yeah. You might have it better, I think, from what I'm sensing. But I think Beaumont's now gone over probably about 25,000 riding now.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Kular: Just the actual city of Beaumont. And then if we look at the growth that has happened in the Leduc county area just to the west of Beaumont, I would say you're probably – if you included some of the Leduc county to the south in and around Beaumont, you'd be close to 40,000 to 45,000 population.

Mr. Clark: Twenty-four thousand, five hundred and ninety-three.

Mr. Kular: There you go.

The Chair: Pretty good.

Mr. Kular: Yeah.

The Chair: That doesn't even need an approximation.

Mr. Kular: Yeah, so both the 25,000, and then there's the growth of Leduc county there where the airport in the south part of Edmonton is – that's been increased – and then obviously the south as well.

Leduc, I thought was probably, I want to say close to about 45,000 to 50,000, city alone. Then obviously if you look at some of the growth that's happened in and around the Leduc county, south and north – I said keep it closer to Beaumont, but just the Leduc county around, so not so much growth in the rural, but just the city itself – it could be closer to 50,000, you know, in the next few months if we kind of set that up.

The Chair: Julian?

Dr. Martin: Thank you very much. I wanted to ask you a different kind of question since you know the district at this granular level. I'm going to pepper you with some questions about it.

Mr. Kular: I do real estate by trade.

Mr. Clark: Ah, perfect. We need people like you. Tell your friends.

Dr. Martin: Well, the first question is – well, really, I'm interested in your sense of residential growth pods. Immediately to the west of the existing city of Beaumont are two sections, right? You mentioned it.

Mr. Kular: Yeah. West is the Elan area which has grown immensely.

Dr. Martin: Here.

Mr. Kular: Yeah, that's right. So not this quarter section here . . .

Dr. Martin: No, the next section.

Mr. Kular: This quarter section.

Dr. Martin: Yes, that's right.

Mr. Kular: That's right. It's grown immensely. They've got a new development going in there. They've got the dog park there. They've got the baseball park there. It's right across from the rec centre, walking distance to the school. New apartment buildings have popped up in Beaumont. It's growing at a significant rate.

Dr. Martin: Okay. My next question is about 50th Street.

Mr. Kular: Yep.

Dr. Martin: You know, obviously a major commuting route. Now, people have been – I don't know if people in the room know, but people from Beaumont have been complaining about 50th Street for 50 years, right, because there's such an increase of the volume of traffic along that roadway. Do you see much growth, much development happening adjacent to that roadway? Okay. So that may be inside the traditional boundaries of the city of Beaumont or maybe north of them, but there's still development occurring all along there. It would seem natural that that would happen.

Mr. Kular: That's right. If we look at right where my cursor is within the city, that's the midway point here. That quarter section here on the right of 50th street is the Le Rêve area, which is, again, under development. The next quarter section has already got the NSP plan to the city. East of 50th Street, both of those quarter sections are probably getting developed within the next 5 to 6 years;

one quarter section is already more than halfway developed. If you guys have driven down there, most people will know the Old Yale brewery that will come up there is one of the best in Alberta. It's been busy – go, Oilers, go – and we've been there a few times. That thing has taken off. I think the growth is going to be there.

And then the same thing if we look at 50th Street just south of Edmonton, most of the developments are just going south of 34th and 50th and in between 91st and 50th Street. I don't even take 50th Street anymore if I want to come to Edmonton. I go to 91st Street and go to Anthony Henday because it's a single road. The city of Edmonton has not developed that road wide enough, and they've put intersections on it. It's just chaos.

Beaumont's already developed, I think – yeah. So, Beaumont was up to where my cursor is right now, where it says "Leduc-Beaumont." They had doubled that 50th street, Highway 814 all the way to the edge of the city of Edmonton. The city of Edmonton didn't do anything, and they've now just annexed it. That double part that was done by Beaumont or Leduc county with Alberta Transportation, now half of it is within the city of Edmonton. That growth is exactly happening in and around that 41st Avenue and that south portion of Edmonton, with the dome and then that Orchards area and some of that industrial area coming in there with Amazon.

2:10

Dr. Martin: Now, the last time I was in Beaumont, I went west on 510 and then connected with 91st that flows up this way.

Mr. Kular: That's right.

Dr. Martin: So my general point is that there's an awful lot of commuter traffic in and out of Beaumont, but it doesn't have an industry, so people are commuting to work or to whatever. You know, there's heavy pressure on these particular roadways we've spoken on. Whether you're going to Nisku or to the airport or whether you're circling around one way or another to come back into Edmonton proper, that is characteristic of what people in Beaumont do.

Mr. Kular: And that would be ideal, having our own MLA, having our own riding to represent and speak for Beaumont. Getting us 510 widened; 625, getting that widened; 50th Street, attaching to Edmonton, getting that widened would immensely help the Beaumont community grow and then keep growing at the rate and be safe, not be stuck on, you know, single-use lanes that do not have high lighting or do not have, you know, turning lights.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Better let you go, Mr. Kular, but let me just throw one scenario out, if you can just answer yes or no. I know that in 2017, I'm quite certain, the commission governed for Edmonton-South and Edmonton-South West for future growth.

Mr. Kular: Yeah.

The Chair: I take it you are suggesting that we couldn't go wrong if we govern Beaumont for future growth.

Mr. Kular: That's right.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Mr. Kular: Thank you. I appreciate it.

The Chair: Okay. Ms Gray.

Ms Gray: Yes.

The Chair: Oh, welcome. Welcome. Please come forward and have a seat.

Ms Gray: I thought I was coming early to watch others, but this is great.

The Chair: We have a challenge in terms of scheduling and time here. We have been allowing more than seven minutes, so you can be a little more – you can be relaxed that we're not going to cut you off in seven minutes.

Ms Gray: Got it.

The Chair: Welcome.

Ms Gray: Hi, everyone. I'm Christina Gray. I am the MLA for Edmonton-Mill Woods, and I have been a Mill Woods resident for 22 years. Back in 2003 I bought my first home in Mill Woods, got involved with the local community there, my community league, the Edmonton transit advisory board, started volunteering, and that kind of set me on a path to getting involved politically. Now I've represented the area for a decade. I just had the anniversary, which was amazing. I am coming to share a few of my opinions about electoral boundaries, but more importantly, I am hoping to just help the boundary commission understand: what is Mill Woods?

I did send a PowerPoint. I'm wondering if that's possible. Thank you very much.

Mill Woods is a very unique area because it was created in the '70s to deal with housing affordability issues created by one of the largest land assemblies or land bank projects, working with the city, the province, and the federal government to acquire nine square miles to plan and develop this community. Some people refer to it almost like a town planning process that happened.

In the 2017 boundary commission hearing one of the planners, Mr. Sarty, came and gave a presentation. I called him. I said: oh, do you want to come talk again? He's in his 80s now. He said: I'm not feeling up to it.

The thing I want you to understand about Mill Woods is that in the '70s it was created with a development concept to create a socially planned community that was inclusive for all, that focused on neighbourhoods and green spaces, and was deliberately designed with curvilinear roads, so getting lost in Mill Woods was a planned thing, if you've ever heard someone talk about that, to try and build more of that town concept.

There are nine communities built around Mill Woods Town Centre, a big mall. The Grey Nuns hospital is in the centre. It had a lot of visions for planning in a way that would allow for some high-density development, if necessary, but also just a real community itself. The other thing that makes Mill Woods very unique is that every single neighbourhood has affordable housing built into it. I actually have one of the highest number of Civiida housing units of any representative, and that's because when Mill Woods was created in the '70s, they deliberately wanted to have that density and different economic residents.

This map that I'm showing you is – think of it as just a point in time. I come from a programming software background. I've forgotten most of it now that I've been a politician for 10 years, but I found this data visualization. It's based off Edmonton's 2017 property assessment, so it's not only out of date as far as what property assessments would be, but you'll see that Meadows and Ellerslie are not built up because in 2017 that hadn't fully started. What it does show you is that Mill Woods is separate from the city of Edmonton by two big tracts of industrial space. Between the

north and the west these industrial districts – I’m just going to get this slide. Not only that, but even just looking at the property assessment value, you can see that the Mill Woods pieces are priced differently than the other homes to the west, which is Rutherford, or even to the north, which is getting into more of the kind of Strathcona areas.

The communities here are built around various neighbourhoods that are part of a community league system. I’m going to bounce back and forth between these two slides very briefly. We’ve got the nine community leagues based around the Grey Nuns hospital and the Mill Woods Town Centre. Each community league is made up of two or three neighbourhoods. The community league system in Mill Woods in particular is incredibly strong. Each has a hall. Each has pairings with sports groups and schools. Some of them have daycares within their halls. All of the presidents of the community leagues in Mill Woods get together in something called the Mill Woods Presidents’ Council, and they support each other. A lot of residents in Mill Woods know which community league they are a part of, and that is a foundation of some of the Mill Woods pieces that we have and people’s identity as a Mill Woods resident.

The current riding of Mill Woods encompasses all of the community leagues along the west side of Mill Woods, along the middle of Mill Woods, and one of three neighbourhoods that are part of the Ridgewood community. Just further south here is a community that is technically part of Mill Woods – it’s considered Southwood – but it’s cut up right now. Part of it is in Ellerslie, and part of it is Meadows. My first recommendation to you is that as you are considering what you’re going to be doing around that Mill Woods area, I’d like you to understand that it is its own distinct community of interest and also where the community league boundaries are. I would recommend to you that an MLA should represent all the neighbourhoods of a community league. If that can be done within the numbers, that might make sense.

The second thing I wanted to talk about was that the estimates for population change that have been published on your site show that Mill Woods is 7 per cent over the average. Now, when the 2017 commission made their recommendation, they put Mill Woods at 7 per cent over because it wasn’t expected to have as much growth as other areas. The number of 58,000 surprises me because that’s higher than I would expect. Now, there is a bit of a – there’s a housing crisis. There have been a few small developments that have gone in. Since the 2017 boundary commission there’s a new Sakaw Terrace housing, with 150 suites, that was created. There was one first place program where surplus school sites originally designed for schools has now got some housing on it, and that has about 100 units of housing.

2:20

Mill Woods was fully built from the ’70s through to the ’90s, and there are no new neighbourhoods that are coming on in the last – like, we’re hitting our 50-year anniversary of the start of the Mill Woods development concept, which was originally signed in March 1971. So 8,000 new people within the existing boundaries doesn’t feel quite right to me, but I don’t know how that number was reached, and it could be fully accurate. We’re not seeing a lot of infill housing yet. It’s just starting to trickle in but not in the same way that you see in more centrally located ridings. I’m just flagging that I’m curious about how that number was reached and what that might look like.

That being said, the Mill Woods Town Centre has been purchased by Maclab Development with plans to build more high-density housing there, starting with the first phase of a pair of 22-storey rental apartment towers with a total of about 550 units. That’s something that as a boundary commission you might not be aware

of, but right in the centre of Mill Woods Town Centre they’re going to start building some more housing. We’ve now got an LRT that comes to Mill Woods Town Centre, so it’s a really exciting idea and part of what Mill Woods was originally developed and designed for. It’s kind of now 50 years later that that’s coming to fruition. We do not have a timeline on that project, so I’m more just flagging it, that we know there’s going to be a little bit of growth there in the centre.

I’m just looking at my notes as to what other things I wanted to flag or say other than, again, when you’re looking at decisions about Mill Woods, I hope you consider the community leagues. I hope you recognize that it is significantly different. The one thing I’ll point out is that one of the community leagues of Mill Woods, Jackson Heights, is on the north side of the Mill Creek ravine. Right now that piece is currently grouped with Meadows, and I would suggest that that works fairly well, both because of the ravine but also because you’ll note that the houses there, the property value, some of them are that dark red. They’re a little bit more expensive and fit more with the Meadows concept.

I am happy to take questions as to how I can help.

The Chair: So you don’t want that back, then.

Ms Gray: Well, I don’t know if all nine square miles of Mill Woods could fit into one riding and the numbers would work. I think that may still be too many people, so my potential suggestion would be to consider including the other two neighbourhoods of Ridgewood that are not currently part of my Mill Woods, so that would be the neighbourhoods of Minchau and Bisset potentially, or Southwood, which is Daly Grove, Crawford Plains, and Pollard Meadows. That section potentially makes more sense.

One of the reasons why I’m emphasizing this is because the federal boundary commission just finished their work. I will be honest; I was involved with the Legislature and I didn’t tune in to that process at all until I saw that they had cut Mill Woods in half. Now federally there is an Edmonton Gateway, which is the old part of Mill Woods plus the neighbourhoods that are in Rutherford on the other side of Calgary Trail, and then the new part of Mill Woods got grouped with Meadows. Not only was I surprised and disappointed to see that because I think it’s going to cause a lot of confusion, but a lot of the community league presidents and volunteers I talked to were not happy about that. I’m hoping we don’t see that kind of popping up Mill Woods in a way and grouping us with other communities that might happen.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you very much, Ms Gray.

I know very little of Edmonton except I do know Mill Woods a little bit because my wife’s parents lived there, so as you described this, you know, you brought back late ’70s, early ’80s business for me. I have some more questions; that was just a useless comment. Sorry.

Ms Gray: Sure.

The Chair: Susan, any questions?

Mrs. Samson: I was just going to comment because I know it’s a concern of yours. You said that you’re not sure where the population number of 58,725 came from. That came from the Canada census, and unfortunately that’s the number we have to work with. I get that you wonder where those 8,500 people came from, but that’s what we’re going to work with.

Ms Gray: Understood. Fair enough.

Can I just probe that? You mentioned the word “census,” and my understanding was that the last census was done in 2021. For this 2024 number do you know what goes into that?

The Chair: Yeah. You know what? I’ve explained this a few times. I’ll let somebody else.

Ms Gray: Honestly, if you trust the number, then I’m fine. We don’t need to argue about it.

The Chair: I have a three-page analysis from a statistician.

Ms Gray: Well, maybe there are more basement suites than I realize.

The Chair: I’ll let somebody else explain that.

Dr. Martin: We all puzzled over how a census arrives at numbers. Let me begin by shocking you. There is no empirical census. Those two words don’t go together. A census is an amalgam of high-probability estimates of various strands of expected population growth. For example, it is considered legitimate to add up and project thereupon new Alberta health card applications. I mean, it’s obscure, but nevertheless it’s not unreasonable to see that as an indicator. But they’re all partial rather than absolute. A census is never empirical. People move; they die; they are citizens; they’re not citizens. It’s very fluid. As soon as a federal census is done, the demographers set around and within six weeks sometimes are issuing a correction. So it’s an ongoing feast.

Ms Gray: Okay.

Dr. Martin: The numbers that we have chosen and agreed will be our base numbers, our stable numbers, this patchwork quilt of estimates that’s been tested repeatedly: we’re going with July 1, 2024. It’s not bleeding edge because that could be highly volatile, so July 1, 2024, is what we have agreed will be our number.

The Chair: And that number is 4.888 million overall, and I have a slide for that.

Ms Gray: All good. All good.

I do see huge amounts of growth in the south when I visit the gurdwara, the mandir, the mosques, or even our churches, like, the number of new people. Mill Woods is a bit of a community hub. Lots of people come to Mill Woods for cultural events or for faith. So I would certainly argue that, I think, of the two new seats Edmonton south – that absolutely makes sense that there needs to be another seat around there.

Dr. Martin: I have another question again. In your presentation and characterization, particularly when you’re speaking of community leagues and what a cultural magnet those have become, you want to exclude Jackson Heights and Kiniski although, as I under it, they are some of the old original communities as well, are they not?

Ms Gray: In fact, the way Mill Woods was built, that is the last part that was built, and it was built more in the late ’80s and ’90s. Mill Woods started building over in the top left corner – actually, can I stand up and just point this out?

Dr. Martin: Please.

Ms Gray: Awesome. Thank you. Fun fact: if you’re paying close attention, there’s one house right there that is literally beside the Pakistan Canada Association hall and the mandir over here and is a residence of Mill Woods but stands off to the side.

When Mill Woods started getting built, this is the very first community, and then it kind of started to fill in this way down through the middle and then building more this way, with Jackson Heights and these pieces being the last that were built in these communities. Ideally, I think, people who live all over here but also all over here all say they live in Mill Woods. Like, they think they’re in Mill Woods even though they may be in Meadows or somewhere else because Edmonton southeast is just considered Mill Woods. But the literal Mill Woods is that grid of the nine community leagues, and if that could be the provincial riding, I think that would make sense. It would match exactly what people expect. I just think it’s too many people, and so then decisions just have to be made. Because of the ravine and because it has historically been paired with the Meadows side, I have suggested that, but if it could be included, I could understand that as well. Yeah. Thanks for letting me point that out.

2:30

The Chair: Any other questions?

Mr. Clark: No, just, I guess your numbers are – yeah. You’re a little above average, 58,725 on the 55,000 or so, so almost 7 per cent over, but in terms of, to borrow a phrase from a famous Edmontonian, skating to where the puck is going to be, would you suggest that what is currently Edmonton-Mill Woods, if for some reason we were just able to keep the boundaries exactly as they are, do you feel like the growth in the rest of not just Edmonton but really kind of the province, would that number as a percentage – very tough to know. I mean, a lot is going to happen. Populations grow and shrink all the time, especially in Alberta, but do you feel that the rate of growth in Edmonton-Mill Woods, the constituency, is more average or below average to the rest of the province?

Ms Gray: Well, using the numbers that the boundary commission has, it seems to be exactly average, because in 2017, in the final report, Mill Woods was considered 7 per cent over, and today Mill Woods is considered 7 per cent over, so that trend seems to be bang on, with the one caveat being that we know of the Mill Woods-Town Centre development that may be happening, but it’s not approved yet. There’s no construction. The timing on those major projects shift. We have tariffs. I don’t know what’s going to happen there. But yeah, thank you for that question. I appreciate that. I think that the work you’re doing is really cool. I hope someday in the future I might get to sit on a boundary commission. Greg, you give me hope that a former MLA could be a member.

The Chair: There’s life after.

Mr. Clark: They don’t just float you out on an iceberg.

Dr. Martin: Well, as you can see, much of our current work is made easier than previous commissions by virtue of there being interactive GIS programs, but it does become a bit obsessive, so you have to watch out for that if you ever join this commission.

Ms Gray: Fair.

The Chair: Well, thank you so much, Ms Gray for your very balanced and entertaining presentation. I love the assessment.

Ms Gray: If you go to the website that does this, even if you just Google “Edmonton 2017 property assessment visualization,” you can zoom in and out. You can see other parts, so other areas of neighbourhoods you might be interested in seeing different pieces of.

Thank you for your time.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Other presenters: Mr. Roth, could you . . .

Mr. Roth: Terry Howlett.

The Chair: Oh, okay.

Mr. Howlett: Good afternoon.

The Chair: Mr. Howlett, you were probably told that you have seven minutes, but we're a little bit more flexible this afternoon.

Mr. Howlett: I don't think it'll take seven minutes.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Howlett: I'm not a politician, just a farmer and a rancher that lives on the edge of the city.

So straight to the point, I'm here about the boundaries for Edmonton-West Henday. As I was going over the boundaries, a question came up, and I realize you folks can't answer it, but why is Calder, Wellington, and Athlone part of the West Henday constituency? In the map, if you look at it, it's way up in the north corner. I'll preamble here. If you let me preamble for a couple minutes, I'll explain my position why it shouldn't be part of . . .

The Chair: Can you just repeat those communities again, sir?

Mr. Howlett: Sure. That's Calder, Wellington, and Athlone. If you're familiar with where the Calder train yards are, it's in that area.

So my name is Terry Howitt. I serve on the board of the Summerlea Community League in west Edmonton. Over the last decade I've had the opportunity to work with various community leagues in the region while meeting with the city of Edmonton over certain issues. I've worked with communities such as Belmead, Terra Rosa, La Perle, and Lymburn, all part of Edmonton-West Henday. It's been a positive experience.

In the past I and other community league members have presented our positions to the city of Edmonton regarding the Valley Line west LRT, feeder roads to the West Henday freeway, public transit routes and transit centres in west Edmonton, and the use of recreation facilities in the area. In my opinion, we've made a positive difference.

I'd also like to mention that these communities share many of the same public facilities in west Edmonton, such as the westend seniors centre in Terra Rosa, the Belmead community centre, Callingwood library, and of course the Callingwood Recreation Centre.

Of course, I just want to mention that many of our community members in West Henday share the same roads. We're stuck on Winterburn Road for 20, 30 minutes going to work and coming home. We're stuck on 87th Avenue trying to get on the West Henday freeway. We share the same rec centres. We watch our children play soccer in our parks. We shop at the same grocery stores. We have all these commonalities, and we basically have the same goals. We want west Edmonton to thrive and be a great community to live in.

What I've learned is that when various community leagues collaborate, it can result in better ideas, better relationships, and we even might have positive outcomes with the city of Edmonton, and it's only my opinion that in the next few years the communities in west Edmonton are going to need to work together even more. We need to interact with the city and hold the city accountable. Transportation issues, new transit centres and transit routes, and we have a serious shortage of schools and school space in Edmonton-

West Henday, and the location of low-cost and affordable housing are some of the major issues facing west Edmonton. Of course, when you talk with the city of Edmonton, the issue always comes up of funding from the provincial government, so we need to collaborate.

What does this have to do with boundaries? As we examine the Edmonton-West Henday and the constituency map, you'll notice, as I pointed out, that Calder, Wellington, and Athlone are situated in the far northeast corner of Edmonton-West Henday, far away from the major communities in Edmonton-West Henday. Most of them are located in the southwest region. Calder, Athlone, and Wellington are separated from the west of the constituency by a huge swath of industrial areas. It's kind of cut off by the Yellowhead freeway and partially cut off by the CN train yards. When you get on the map, you can see where the trains are. They're right in the top corner.

I believe that the communities of Wellington, Athlone, and Calder, their needs are different compared to other communities in Edmonton-West Henday, and they would be better served in the constituency of Edmonton-North West. If the communities of Wellington, Athlone, and Calder were to become part of Edmonton-North West, approximately 9,700 people would become constituents of Edmonton-North West. I use that 2021 figure. I'm sorry; I'm not a politician. I'm not really up to date. In return, to balance it, I suggest that Summerlea community, which is roughly 2,200 residents from the Edmonton-McClung constituency, and Glastonbury, approximately 6,900 residents from Edmonton-South West, to join the Edmonton-West Henday constituency. That's a total of 9,085. So pretty close numbers.

2:40

I also want to state that Edmonton-West Henday is growing. I couldn't really find any solid facts on how much of the areas of Trumpeter, Hawks Ridge, Suder Greens, Rosenthal, Starling are growing. But when you drive by there, it's quite evident that there's a lot of construction, and it's a growing population.

In conclusion, I feel that the MLA for Edmonton-West Henday would be better able to represent the ideas and concerns of their constituents if all the communities in the Edmonton-West Henday constituency are located in the same general region. Unfortunately, Wellington, Athlone, and Calder communities are geographically separated from the other Edmonton-West Henday communities. Secondly, they do not share a lot of the same concerns we have in the southwest. Examples of Edmonton-West Henday concerns are feeder roads such as 87th Avenue going on to the western portion of the West Henday; the extension of the Whitemud freeway, which is highway 60, otherwise known as the Devon highway. We need to rebuild the Winterburn-Stony Plain road overpass due to high volumes. A lot of our residents are sitting there for 30 to 45 minutes going to work, going back home.

Schools are a major, major problem. When I would talk and work with these other community leagues – we need a high school really bad; we need a junior high. We also have a shortage of classroom spaces.

There's going to be a lot of talk about a location for low-cost, affordable housing that we need an MLA to work with us and with the city of Edmonton, and there's always talk about health care, a hospital somewhere located in southwest Edmonton.

I don't want to take up any more of your time. Thank you for listening to me. If you have any questions, I'd be happy to answer.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much.

Go ahead, Greg.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Thank you. That was a really interesting presentation. It's two things. I was able to do a little bit of data magic with the tools they give us. The three communities that you've identified, as far as I can tell, are about 11,800.

Mr. Howlett: Yes, that's about right. That's the first mistake I've made all year.

Mr. Clark: You're allowed one. No.

What's interesting is that your population is about 15 and a half per cent over 63,000. So that would take it down to 52,000. It's a little below average, but, you know, with a little bit of tweaking, I mean, that could work, especially if there's growth happening. What I am, though, curious about is – we talked about keeping this within the four walls of Edmonton. We haven't really talked about the areas due west. We've heard some submissions that it may make some sense to combine some of the areas west towards Acheson and Spruce Grove perhaps and have perhaps Spruce Grove and then kind of bite a piece out of west Edmonton, Edmonton-West Henday, in particular. What are your thoughts on that? Do you feel there's enough commonality in terms of the communities, or are they different places?

Mr. Howlett: Five or six years ago I would have said that, yes, there's a big commonality. Now, in the particular region of southwest we've had a lot of immigration from other provinces, and we've had a lot of new Canadians – good thing – but a little different from Spruce Grove, Stony Plain, or Acheson. I farm out that way. There would be some differences, but it would be workable, I think.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

Dr. Martin: Thank you very much. I'm very interested in the thing that you pointed out right away. There's the vast light industrial and commercial landscape that divides the current two pods, as it were, of your riding. You know, everything to the east of St. Albert Trail you suggest potentially could be absorbed into one of the other ridings. They're kind of full up. Edmonton-Glenora is a little light, but that would mean going across the Yellowhead. I mean, we're boxed in and perplexed no matter how we do it.

Mr. Howlett: I wouldn't want your job. But just this morning I used Google Maps just to see how long it would take to get from Terra Rosa, which is probably close to where Stony Plain Road is and 170th Street . . .

Dr. Martin: Just north of the mall.

Mr. Howlett: Yeah, it's north of the mall.

It came up as a 22-minute drive. Yeah. So there are some problems.

Dr. Martin: Now, I wondered if I might just supplement by looking at one of the other nodes at the south area, which is immediately adjacent to the north of the mall in the current configuration. Do you see this area between 178th and the Henday as a coherent neighbourhood?

Mr. Howlett: Yes. That's Summerlea.

Dr. Martin: Okay. Yeah.

And immediately south of there, which is currently in Edmonton-McClung, do you see that as part of the same coherent neighbourhood?

Mr. Howlett: Yeah.

Dr. Martin: So the boundaries that were drawn last time were a little bit disparate.

Mr. Howlett: I can't comment on that. I'm just an old cowboy.

Dr. Martin: Okay. Oh, they say that.

But in this configuration the old Misericordia hospital is included in Edmonton-McClung, which seems an awful long way. The future of that site is to rebuild a new hospital, I believe.

Mr. Howlett: Yeah, that's right.

Dr. Martin: So you're saying that you really need to see the growth of high schools and hospitals and/or medical clinics in this area, correct?

Mr. Howlett: Well, when it comes to the hospital, that doesn't have to be in Edmonton-West Henday, but somewhere . . .

Mrs. Samson: In the west.

Mr. Howlett: In the west. Yeah.

Dr. Martin: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Sue?

Mrs. Samson: No. I'm good. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Howlett, you touched briefly on or just passingly you said something about future growth. It looks like in the last eight years there's been significant growth, 20,000 more.

Mr. Howlett: Yes, sir.

The Chair: If you had to compare Edmonton-North West and Edmonton-West Henday, which has more potential for growth? Edmonton-North West or Edmonton-West Henday?

Mr. Howlett: I would say, oh, definitely Edmonton-West Henday.

The Chair: Okay.

And would your Edmonton-North West neighbours agree with you?

Mr. Howlett: I think so. I think that's pretty well a fact that – I haven't looked at the population, but it's pretty stagnant. It's an older area. The houses were built probably in the 1960s, late '50s.

The Chair: And there's not as much land either.

Mr. Howlett: It's pretty well developed.

The Chair: Yeah. Okay. Well, thank you very much for an excellent presentation.

By the way, the diversity of presentations today for a non-Edmontonian has been fantastic. I commend each of the presenters, so thank you very much.

Mr. Howlett: Well, thank you very much. I've never done this before, and you guys have made it enjoyable. Thanks again.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

I guess we've passed our break time. I was giving everybody so much time, and we're 30, almost 40, minutes over break time. We'll take a 10-minute break and reconvene just after 3 o'clock.

[The hearing adjourned from 2:49 p.m. to 3:10 p.m.]

Mrs. Samson: Justice, who do we have left?

The Chair: We have two more presenters that we are aware of.

Can I have Roxanne Carr come forward, please. Please come forward. We're scheduling you just a bit earlier than what we had at 3:20. Just have a seat. Okay. As I've said before, we have probably told you that you have a limit of seven minutes, but we're a little bit more flexible this afternoon because our schedule isn't as full, so we can probably go over the seven-minute time period. Okay. Please proceed.

Ms Carr: Good afternoon, members of the commission. My name is Roxanne Carr. I live in the constituency of Sherwood Park, and that is electoral division 81. Thank you for including me in this hearing to share my views. My background and involvement has been in community building and includes the positions of the director of the Alberta Association of Agricultural Societies. I was an economic development officer for Lamont county and a councillor and former mayor of Strathcona county. I was also honoured to be the chair of the first growth plan of the capital region board and served two terms on the Alberta Land and Property Rights Tribunal.

These experiences in and with different communities have led me to see the positive impact when a population identifies itself as a distinct group with common needs, challenges, and opportunities. From that, a municipality can build a specific economic and tourism framework, infrastructure, cultural and health services that will provide the greatest safety and well-being to its residents. When our ridings reflect our common interests and values and when our ridings mirror our uniqueness as an area and a population, then I believe our elected official, our MLA, will be better positioned to most effectively represent our area in the Legislature, ultimately building a better province.

The constituency of Sherwood Park is just such a well-defined entity. It is the largest hamlet in a specialized municipality with a common history, geography, culture, and economy. Sherwood Park was born on Treaty Six land. European settlers developed an urban core in the 1950s. The hamlet offered a uniform base of services, adding infrastructure, roads, parks, schools, homes, businesses, broadening its economy to include its first oil refinery in 1975. Its agriculture base and growing oil industry created a strong and vibrant economy while now our business chamber boasts more than a thousand members. We are a diverse and forward-thinking community that was shortlisted, in fact, for the Governor General's award for excellence in community programming in 2023.

Sherwood Park is known as an urban centre that plans for and provides economic, cultural, recreation, and health services that serve its own population while having the capacity to serve surrounding areas. Our municipal council plans for future growth by building roads and other infrastructure to a high level, a high provincial standard like our multitude of baseball diamonds, which cater to our growing youth and population. You may have been out there this weekend when we actually hosted teams from across western Canada as well.

Our transit system is uniquely suited to Sherwood Park, with its on-demand bus and its express system into Edmonton. Our highways and roads provide rapid and clear boundaries for our electoral division. Sherwood Park has a single communication system, a common system for emergency alerts.

Our MLAs have been able to communicate the challenges and opportunities of our ridings to the province, resulting in the building of a hospital in Sherwood Park in 2014. Currently Sherwood Care, which is one of Alberta's top senior care organizations, is building Sherwood Park's first dedicated palliative care unit. Our strong base of health care services supports the rest of Strathcona county as well as the broader northeastern region.

Yes, our municipality is a desirable place to live. Positive relationships between our municipal and our provincial representatives are a significant key to our success, and this requires clear communication through our MLAs to our provincial government. Because we have such a unique history, topography, and culture and because we are a focused population with common values, it is easier for our MLA to work on our behalf and to represent us effectively in the Legislature.

In summary, given the unique attributes of this constituency and the current effective operation of Sherwood Park as a cohesive riding I hope that the commission agrees with our residents that it is in the best interest of the election process and provincial governance to keep Sherwood Park riding boundaries unchanged.

With that, I thank you for your time and would be pleased to answer any questions.

The Chair: Well, thank you, Ms Carr.

Can we get the electoral division map up, please?

In the meantime, as we get that up, our commission will start with questions, Ms Carr.

Mrs. Samson: I was looking at the population of Sherwood Park that we're working with, and census Canada says that we're working with 50,493, so 50,500, which shows an increase of 5,000 people – let me just confirm that number – 4,000 people since 2016-2017. You're within the guidelines, under what we're looking at, of the baseline of 55,000 per electoral district. Do you see the growth in Sherwood Park? Where is it occurring?

Ms Carr: Yeah. The question is very interesting to me, and it challenges me. I mentioned I was on council and the mayor, but I was the mayor of the entire municipality, which is Strathcona county. Now, we have 100,000 people in Strathcona county, and we have two divisions representing that entire municipality.

Yes. Sherwood Park, as you see, the 81 division goes out east as far as a little beyond Clover Bar Road, but it looks like not – oh. Yes, to highway 21. If we need to expand that boundary, the very best thing to do, in my opinion and experience, would be to push it further east and take on more east and north actually, because if you push it east and north, you're going to get towards Bremner and north you'll be getting into Cambrian. These are the largest growth areas that we have. They have been planned by council, in my time actually. That would give us more population that would suit your vision, I believe.

In fact, if we get creative and inventive, we could look at going to the industrial area because we take in – we go around Fort Saskatchewan, and to the north is more industrial area, which our taxpayers' money goes into in the roads and such. So if there would be a way to go around Fort Saskatchewan and north, fine, but if that causes moving of too many division boundaries, then I really suggest that we look at going east and north, that way, without going kind of west-north.

3:20

Mrs. Samson: Right. Thank you.

The Chair: I'm interested in the current boundaries. If they were kept the same, what is the potential for growth within the current

boundaries based on your experience in those communities? Like, are there large developments online?

Ms Carr: Depending upon your definition of large development. If you look at Emerald Drive, Lakeland Drive area, then in that northeastern region – actually, isn't Cambrian already – it's south of the CPR. Could you check that, the Cambrian development? It doesn't have it on this map. Yes, it is. It's exactly west of highway 21. I don't have the exact numbers that Cambrian expects, but it is in the order of several thousand.

Dr. Martin: Okay. I live in Sherwood Park. I'm near Clover Bar Road, so I'm sensitive to everything you're speaking of. You're quite right. If you go to 21 and the Yellowhead, there is development, already got Tyvek on the buildings, going on up there. There's also the pod on Lakeland Drive, immediately north of it, and east of the community hospital and so on up there at the top. So Emerald Drive – this whole pod is available for development it seems to me.

Ms Carr: Yes. There are a lot of apartment buildings in the exact area, a new seniors residence up there as well. There is a lot of potential for growth there. As I noted, Sherwood Park, the council, is very forward looking, and they're zoning changes. We have added in the last year multilevel buildings.

Dr. Martin: I have two more points if I might. One is about Bremner. I spoke to one of the county councillors who looks after that, I guess, zone 1 or something, where Bremner is. It's immediately north of the Yellowhead, for those who don't live in the mighty hamlet. If they open ground this summer, as I understand that they are likely to do, some component of it – it may take 20, 30 years – it would be the next commission that would have to deal with the puzzle that development presents to us. What I would be very curious to hear your thoughts as the former mayor of the county is about immediately south of the hamlet, just south of Wye. There's a fair bit of apartment and condo development in there now. Do you recall when that was planned for, at the corner of Wye and Clover Bar Road, down to there, just north of the Catholic school?

Ms Carr: Yes. That building started fairly recently, in the last decade. Is that the area you're talking about?

Dr. Martin: Yeah, I guess so.

Ms Carr: I think it is.

Dr. Martin: It's just very kind of ragged edge to the hamlet . . .

Ms Carr: Yes, it is.

Dr. Martin: . . . at the south end, and the last part of it is sort of a mysterious and ambiguous dotted pod. But as I understand it, when I drive down through there, it's getting built out fast.

Ms Carr: It is getting built out, but there are limits to it. I would prefer that administration and the technical people give you the exact zoning, but they're very sensitive to the perimeter of Beaver Hills.

Dr. Martin: Right.

Ms Carr: And that will come up in that area. I just can't picture it in my mind. It would be good to look at the perimeter of Beaver Hills.

Dr. Martin: Both you and I could sit in a corner and gossip about little bits of our territory, but for the present purpose you would agree that there are sufficient known building zones within the current hamlet boundaries?

Ms Carr: I would agree that this commission I don't expect will have to deal with an overrapid growth of population in this division.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

Mr. Clark: That's a fabulous segue. First off, a technical question. Again, thank you very much for being here. This is really, really interesting stuff. The Strathcona-Sherwood Park constituency: does that trace the boundaries of Strathcona county? Is it that the entire county is within . . .

Ms Carr: Are you talking about division 81?

Mr. Clark: Strathcona-Sherwood Park. Sorry.

Ms Carr: So 81 and 84? You're talking about those two?

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Put those two together. Is that the entire area of the municipality?

Ms Carr: No. If you look at 84 and look at highway 16, it seems to be the northern border on mine. Is that right, that highway 16 is the northern border of 84?

Dr. Martin: That's correct.

Ms Carr: Okay. That doesn't show enough, doesn't show all of our Industrial Heartland.

Mr. Clark: Right.

What I'm curious about – when I look at the population, you're right. The population by my numbers is almost exactly 100,000 between the two, but the growth trend has been less than the provincial average growth trend. When these constituencies were first established, they were both almost exactly the average of the Alberta constituencies, and since then they're both just a little bit under. Let me just get my actual numbers here. Strathcona-Sherwood Park is now 7 per cent under and Sherwood Park is 8 per cent under, so the two of them are each below the average. If we needed to find a little more population to add into one or both, where should we look for that?

Ms Carr: You should consider – I know you're saying what the growth rate is, but I think sitting down with Strathcona county economic development department would illustrate that their plans for growth are going to take up that room that you need. I don't think these boundaries should or could be . . .

The Chair: So you're saying: don't change the boundaries; think of the future. Let the future fill it up. Is that right?

Ms Carr: I don't think you're going to have that problem until the future, but if you change the boundaries, what I am asking is that you just bring into the boundaries more of Strathcona county proper and that you not go down to Beaumont, that you not go and take up or expand into Fort Saskatchewan or take in other municipalities.

My whole experience has been that the planning has been so good in this particular municipality that the ratepayers, the taxpayers, are actually building things within their own community that add to the homogeneous aspect and outlook of them. Am I making myself . . .

Mr. Clark: I hear you. I'm sorry; I'm a mere Calgarian, so I'm afraid I don't understand all this, which is fantastic.

I've just gone to our magic friend Google. Strathcona county itself is actually quite a bit larger than I realized. It goes all the way up to Bruderheim, all the way down to almost Beaumont but not quite. Okay.

Ms Carr: Yeah. So if you took some of that territory and put it into either one or both of these divisions . . .

The Chair: You'd be content with that.

Mr. Clark: So as long as whatever we do would still be Strathcona county: that's the sort of core criteria. That's what I need to understand.

Ms Carr: Yeah. Because that gets municipal dollars working within their own area.

Mr. Clark: If you don't mind, just one. What if we were to reach west into the city of Edmonton itself and blend between either one of those constituencies and part of Edmonton?
What do you think of that idea, or are they different places?

3:30

Ms Carr: I think the history of this is that – was it part of Mill Woods that was actually part of this division 81 in the past and then it was moved? Am I right there? I thought Edmonton was pre-1990 even.

The Chair: Are you thinking provincial or federal?

Ms Carr: Maybe I'm mixing it up.

The Chair: Yeah.

Ms Carr: Okay.

The Chair: Yeah. I couldn't perceive Mill Woods being part of . . .

Ms Carr: No. That's right. That's federal. And I don't think, if you asked the average Sherwood Park resident, Strathcona county resident, that is a good thing or a positive thing at all. Strathcona county: their vision, their attitude, their awareness, their whole vision is urban-rural. If you add a very urban area, a densely populated area, you're mixing messages to that municipality, and your MLA is going to have more challenges and more different, very different history, culture, topography even.

Most of Strathcona county is knob and kettle terrain; hence the bioreserve that we have, Beaver Hills, made sense to them, and they put their thoughts, their planning, and their money into things that make sense to them. If you base it on a municipal boundary where possible, and that's not – if you go into Edmonton, obviously that's a different municipality – then you're asking the councillors on the Edmonton city council to think outside their box, and our councillors in our urban-rural municipality are now going to have to think outside their box. I say that is a serious and negative mixed message to the MLA, which he then has to take through to the Legislature.

Darn good question, Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you very much, Ms Carr, for your presentation, for your most winsome and coherent presentation. You're excused, but please stay in the gallery if you can to hear, I

think, one more presentation.

Mr. Neil Singh.

The Chair: Please proceed.

Mr. Singh: Yes. I live in the Leader of the Opposition's riding in Edmonton-Mill Woods, and I totally agree with what she said, but my presentation is not really about any single riding, but it's about some of the names of the ridings in Edmonton.

The Chair: Okay. Good.

Mr. Clark: This is helpful.

The Chair: This is the part of our job we keep forgetting.

Mr. Singh: I find some of the names in Edmonton boring compared to our Calgary neighbours. Edmonton-South West, Edmonton-South: I think they're too similar. Edmonton-North West also doesn't say much. Geographywise, there's a problem with – I'll give an example of the riding of Edmonton-South West. You have a portion that is Windermere, which is in the southwest portion. Then you have areas like Glastonbury, that are totally west. So how does the name Edmonton-South West make sense to that? And for the residents how does it make sense when you live in, like, Granville or Glastonbury, in that area, and your riding is called Edmonton-South West?

One of the things I like is having some of the ridings named after our Premiers. Like, Edmonton-Manning is a great example. Calgary-Klein. I know that Laurence Decore was not a Premier, but he was a very influential Leader of the Opposition in our province. I think a riding should be named after Premier Getty. I think maybe either Edmonton-South or Edmonton-South West should be named after Premier Getty, because I believe his old riding, Edmonton-Whitemud, before there was development in all those areas, was probably relatively in that area. So I feel like we should have our ridings in Edmonton named after individuals.

Edmonton-North West: its name should be changed. There should be some kind of community like maybe Hudson or Oxford or maybe called the Palisades. I believe those communities are sometimes called the Palisades by developers.

My presentation wasn't long. It was just mainly to – I feel like the names are a bit confusing. I mean, Edmonton-South is a very generic name. I mean, if you do not want to name it after a person, you could call it, like, Heritage Valley, Edmonton-Heritage Valley, because all those communities are called the Heritage Valley area.

Mrs. Samson: I think you're on the right track, because what the names are meant to do is to tie the area specifically for clarity for the people who live there. So if you lived in Edmonton-South or Edmonton-South West and you were new to the region, how would you know, really, which one it was? I think the challenge for us, because we don't, like, I don't live here in Edmonton, would be: what would be a better name? I know I don't want to put you on the spot right now, but if you think of or if within your community of friends someone thinks of names that would be meaningful for those areas, that would be very helpful, I think.

Mr. Singh: I think for Edmonton-South, you could call it Edmonton-Heritage Valley. I mean, a lot of those communities are in, like, the Heritage Valley area. Edmonton-South West: I mean, Windermere, if you called it Edmonton-Windermere, that can kind of offends the west portion – right? – of the riding. So I would

honestly say maybe you should name that one, like, Edmonton-Getty.

Mr. Clark: Sorry. What's your recommendation for Edmonton-South? You said Heritage Valley?

Mr. Singh: Heritage Valley. Yeah.

The Chair: Your point about, if I can paraphrase you, the boring nature of the names is well taken. As I recall reading the last report, there was some controversy about naming electoral districts after politicians either living or passed away, so I think we'd have to go back and look at that. There is some controversy about naming. I don't think the 2017 commission recommended any names of individuals. They just limited it to what was already there.

Mr. Singh: But, I mean, we already have them named after individuals, so what are we going to do, get rid of Calgary-Klein, get rid of Edmonton-Manning, change the names?

The Chair: Well, we weren't thinking of that. What do you think of Edmonton-Gray?

Mr. Singh: Yeah. Absolutely. Well, I'm in favour of the last presenter. I want to keep Edmonton-Mill Woods. It's an iconic place in Edmonton.

The Chair: Okay, so we won't name that Edmonton-Gray, then. We'll keep it Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mr. Singh: No. Anything else. Maybe Edmonton-Gold Bar could be named that. I'm not sure.

The Chair: But, no, your point is well made, and there is some conversation surrounding that issue, but your Heritage Valley and Windermere: we'll certainly look at those. We'll look at the Getty issue as the name, but we haven't had that discussion, quite frankly, but my recollection of the last commission report was . . .

Mr. Singh: I would strongly recommend that one, because he was . . .

The Chair: For Edmonton-South West?

Mr. Singh: Yeah, for Edmonton-South West or even Edmonton-South.

The Chair: Well, there are going to be two southwests, probably two.

Mr. Singh: Yeah. I mean, he was a Premier from our city, right? That's why I would strongly recommend that.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Singh. Aaron, one more?

Mr. Roth: Yeah.

The Chair: Okay. And she's here?

Mr. Roth: Yeah.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms Fedor? Yeah, please come forward. Were you on the list already, or are you . . .

3:40

Ms Fedor: No, I'm kind of an addition.

The Chair: Okay. Come on in. Good. Could you spell your last name for us?

Ms Fedor: F-e-d-o-r.

The Chair: Cynthia. Okay.

Ms Fedor: Thank you for taking an addition. I came to listen today, thinking I wasn't really sure if I was going to speak. I'm not a public speaker, so if you're kind of patient with me today. I really appreciate a lot that's been shared today, so I'll try not to repeat. Because of that, I thought I was sure. A lot of key themes here today. I just wanted to share that I agree with that new seats should be added to reflect the reality of current population growth.

Oh, I should introduce where I'm from. I am a Edmonton-South resident. I thought what I also should share would be that I had a family farm in Leduc county, so right on the border of Edmonton-South or roughly Ipiihkoohkanipiahtsi, the municipal boundary with the county of Leduc, so I kind of can relate to being in both courts there.

I'm a firm believer that municipalities should be kept intact and not be broken up into multiple ridings. I'm really sorry to forget her name, but I think that what she shared about municipalities not being broken up into – because each have their own unique needs and having MLAs represent those needs accordingly. These communities have things in common. Again, I just feel that economic and geographic commonalities should be respected.

I had a chance to read the past Electoral Boundaries Commission report, and I tend to agree. I found that there were some common themes between municipal councils as well as the addition of school districts and transportation corridors. I just wanted to agree with that.

Something I just wanted to – the gentleman that spoke about the hospital in Edmonton-West Henday: in 2017, in addition, the NDP government under Rachel Notley did approve a new hospital. It was at Ellerslie Road and 127th Street. It was to be opened, actually, in 2026, next year, but it was scaled back in 2019 under the Kenney government, and it was cancelled last year, in 2024. If you are from Calgary, that's sort of the history. It was a large property.

I don't know if I have anything else here.

In regard to the county of Leduc, as well, it may not seem like a huge amount populationwise. I had a chance to look up their strategic plan and their 2024 population. If, let's say, you did combine it with Edmonton-South for any reason or even Beaumont – the county of Leduc population is 14,416, for example. They have 800 businesses. If you ever did seem to combine parts of Edmonton, it would be a huge undertaking for an MLA.

Again, that's just my objection to trying to combine. That's basically what I'm here to say. If you have any questions, please feel free.

The Chair: Well, Ms Fedor, you don't have to apologize. Anybody who has read the last report and municipal town plan, you have come very prepared. Thank you for your presentation. It's obvious that you take this very seriously and it's an important issue for you. Thanks for volunteering at the end, for coming forward.

Any questions?

Mrs. Samson: How do you feel about Heritage Valley?

Ms Fedor: The name?

Mrs. Samson: Yeah.

Ms Fedor: I feel it's not a serious name. To tell you the truth, it sounds like a ski resort to me.

Mrs. Samson: Do you have a suggestion?

Ms Fedor: I would take some time to think about it.

Mrs. Samson: You can get a hold of us. You can get back to us on that. That's an on-the-spot question.

The Chair: You'd get a lot of tourists if people think it's a tourist destination.

Ms Fedor: Well, we have a Heritage Valley. We have the community league as well. It might be something to think about.

Mrs. Samson: It has to resonate with you. Particularly, if you're a resident, you're the best to test the idea out on.

Ms Fedor: It's not a criticism. Actually, sorry; that came right off the top of my head. I think that it needs to be something that we're – elections are very serious, and it has to be a name that we can easily look up and find and something that is memorable, not associated perhaps with something else, not a committee to meet. You know, elections to me are very serious. That's what I have to share.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

Ms Fedor: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Oh, there might be some more questions now. No?

Mr. Clark: No. I mean, aside from a word of thanks. We appreciate you doing this.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

That, then, completes our list. A full day. Thank you very much, those of you who are still here and can hear me, for expressing your interest and coming forward and giving excellent presentations. In many ways you're not making our job easier, but that's still our job, and we gained a lot of insight and have benefited from all the presentations today. Thank you very much.

We are reconvening this evening here. Do we have any spots available, or do we have a full slate?

Mr. Roth: I just filled the last one.

The Chair: Oh, okay.

If you can't find anything good on television tonight, please come and watch this evening's presentation.

[The hearing adjourned at 3:47 p.m.]



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

Edmonton

Monday, June 2, 2025
6:33 p.m.

Transcript No. 5

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission

Justice Dallas K. Miller, Chair

Greg Clark

John D. Evans, KC

Julian Martin

Susan Samson

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Christina Steenberg

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Clerk

Clerk Assistant and Executive Director of
Parliamentary Services

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Managing Editor of *Alberta Hansard*

Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Edmonton

Public Participants

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Jodi Calahoo Stonehouse, MLA, Edmonton-Rutherford
Harpreet Grewal
Robert Jarman
Leigh Makarewicz
Lloyd Osler
Bob Paterson
Rakhi Pancholi, MLA, Edmonton-Whitemud
Stephen Raitz
Karen Stix
Elizabeth Strange

6:33 p.m.

Monday, June 2, 2025

[Justice Miller in the chair]

The Chair: Well, good evening, everyone, and welcome to this evening's Electoral Boundaries Commission meeting.

My name is Justice Dallas Miller. I am the chairman of the commission, and I also serve as a justice of the Court of King's Bench in southern Alberta. Before you tonight we don't have a full commission. John Evans is unavoidably absent. He will be joining us for tomorrow morning's session, which will be at the Edmonton Inn on the other side of town.

Our commission consists of, in addition to our absent John Evans, Susan Samson, a long-time resident of Sylvan Lake, an experienced municipal councillor and former mayor of Sylvan Lake. She was named citizen of the year several years ago of Sylvan Lake and also received the Queen Elizabeth II medal for volunteer service back in 2012. Susan is a very dedicated volunteer in the Sylvan Lake area, especially in the area focusing on public health care.

To my immediate right is Dr. Julian Martin, a retired professor from the University of Alberta. By the way, you can see all the full bios on the website, so I'm just being very cryptic or brief in the introduction. Julian has volunteered on many committees in the Sherwood Park area and served on provincial tribunals such as the Surface Rights Board and the Land Compensation Board.

At the end of the table is Greg Clark, an entrepreneur and consultant and someone that is involved in the information and knowledge management areas. Greg has served one term as a member of the Legislature of Alberta, representing Calgary-Elbow, where he resides. Greg is also recipient of the Queen Elizabeth platinum jubilee medal and serves as chair of the Balancing Pool. Greg holds an MBA and an institute of corporate directors certificate as well.

We are your Electoral Boundaries Commission. We are looking forward to this evening. We served all day today, heard a lot of really good submissions and presentations, and we've learned a lot about Edmonton so far, especially those of us who are not from the capital region. Julian probably didn't learn as much today as the rest of us did, but it was a very good, long day.

A couple of pointers. Can you please silence your cellphones, you know, turn them off, just silence them for this evening? If you have a written submission that you want us to keep, just provide it to Aaron Roth here, who is standing up. He's the clerk of our committee and he helps the trains run on time, so to speak, for us.

Before I open it up for presentations, I want to take a moment and just remind you that we are an independent commission, established by the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, and we have a couple of tasks this year in our job as Electoral Boundaries Commission. First of all, we have been instructed through the legislation to provide boundaries for 89 electoral districts, not 87. The province is enlarging the Legislative Assembly from 87 members to 89.

In terms of giving you some background for our timeline, the committee was announced and appointed in late March, and once we're appointed, we're on a bit of a timeline, a legislative timeline. We met a couple of times throughout April, as a commission of five members, with staff from Elections Alberta and the Legislative Assembly Office, and starting last week through to the end of June we're meeting across the province and hearing submissions. For the rest of the week we have one more day in Edmonton tomorrow, and then we go to Westlock and St. Paul. So we try to cover as much of the province as we can.

We will end our public hearings at the end of June. We will deliberate, and then we are tasked with providing a report to the Speaker of the Legislature no later than October 28. That report has been termed an "interim report" and will be released to the public. There will be an opportunity for public response and input to that interim report, and we will conduct further public hearings based on that report. The dates are not clear yet but probably late November throughout December and January and February. Then we must submit a final report to the Speaker of the Legislature by late March 2026.

When we do our report, we're guided by several factors. As I said, we're going to be moving from 87 districts to 89, and population is also a big factor. Population changes have taken place in Alberta, and that's not new to anyone in this room, I'm sure. But to give you some perspective, the population estimated back in the 2017 Electoral Boundaries Commission report was just over 4 million people. In fact, it was 4,082,609 people in Alberta, and that's population, not voters. The formula that was used by the last commission, of course, was that population divided by 87; it left a target or a median amount of population for each electoral district of 46,697, with a target range ranging from those figures that you see on the slide, from 35,000 approximately to 58,000. That was 2017, and again that was based on just over 4 million people.

6:40

If you look at the numbers we're using for this commission, we are using a figure of 4.88 million people. If we take 89 electoral districts and divide the population by that number, the mean number is 54,929, with a range, as you can see, from just over 41,000 to as high as almost 69,000 for the targeted range. Of course, that population isn't distributed evenly across the province, so we have to deal with how we're going to apportion the ridings based on that population increase.

The task of our commission is not to carve the province up into 89 perfect districts with the exact same number, but we are to provide electoral boundaries that provide what's come to be known in the Canadian parlance as effective representation. When we do that, we consider several factors: first, the relative density and sparsity of population in the region; common community interests and organizations, and we've heard a lot about that in Edmonton today; geographic features, which is a factor in the cities, but it's also a factor in the country, more of a factor in the rural areas. Communication lines and transportation lines across the province are also factors. These are all factors mentioned in the legislation. We're also mandated and required to come up with understandable and clear boundaries – that can be a challenge at times, we're learning – and there's a catch-all provision in the legislation that provides for other appropriate factors that we glean either from public hearings or from the data and submissions that we have gained over the course of our hearings.

Now at this stage is the time that we want to hear from you as participants who have signed up for the presentations. We do have maps, if you want to refer to maps, anybody who's presenting. I can't control that. They don't let the chairman of the commission in charge of that sensitive data. Somebody else will have to bring those maps up.

Given those comments we've got a fairly full list tonight. Not all the presenters are here, but I believe the first two presenters are here. Elizabeth Strange? In the communication that you've received from the commission, you probably were told that we are limiting presentations to seven minutes with about three minutes of question and answer.

Ms Strange: Yes.

The Chair: You can be assured that we're not strictly enforcing that timeline, so we're not going to cut you off right at the seven-minute mark.

Please start. Tell us your name and what riding or constituency you're from.

Ms Strange: My name is Elizabeth Strange. I currently live in the Edmonton-Glenora riding, but I was born and raised in Medicine Hat, so part of my presentation is going to be about Medicine Hat, getting a little bit of a preview for your future appearance in Medicine Hat.

Just by way of background, I currently work as a lawyer. I have a bachelor of arts in human rights and gender studies with minors in anthropology and sociology, a bachelor of law, and a master of law. After my university degrees I moved back to Medicine Hat as an adult to work in refugee resettlement for two years.

I'm going to touch on three themes. One is the number of seats, which I know you cannot change that it's 89, but I'd like the record to reflect my interest in there being more seats; seat distribution; and seat boundaries, specifically about Medicine Hat.

Addressing the number of seats: while, again, I recognize this body can't add additional seats, it's an important issue that should be addressed. Bill 31 in 2024 increased the seat count from 87 to 89. The last seat count increase was in 2012, from 83 to 87. Since 2012 the Alberta population has increased by 1 million. One million more Albertans but only two more seats. From 1986 to 2012, when the seat count went from 83 to 87, the population increased by 1.5 million. When you distribute that out into Albertans per MLA, the new seat count will have approximately 56,000 Albertans per MLA. In 2012 that was 44,500. In 1986 it was 28,000 Albertans per MLA. So we have many Albertans who are being underrepresented or unrepresented simply because of the number of MLAs. In future legislation there needs to be an increase in seats to reflect the population growth.

Now, turning to seat distribution, new seats must be added where population has grown. The statistics show that that is in south Edmonton and north Calgary. I'd also like to say that people vote, not land, so while I'm sure that in many of the rural areas you'll hear that the seats are too large geographically, the reality is that that is the way that rural Alberta is, and it's important to ensure that the seat distribution reflects where people live, not where there is land.

While I have the utmost respect for the MLAs who represent the rural ridings and the difficult challenges that they face with a riding that spans four, five hours from border to border, we also must recognize that MLAs 100 years ago represented large rural areas. The Peace River riding is essentially the same as it's been since Alberta was created, but now we have the benefit of modern technology to allow the MLAs to better represent those rural areas. I would like to see the commission not be pressured to make the rural ones smaller simply because it's inconvenient for an MLA to do that travel work. We need to ensure that the MLAs are representing the people.

Now, finally, turning to my hometown of Medicine Hat, in the last seat redraw Medicine Hat got the short end of the stick in many, many ways. As you can see in the map, Medicine Hat is divided by the South Saskatchewan River. The last commission redrew the line dividing what was an urban Medicine Hat riding and then a rural Cypress-Medicine Hat riding into two urban-rural ridings. The boundary is not the river, though. The current boundary is three blocks south of the river and then this weird triangle. The map I've provided for you is from the city of Medicine Hat and shows you

the neighbourhoods. The current line divides some of the neighbourhoods. The downtown and Herald neighbourhoods are divided in half.

I volunteered in the last two elections, and the number of voters who were confused why they'd always voted in the Cypress-Medicine Hat riding and now they're part of Brooks-Medicine Hat or they were part of Medicine Hat and now they're part of Cypress-Medicine Hat, just the confusion. I would like to see Medicine Hat stuck together as one urban riding again. Given the number you provided at the start, the population of Medicine Hat is approximately 63,000, so it's in range for the entirety of the urban centre to be one riding.

If the commission needs to divide Medicine Hat, I would propose that it simply be by the river. That is a very clear geographical landmark in the city. Medicine Hat does the north-south, east-west on addresses way better than Edmonton does. If you're north of the river, your address is a north address. If you're south of the river, your address is a south address.

If you have to get a little bit of, like, fiddling to get some neighbourhoods to add up to the right number, I would recommend River Ridge and Riverside being with the south side riding. River Ridge is essentially a retirement community. It doesn't have a huge population; I think it's approximately 700. And Riverside is one of the oldest neighbourhoods in the city, oldest alongside downtown, Herald, and River Flats, so historically it makes sense for Riverside to be with the south side. Also, there is a thick line on the map that divides Riverside from northwest Crescent Heights. That is a very steep hill that is, again, geographically significant in the city.

I don't think I have anything else to say.

The Chair: Did you do any checking of the population in River Ridge and Riverside?

Ms Strange: Yes. River Ridge, from the statistics I could find, has a population of 476 – it's very small – and Riverside is 1,950, so if you did north of the river, it would be a total of 16,570 in the city. Obviously, you've got Redcliff nearby and, depending on how far the riding goes, you end up including Suffield, potentially Brooks. South of the river, just the neighbourhoods that are in Medicine Hat south of the river, is 46,430. If you were to do south of the river plus River Ridge and Riverside, the riding would be 48,856.

6:50

The Chair: Okay. So you're suggesting the municipal boundaries of the city of Medicine Hat be one constituency. Get rid of Brooks and get rid of the Cypress part and let . . .

Ms Strange: Let that be a rural riding that encompasses those areas.

I should also note – sorry – the areas of the city that have the most growth are the south side, so the areas that are noted as future development: it's mostly the south side. I'm sure when you get down to Medicine Hat, they'll tell you the joke about Burnside. It's been flagged for development for 100 years, and it can't actually be developed as residential, so all of the development is going to be on the south side. The south side will continue to grow whereas the north side has very limited growth potential.

The Chair: Okay.

Any questions?

Dr. Martin: I'm curious about the what you might call a sister town that's immediately on your flank, namely Redcliff. Now, what in your mind distinguishes that sufficiently that it should be excluded from your scenario?

Ms Strange: One is, obviously, the municipal boundaries. People know if they live in Medicine Hat or if they live in Redcliff. I can tell you, by way of background, I used to be the curator of the Redcliff Museum, and it is culturally significantly different. The fact that I was a Hatter that was the curator of the Redcliff Museum was not the most positively received. Redcliff has definitely got a distinct culture, a distinct history.

I think the other thing is simply that, looking at the numbers of what these ridings are going to be, the city of Medicine Hat is kind of perfectly in range to just be a riding. We don't need to mess around with adding Redcliff, don't need to mess around with adding Veinerville, which is right nearby as well, or Dunmore. Let's just leave the city as the city.

The Chair: Greg?

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much. I appreciate it. You've preempted my question by asking if we needed to put something together. I guess I don't really understand Cypress county, and that's part of the feedback that we've received from some of the written submissions, sort of what logically belongs with other places. I've got a list of a couple of other spots here, Redcliff being one of them, you know, some of those other more outlying areas.

Maybe I'll just ask a general question, then. Why do you feel it's important to have – like, what's distinct about Medicine Hat as a city from its surrounding areas? I mean, a lot of the people who live around the edges or outside of Medicine Hat, even quite a distance away, I imagine would come into Medicine Hat for shopping and maybe work and, you know, recreation or whatever it may be and perhaps vice versa a little bit as well. Maybe you can just speak to why you feel like Medicine Hat as a city or a portion thereof should be its own constituency.

Ms Strange: Okay. Part of it is, like I said, just the ease of having the city boundaries as pre-existing, that people understand. People know if they live in Medicine Hat or they don't live in Medicine Hat. It's something that can clearly be articulated to the voters that they will understand. Being someone that was born and raised in Medicine Hat, I can tell you that there is a distinction between being an urban Hatter versus being from the rural.

There is a degree of an affinity. Like, you go to the hospital if you're from rural. But the people in the rural region: they feel like they're separate. I would say that's more of what it is, that the rural area surrounding Medicine Hat: they feel like they have more of a unique identity that the urban people in Medicine Hat would not understand and don't have the same concerns, interests. There's, obviously, a bleed over of commonality, especially when you're talking about the fact that the nearest big city is three hours away. People are coming into Medicine Hat for those services. But equally, I mean, Medicine Hat is so close to the Saskatchewan border that arguably people that are in Cypress county have way more in common with people across the Saskatchewan border than they do with people within the city limits of Medicine Hat.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

Mrs. Samson: Just a comment. Our data from census Canada for 2024 shows the city of Medicine Hat having a population of 67,909, so almost 68,000, and you know that our number is 55,000 plus or minus a 25 per cent variance. I think that we have been leaning towards, based on past reports, not to be as high as 25 per cent. I guess that's just a red flag. Like, I understand what you're saying, but we do have that one red flag. I don't know if anybody else at the table wants to comment on that with that number.

Ms Strange: That is why I said that if you're going to draw a line, let it be the river or let it be River Ridge and Riverside with the south.

The Chair: Okay. So if we don't recommend the complete city as a riding, are you content with Brooks being part of the north part of the city? That's what I understand it is now – it was as a result of the 2017 commission – and what's below the river or under the river is basically Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Ms Strange: What I would prefer to see is that south of the river, the city limits, that would be the population to get you a riding and then Cypress-Medicine Hat to encompass the north part of the river. Like, what it essentially used to be was that the city was Medicine Hat and then south of highway 1 was Cypress-Medicine Hat, but Cypress-Medicine Hat looped around and included I think as far as Bassano but not as far as Brooks. I think that would be more appropriate because Brooks is, again, its own city. It's not as big, so it has to be in with something, but it's an hour and a half away with a very different culture and very different entities.

The Chair: Yeah. You did highlight the confusion, which I know. I have family in Medicine Hat. They talk about the confusion of the boundaries, for sure.

Julian.

Dr. Martin: Thank you. I wanted to pick up a point you had just made, actually, and I want you to tell me about CFB Suffield.

Ms Strange: Okay.

Dr. Martin: Those people presumably, when they're allowed off base, actually come to the Hat to shop and to play and stuff like that. Do you find that a beneficial relationship with the businesses in town, to have the base there?

Ms Strange: Interesting question. I basically grew up on base. My father was a defence scientist, and I worked on the base for many years. Yes. The people that are on base actually tend to live in Medicine Hat. The Canadian soldiers, if they're stationed there, tend to actually live in Medicine Hat. There's not very much British there anymore, but they do stop in Medicine Hat. There is a beneficial relationship. The Medicine Hat economy is very much based on that military base.

Did I answer your question?

Dr. Martin: Yeah. I think you answered it more fulsomely than I had expected. You know, it raises more questions, really, because if Medicine Hat is an economic engine and magnet, so to speak, for people who are on the base, then we have to consider that as a factor in favour of you having a rural hinterland, as it were. But by the same token, you don't want it with respect to Redcliff?

Ms Strange: Well, the thing is that Redcliff actually has not a huge population, but it's got thousands of people whereas CFB Suffield does not. If you're going to stretch the riding to encompass CFB Suffield and the town of Suffield and the town of Ralston, that would be fine, but you're not really adding that many people into that riding by doing that whereas including Redcliff into the Medicine Hat riding: that is increasing the number quite significantly.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you very much, Ms Strange. Thank you for your loyalty to your hometown.

Ms Strange: Thank you so much.

7:00

The Chair: Karen Stix.

Mrs. Stix: Good evening. My name is Karen Stix. I'm a CPA of some length, and I am a constituency member of Edmonton-South. I also live in Magrath, which is the very northern tip of Edmonton-South. Now, like my predecessor here, I believe in the boundaries as being defined by rivers, major roadways such as the Anthony Henday, ravines because it just seems to draw an appropriate boundary and how the community has been developed.

Now, I do understand that Edmonton-South is possibly up for division or reallocation because it is one of the fastest growing areas in the province. While I have my opportunity, I would like to express that Magrath and Mactaggart belong north of the Anthony Henday based on longevity in the city, based on the community amenities that exist north of the Henday as opposed to south of the Henday. I just think they're a much better mix with either Edmonton-Whitemud or Edmonton-Rutherford.

That's the simple presentation I have. It's not complicated. I just wanted to bring that to your attention. I myself did some – I ran in the last election as a candidate in Edmonton-South. I wasn't the successful candidate, but I myself, when I was door-knocking, noticed the real difference in the communities, so I make that suggestion to you.

The Chair: Just before I open up for questions, I just want to give you the figures that we have. The 2017 report for Edmonton-South relied on a population base of 45,801, almost 46,000. The population that we'll be using for our report is 81,077. So that is a huge – it's another riding pretty well. The regions or areas that you suggest that we take out of Edmonton-South: did you do a verification as to how many people were in those areas?

Mrs. Stix: I have a pretty good sense. I know Magrath – well, no, I don't have specific numbers to share with you.

The Chair: Okay. But those regions are Magrath . . .

Mrs. Stix: And Mactaggart. If you look on the map there, you can see that they jut up above the Anthony Henday.

The Chair: Oh, yeah. Okay. So everything above the Anthony Henday in Edmonton-South.

Mrs. Stix: Yeah. You could easily cut out, and it would fit quite easier with one of the other constituency associations that exist.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Clark: Have you got more? Sorry. I'm being a little cheeky. I guess what I mean is . . .

Mrs. Stix: You want more numbers than that.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. I say that, and I apologize if I came off as flippant. I certainly didn't mean it that way. It's only about . . .

Mrs. Stix: Well, how . . .

Mr. Clark: Sorry. Yes. I've just done a little magic on my machine here. That top left little slice there is about 9,000 people or so.

Mrs. Stix: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Clark: As Justice Miller said, we're quite a ways over. We're aiming for about 5,500, 5,600, somewhere in there.

Mrs. Stix: I can give you another roadway such as Calgary Trail. That's a pretty key roadway. You could take that group of people, the Summerside people, and put them further east.

Mr. Clark: Okay. Is Ellerslie Road sort of a natural boundary south of Henday as well?

Mrs. Stix: It's a soft natural boundary, but yes. I mean, it could be used, but it's not as significant as the Anthony Henday. Those people there do belong in Edmonton-South. I wouldn't necessarily group them up above, but you could if you really wanted to.

You've got Blackmud Creek. They would serve well up above, too. I think that's reasonable, what you're suggesting.

So the Calgary Trail, the Ellerslie Road, noting the Anthony Henday as being another significant boundary. You can see the Whitemud Creek and the ravines as well demarking the areas. There's been significant growth south of the Ellerslie Road. That's also where you're seeing your significant numbers, so that's why I suggest the Calgary Trail as your demarcation as well. That would maybe cut out some of those. And 41st Avenue used to be city boundaries. Now, of course, it's highway 19. There's significant growth past 41st Avenue.

Mainly, I think you've covered it if you try to add up – what are you looking for for numbers? You're looking for about 30,000?

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Well, and then planning for future growth. This is also the challenge.

Mrs. Stix: Maybe 40,000.

Mr. Clark: Again, I used this earlier today, but as a Calgarian one of my favourite Edmontonian quotes is: skate to where the puck is going to be as opposed to where it is. You know, looking at Edmonton-South and Edmonton-South West, there's obviously a lot of growth and has just as much since. We would, if we can, like to accommodate for that as well. Just any thoughts as to what belongs with what is really what we're interested in.

Mrs. Stix: Yeah. I think just really watching for the roadways and the ravines and the rivers. As was previously mentioned, we've covered off on Ellerslie Road. We've covered up on Calgary Trail. We know Magrath and Mactaggart just don't belong. That's my main consideration right now because that's where I live. I'm most concerned about that. Okay.

Mr. Clark: That's helpful.

The Chair: What about the name? We had an interesting discussion this afternoon about the name, and somebody said that Edmonton-South West, Edmonton-South are boring. We need to liven the name up.

Mrs. Stix: Yeah. Well, it's tough because if you call it Edmonton-South, that sort of encompasses the whole thing. I haven't given that any significant thought. What have you come up with for some ideas?

The Chair: Somebody suggested Edmonton-Heritage Valley for the south.

Mrs. Stix: Oh, Heritage Valley for the south. Okay. Well, that, then, is one of the neighbourhoods, so it's a little bit unfair that way. But you could maybe take a couple of the neighbourhoods and hyphenate it, something like that. I don't have great ideas on that.

The Chair: Okay.

Mrs. Stix: Thank you.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much. Please stay for the rest because sometimes we have time at the end that we like to have a fulsome conversation.

Jerry Gill. No?

Bob Paterson.

Mr. Paterson: Yeah.

The Chair: Please have a seat.

Mr. Paterson: Hi. My name is Bob Paterson, and I am a volunteer and board member with the Edmonton-McClung UCP Constituency Association. I've been on that board for three or four years. I hold a number of positions.

I want to thank the electoral board commission for this opportunity, and I wanted to give a shout-out. I've spent a career in media statistics and presentations, and I just wanted to give kudos to the team that built that website because it is a very, very useful tool for people just like us. I am referring to the numbers almost directly out of that website when I'm presenting these numbers to you and after consultation with your administrator to confirm how we are using the population numbers and how we're arriving at that.

This is a pretty simple exercise, and we're here to address one of the main concerns that you've already addressed here two or three times, the rapid growth of the city of Edmonton to Edmonton-South and Edmonton-South West. Edmonton-McClung is positioned, for the most part, on the northern tip of Edmonton-South and Edmonton-South West, and our two key, main boundaries are the Edmonton Whitemud freeway, and to our north we have a couple of pieces of just immediately north of Edmonton-Whitemud.

7:10

There's a map there that will benefit you for the existing riding constituency, and that number of 49,227 is directly off the AEBC website, and it's consistent with how we're extrapolating the StatsCan numbers. That number is about 10 per cent below the target ratio posted of 55,000 per riding, so this is a very simple exercise of dealing with a very mature part of the city; that is, Edmonton-McClung. We're a very mature neighbourhood, and we are looking to add some of the more mature neighbourhoods out of Edmonton-South and Edmonton-South West. I've listed those communities there with the exact numbers.

Our recommendation is to, for the most part, take almost directly out of Edmonton-South and Edmonton-South West with a goal of getting to approximately 63,000 for Edmonton-McClung. That would include us moving the small neighbourhood of West Meadowlark, which is in the northeastern tip of our current riding map. Our recommendation is to move that to Edmonton-Riverview. Edmonton-Riverview's current number is around 50,000, so if we put 3,500 into Edmonton-Riverview, it gets close to the average of 55,000.

Edmonton-South is at 81,000. Edmonton-South West is at 76,000. Our proposal is to take about 17,000 all told out of there.

The Chair: Combined?

Mr. Paterson: Combined. Yeah.

I've given you a spreadsheet of how we've broken those numbers down, and if you look at the new proposed map, it's pretty simple. We're using the – my esteemed colleague before was talking about the transportation boundary of the Anthony Henday and the Whitemud. The Anthony Handy: two communities that touch on the south side are Jamieson Place and Cameron Heights. Both those

communities are now quite mature, and they fall within Edmonton-South West. Our recommendation is that we move them into Edmonton-McClung because all the shopping facilities are there, the community rinks, the school zones, et cetera, et cetera. The same for Glastonbury and Granville, which are on the new west side of the map that I've drawn.

This, essentially, is, like, a small, centre-driven riding. Take from the south, take a little bit from the southwest, bump us up to around 63,000. I realize that that's about 15 per cent over the median average, but considering how the city is going to grow, this isn't about the next electoral map. What does this look like three elections from now, right? Yeah, we would be slightly above the 55,000 threshold, but our recommendation is that it's all tightly in one spot. Easy for an MLA to effectively represent that community, all the members in that community, all of the suggested new communities. We all use the same facilities, we shop in the same place, we go to the same schools, we use the same recreation facilities. It's pretty simple.

Mrs. Samson: Nicely laid out. I appreciate the diagram. It's pretty clear.

Mr. Paterson: Yeah.

The Chair: Yeah. Especially for us Edmontonians.

Mr. Paterson: I realize that this is a municipal issue and is not to be of concern for this committee necessarily, but that red X, that big red X area, is what we refer to as West Meadowlark. There's about 3,300 people in that community, and they're all dealing with the same thing, which is the extension of the LRT to west Edmonton. People immediately east of that community are dealing with that, so everyone in Edmonton-Riverview is dealing with the issue of extension of the LRT to west Edmonton. I believe that if we moved that West Meadowlark community, it would have – even though it is a municipal issue, there's provincial funding, there's federal funding for that, and it ends up on an MLA's plate and will for the next several years. If you've ever tried to drive by there with the current LRT construction, it's a nightmare.

That's our proposal.

The Chair: Okay. Any questions from the commission? Yeah. Julian.

Dr. Martin: Thank you very much. Excellent to see a proposal laid out with options and the like, and having done this you will appreciate the kind of difficulties the commission goes through with every scenario that comes before us.

I had a couple of specific questions for you because in some of your options, you talk about bringing in or not bringing in Patricia Heights, Rio Terrace.

Mr. Paterson: I apologize. I realize that Patricia Heights is on the outer edge of my map, and I didn't do a very good job of including that inside of my map.

Dr. Martin: I read the footnote. It's okay.

Mr. Paterson: Our recommendation would be to bring in Patricia Heights specifically because the school zones between Patricia Heights and Westmount and Wolf Willow, the kids go back and forth for school there.

Dr. Martin: Sure they do.

But that brings me to my second question, which is that there's no road across the ravine . . .

Mr. Paterson: That's correct.

Dr. Martin: . . . so you've got to go out on Whitemud and then scoot back in again.

You're comfortable with that scenario vis-à-vis this, you know, but your district is heavily impacted by the Whitemud freeway.

Mr. Paterson: It is.

Dr. Martin: Yet you are comfortable to take in Aldergrove and so on and the Misericordia out there in east Meadowlark and the like. Do you see a commonality with those neighbourhoods north of the freeway?

Mr. Paterson: That's a fair question. We were looking at this as sort of the boundary of using 178th Street, which is on the east side of West Edmonton Mall. I should state that I've lived in this riding for 35 years. I'm right in the heart of this riding, and I've been dealing with all of the relative construction that's happened for the last 35 years.

This was logistically about making the math work for the commission, to make this easy for you. Technically, looking at this: yeah, it would make sense to jettison Belmead, Aldergrove to the north, and possibly pick up stuff from the south, but immediately this would be a minor change to those ridings, to those constituents west of 178th Street or on the west side of West Edmonton Mall. We go north and south there. It's part of our life. Someone who lives in that area, for example, they would be going to Callingwood Shopping Centre, the rec centre, you know, and possibly even the Oscar Romero high school that's right there. Those people on the north side of the Whitemud freeway still use that community infrastructure that's on 178th Street in the Callingwood area.

Dr. Martin: If I may, I'd just like to follow on. You suggest Jamieson Place and Wedgewood Heights and also Cameron Heights. Now, that's a sticky one because just like Rio Terrace, Cameron Heights can only be accessed from outside your riding. So, I mean, I get it. There's a certain community of interest for the people who live there because you're overlooking the river. It's all lovely, so what's the difference? But the only roadway is the Henday.

Mr. Paterson: Well, yeah, but whether you go north or whether you go south or whether you go west, you know, there's more affinity because there's as many people coming out of Cameron Heights using the shopping area of Hawkstone, which is on Lessard Road, right? It's so easy to get out of Cameron Heights to Hawkstone. It would be less than a 10-minute drive.

Dr. Martin: Okay. That's an excellent answer.

7:20

Mr. Paterson: I didn't list all of those types of things inside of this presentation because I figured we would probably speak to the logistical aspects of why, and there's also a fairly significant professional building inside of that Hawkstone community centre as well. Like, there are dentists and doctors and massage therapists, et cetera, et cetera, that would be used not only by Cameron Heights and, obviously, Jamieson Place but Glastonbury and Granville as well on the west side of the Henday.

Dr. Martin: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Anything else?

Mr. Clark: Just, I guess – and, again, thank you so much for going to the trouble of doing all the data and details. It really is helpful.

I'm curious. I mean, 63,000 is quite a bit over, as you say, and with growth it may sort of normalize over time. But if we needed to aim just a little lower, if we were to say: let's just reduce that number by, say, 3,000 to 5000, give or take, where . . .

Mr. Paterson: We could keep Patricia Heights where it is currently, and now that number would be 61,000, which is closer to 60,000 than not.

Mr. Clark: Sorry. Just so I'm following along, Patricia Heights is currently . . .

Mr. Paterson: It's currently on the northeast edge of my map, that I didn't do a very good job of including because the current boundary goes almost directly through it. It's a small community. If we left it where it was, we would be down to 61,000.

Mr. Clark: And that's currently Edmonton-Riverview.

Mr. Paterson: Correct.

Mr. Clark: And, again, I'm also interested partly in the mathematics or the arithmetic of it but also just kind of the neighbourhoods that sort of belong together, you know, partly what Dr. Martin said.

Mr. Paterson: Well, I should mention that I have a couple of volunteers off our board that are here with me as well, our CA president Margaret Vernick and my colleague Danny Heikkinen. We literally had a calculator out, and we were adding, and then we put this into a spreadsheet and said: okay; what do we think makes sense for Edmonton-McClung 10, 15, 20 years out? Knowing that, we know that the average quotient is 55,000. That's your target range. But you're already 45 per cent over in Edmonton-South West and you're 50 per cent over in Edmonton-South, so to whittle those down, you're going to have to take some significant numbers out. This calculation should help you with that.

Dr. Martin: I mean, I take it that the last commission faced the problem up there of, believe it or not, not having enough people in Edmonton-South West. Now we're faced with the consequence of time affecting this. You know, it seems intuitively right that all the stuff in the lower part of Lessard Road would come back into your riding.

Mr. Paterson: I didn't want to talk history because what happened before didn't really matter.

Dr. Martin: I'm a historian, so I'm not sure . . .

The Chair: Don't get him started.

Mr. Paterson: I didn't go back in time, but in 2010 Cameron Heights and Jamieson Place were part of this riding.

Dr. Martin: Well, yeah. I think it was just taken to make the numbers work, and now we're in a situation where we can re-examine that decision.

Mr. Paterson: And here I am helping you make the numbers work.

Dr. Martin: That's right.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

Mr. Paterson: Thank you for your time.

Mr. Clark: We appreciate it.

The Chair: And thank you for the visual aid. You don't know how valuable that is after we hear our . . .

Mr. Paterson: Well, just kudos to the team because I stole these maps directly – I'm not sure if I should be saying this, but I plagiarized your website and used your data.

Mr. Clark: That's what it's for.

The Chair: Thank you. We will pass on your commendation to those who designed the website. None of us here had any role in that, so don't . . .

Mr. Paterson: Thank you for your time.

The Chair: Thank you.

Jodi. It's not your last name; it's the handwriting of Mr. Roth that I'm having trouble with. Please introduce yourself.

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: Good evening. I'm Jodi Calahoo Stonehouse. I'm the MLA for Edmonton-Rutherford.

The Chair: Welcome.

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: Lovely to meet all of you. You've got some work on your hands for the next little while, so thank you for taking this on.

Edmonton-Rutherford: you know, as I was listening, I was thinking that I would be willing to surrender the name because Rutherford actually isn't in my constituency. They're in Edmonton-South West. So you could just take my name, and we could go with one of the lovely Indigenous names in my constituency such as Sweet Grass or Blue Quill. I would like to brag. I think I have the loveliest constituency. In fact, I think I have the most postsecondary degrees in all of Alberta in my constituency. And our boundaries are a little less. I think we're about a few numbers less than most. Gateway, Anthony Henday, the creek is one of the natural boundaries, so you can see there's lovely, older neighbourhoods in my community, in my constituency.

I'm not opposed to us growing because that's part of life; things shift and change. In fact, I'm quite pleased to see that we're going to be doing some shifting. This is important. I would urge the commission to keep the rural and urban spaces distinct, as we have found infrastructure needs and transportation needs are very different.

For me, though, if I can bring a message, one of the most problematic situations that I've overcome while travelling across Alberta is, for example, in Maskwacis, the First Nation there, they have four different polls that those communities go to. And so, when we think about the truth and reconciliation calls to action and we think about democracy as something we want to invite people to, we know that on First Nations 90 per cent is the unemployment rate, which means people don't have a lot of income. So to do such subtle things like go voting means you're going to call someone more than likely: can you give me a ride; can I catch a ride; are you going to town? If that community is divided by four places to vote, that puts a lot of people who don't have access to actual voting.

So I would urge this commission to look closely at also the Métis settlements and the First Nations, that we are keeping them together is, more often than not, the needs of those communities will be better represented and reflected with one representative in the Legislature rather than being divided.

That's really all I wanted to bring to you today. My constituency is older, the infrastructure is older, but we're a smaller constituency so I'm okay with growing. Although I do door-knock, just to give you a heads-up; don't make it too big. Thank you for your work. If you have any questions, happy to answer.

The Chair: Could you just identify that other constituency that you . . .

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: So Maskwacis gets divided into . . .

The Chair: And where . . .

Dr. Martin: South.

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: Wetaskiwin, and Drayton Valley is also part of it. Alexis Nakota Sioux First Nation is also divided into three different areas. We're talking about a really small community that gets divided into three voting spaces, which makes it, you know, complex for families and daughters and sons, when you all are intermarried and live in the same community. So I would urge you to really look at that critically, please.

Mr. Clark: I just got Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin up here, and it looks like it goes all the way south of Leduc, south of Strathcona county, not quite to Camrose, and it has Ermineskin Nation, Montana, Louis Bull, all that is all part of it. Then over in Pigeon Lake, also that's included.

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: Yeah.

Mr. Clark: So that's the Pigeon Lake, Ma-Me-O Beach area. Those are the groups that I see that are on my map as Indigenous communities. Are there others you feel we should add to that? I just want to make sure I understand where the break is, and they're voting in different places.

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: Alexis as well. Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation. I believe they're divided into Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, and then Sturgeon and maybe Drayton Valley.

Dr. Martin: Yeah. I think that's right. They're mostly in the Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland riding.

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: But it's a very small community.

Dr. Martin: Yeah.

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: And so that means dividing people up in a community.

Dr. Martin: If I may, I think this is a really interesting theme. You know, the commission is heading east for the back end of this week. We're going to, I hope, meet a lot of people out of the Métis settlements on the eastern flank of the province, because this is an important thing to understand.

I mean, this is a very interesting logistical point. How do you get to a poll station? Do we have a mobile poll? You know, those kinds of questions might interest Elections Alberta as much as – because they could actually do something about it. But maybe we need to make recommendations around those sorts of things.

7:30

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: I would implore you to do so, please.

Dr. Martin: Yeah. Thank you for that.

I wanted to just say, in defense of history, that Rutherford was the first Premier.

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: I know.

Dr. Martin: So I can see why they decided to give him a name.

Mr. Clark: It doesn't have to be that same spot, though.

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: Yes. But there's also Rutherford below me, which is confusing for both.

Dr. Martin: Some developer did that.

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: Yes. I didn't do it.
Thank you. I appreciate it very much.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you for coming.

Aaron, there's some demon in your computer that makes the print so small.

Yadvinder Bhardwaj? No. Okay.

Nicole Hughes?

Mr. Break? Oh, that's our break time. Okay. Our break is to be at 8 o'clock, so we're a little early. Is there someone – maybe we can move somebody up.

Robert Jarman? He's scheduled to come at 8:20.

Stephen Raitz?

Charlayne Bozak? Okay.

Anybody else here scheduled to present? We can hear you before the break.

Well, maybe we'll break. Okay. We'll be back at 7:50.

[The hearing adjourned from 7:32 p.m. to 8:02 p.m.]

The Chair: Okay. Good evening again. We're just returning after our break. I understand we have a scheduled presenter that just arrived.

Ms Charlayne Bozak, you're scheduled to present at 8:40, but we're prepared to have you heard now. You may have seen some requirements that you're restricted to a seven-minute presentation.

Ms Bozak: I have less than that.

The Chair: We'll be flexible and let you go longer.

Ms Bozak: Hello.

The Chair: Good evening.

Ms Bozak: Good evening. My name is Charlayne Bozak, and I have been a resident in the riding of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood for nearly 10 years. The riding in which I live is a diverse area that supports people from many cultural, socioeconomic, and ethnic backgrounds. Our neighbourhoods are tree lined; what some people might call a mature neighbourhood. The communities within the Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood riding share resources and celebrations. From the Kaleido and Deep Freeze Festival in and around Alberta Avenue, the Highlandia Festival in Highlands, the dog park in Eastwood, to pub nights in Parkdale, we celebrate the arts and culture of our friends and neighbours, and you will find many of us at various communities. In supporting tax clinics, cooking and art classes, and other social events, we overlap and supplement each other in many ways.

When searching for a new home in 2016, my husband and I specifically selected the area because we love the trees, value the commitment to community, and want to contribute to the revitalization of a vibrant area. While suburban areas offer newer

homes and other amenities, mature neighbourhoods and ridings like ours have their own personalities.

With this in mind, I encourage the commission to maintain ridings like Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood and other mature neighbourhoods as they currently exist. Our populations remain relatively stable, and we share commonality in our municipal, provincial, and federal funding needs, and we have demographic and geographic similarities.

Additionally, as a long-time resident of the city of Edmonton I understand our city is growing and a new riding is needed to support the growing communities in the southern part of our city. I encourage the commission to continue the tradition of respecting municipal boundaries when creating a new riding for our city or any municipality. Our city limits may be inching ever closer to our surrounding neighbourhoods, like Leduc, Nisku, St. Albert, and Sherwood Park, but every municipality has a unique set of needs that is best addressed as a whole or shared with like neighbours in size, agricultural, industrial, or commercial demographics.

Keeping Edmonton's and Calgary's ridings within their municipal boundaries respects the unique requirements of our city and also, importantly, of its neighbours like Leduc-Beaumont and Drayton Valley-Devon. Recognizing and respecting municipal boundaries allows our cities and towns to be empowered to negotiate in the best interests of their residents as it ensures our areas have representation specific to our needs.

I thank the commission for its time and efforts in this important democratic process. Your hard work and dedication ensure all Albertans have fair and equitable representation. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have for me.

The Chair: Thank you very much.
Susan?

Mrs. Samson: No. I'm good. Thanks.

The Chair: I have a question before I forget it. So I just wanted to jump in. I appreciate your description of your electoral district. The Blue Chair isn't in your riding, is it?

Ms Bozak: It's in Riverdale. I think it's a little further south than us.

The Chair: The way you described, it reminds me of that, and I'm not from Edmonton.

When you describe it as a mature riding – I'm looking at the population statistics. In 2017's Electoral Boundaries Commission the population was 43,850 – yeah; so those are right there – but it's jumped almost over 11,000. So in a mature riding – first of all, do those numbers make sense to you?

Ms Bozak: They do and they don't. We do have some infill. Part of the revitalization of our area is that there are infill projects that are being encouraged in the neighbourhood.

The Chair: Like fourplexes?

Ms Bozak: We see mostly duplexes, but there are some fourplexes. It depends on the area. Like, where we are, closer to the stadium, it's mostly duplexes. I think part of it, too, is that a lot of our former residents are aging out and being replaced by larger families. We bought our house from a widower who was single. He had, at one point, a family of four, including himself, his wife, and his two children, and they bought the house from his father. We have one of those little postwar bungalows. We bought it from the son of the original owner.

We're seeing a lot of our older neighbours either passing away or moving to extended care or something like that, and thankfully we are seeing a lot of younger people move into our neighbourhood, younger families, or double-income-no-kids people, like me and my husband, that are taking over those houses. I think 11,000 might be a little much.

The Chair: It seems a little high.

Ms Bozak: Yeah. You know, we see a lot of flux. We are close to and part of the more diverse communities of, like, Boyle Street and McCauley. We're adjacent to them. I hesitate to use the word "transient," but there is a bit of a transient population as far as rentals go, that come and go. So I think there is kind of an ebb and flow to the population in our area.

When I speak to mature, it's, like, the age of our houses are average, between Victorian era and postwar era, some mid-century modern houses, and things like that. Generally, you know, if you sit at the top of the stadium and you look over our neighbourhood, you don't see roofs; you see the tops of trees. So there is that mature aspect to it.

The Chair: It's a good word picture. Thank you.
Julian?

Dr. Martin: Oh, thank you. I just wanted to say that I really like the Parkdale curling club.

Ms Bozak: Yeah. It's a beautiful neighbourhood.

Dr. Martin: Yeah. So it's precisely that that makes me want to hear more about the different neighbourhoods because, obviously, the whole area south of the Kinnaird ravine – I think that's what it's called, right? – and the old downtown Boyle-McCauley area is very, very different than what we see on the east side of Wayne Gretzky Drive, on the one hand, and in the northeastern part of the riding. I mean, all of, you know, those areas, the northeast part is sort of classic old Edmonton; lots of small bungalows and the like. Do you see a lot of infill and reno going on there?

8:10

Ms Bozak: We're seeing more of it, for sure. It depends on the area. Like, if you get closer to Ada Boulevard and closer to the island, there's less duplexing and more splitting of larger lots into two skinny homes. If you're in our area, we typically see duplexes. Sometimes we see the odd duplex with a legal basement suite being as, like, a possibility but not necessarily at the fourplex.

We are starting to see – and I find this quite interesting – a lot of the older houses being torn down to build larger single-family dwellings, like more modern, as opposed to a duplex. I think it's because it's one of the last affordable, walkable, beautiful neighbourhoods in the city. Like, the average price of a single-family home is still around \$250,000 to \$300,000.

I think we're also seeing that the younger generation, the zennials, millennials, they want more walkability, they want more community, so we're seeing an influx of – like, my metric is kind of: when we first moved into the neighbourhood 10 years ago, we saw a lot of average cars like my car. I have a Ford Escape. And now we're starting to see more high-end vehicles. We're seeing Land Rovers, we're seeing Mercedes, and things like that. People want to be closer to the core. They don't necessarily want to be out in the suburbs, so I think there's a greater interest in our community. Also, the festivals draw people, and Alberta Ave is known particularly for its community league, and that draws a lot of people as well.

Dr. Martin: I have a follow-up question.

Ms Bozak: Yes.

Dr. Martin: There's a very large pod of underdeveloped land next to the, you know, exhibition centre, where the old Northlands race track area was. There were lots of little bungalows in there – I bought one of my favourite trucks from a guy in there – and now it's gone. The whole neighbourhood right there is gone. Do you hear any conversation about development, residential development, on that chunk of land?

Ms Bozak: I think the city's first priority is the Coliseum and that old site. To your note, my dad was born and raised in Beverly when it was still its own town. The history of the area is definitely more single-family housing. We do have some apartments. If you get north of 118th Ave closer to the Yellowhead, you'll see more walk-up and more multifamily dwelling development there. Where we live on the south side of 118 Ave, like, we're a few blocks from the stadium. It's still primarily single-family dwellings. When houses used to sell, we'd see them sell and then we'd see for-rent signs go up quite quickly afterwards, and now we're seeing the opposite. They'll sell, and we're seeing more owner-occupied properties.

Part of the reason we bought the house in the area was because there is a very strong sense of community there. The revitalization planned by the city and by the communities involved was specifically intended to not avoid gentrification but try to mitigate it and keep the community accessible to everyone that currently lives within it. That was a draw for us as well. I think that's part of the reason why a lot of younger families are drawn to the area now, because that sense of community and inclusiveness is very important to the younger generations.

I think it's beautiful, because it's kind of a circle; the older people are aging out of their homes and these younger families are coming in and creating not a new but a new and improved area.

We're in Parkdale. We're right on the line between Alberta Ave and Parkdale and Eastwood. The sense of community is – like, we love our neighbourhood more and more every day that we're there. It just grows and grows stronger and stronger and stronger, and a lot of that has to do with – like, we belong to Parkdale, but we volunteer at the low-income tax clinic at Alberta Avenue. Sometimes you'll see people from the Highlands Community League volunteering in other areas. It's very reciprocal and very much a shared – like, I think, in a rough or cerebral sense, we know our boundaries. We stray outside of them, obviously. Uncle Ed's is on the other side of the street, and they make really good perogies.

I think that because of the hardships that the community went through over the last 25, 30 years, it really wanted a lot of people, and it instilled in them that need to build a strong, sustainable community. You need to make sure that everybody is included in the decision-making process that are within our borders, from the most vulnerable to the most affluent. We see people from Ada Boulevard, you know, donating things. I can't remember the family that owns Northline Construction. They donated their mansion to Concordia University for historic reasons. That kind of community exists within the whole community, regardless of your socioeconomic background. Yeah.

Mr. Clark: I'll just add that Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood is almost exactly on average, which is not to say that it is an average constituency by any other measure. But numerically it tracks almost exactly the average.

Ms Bozak: Yeah.

Mr. Clark: We always struggle with where to start drawing these maps. But, you know, what I'm hearing and just looking and observing the lines, it certainly appears to have some fairly natural boundaries north and south, in particular, but even east and west and kind of communitywise.

Ms Bozak: Yeah.

Mr. Clark: Okay. That's helpful. Thank you.

Ms Bozak: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: The message you want us to hear is: don't touch your boundaries.

Ms Bozak: Yeah.

The Chair: The population is in the right zone.

Ms Bozak: Yes.

The Chair: And even if it weren't, don't touch your boundaries.

Ms Bozak: I mean, if we were to see suddenly more of our houses going from, you know, single-owner-occupied, retiree-occupied to, like, four people or whatever and we were suddenly at the peak of the postwar era, where it was the veterans coming home with their wives and their newborn kids and every house has, like, a husband and wife – or two partners, I should say – and their 2.5 children and we doubled in size, absolutely, then it's time to take a look at that. But I'd say that between now and maybe the next election or the next need for a boundary expansion, there's really no need to consider that. Yeah.

The Chair: Yeah. Thank you very much for your presentation.

Ms Bozak: Thank you for your time.

The Chair: We appreciate it.
Next presenter. Robert Jarman.

Mr. Jarman: That would be me.

The Chair: Okay. Mr. Jarman, just have a seat.

Mr. Jarman: Whenever my time commences.

The Chair: It can commence now. We have probably told you that you're limited to seven minutes, but we're somewhat flexible, and we'll let you go further if need be. Introduce yourself, tell us what constituency you're from, and go ahead.

Mr. Jarman: Edmonton-South, which I believe that Aaron here is getting on the screen, which I might point to with my dad's laser pointer for cats from time to time. I'm just shy of 25 years old. I graduated from J. Percy Page high school and went to MacEwan University and University of Alberta for about a year. Any other details required for the introduction?

The Chair: No, that's fine. Please proceed.

Mr. Jarman: On this map here you can see that there is a part of the riding that's north of the freeway. That would be quite irritating for anyone who has limited access to transportation other than cars to get across, especially given that – I'm in the demographic that, while I personally have regular access to motor vehicles, a lot of

people don't. My younger sister is actually ineligible to get one even though she's old enough, so that's a bit of a problem.

8:20

Also, having parts of a riding or a campaign that need to go over a road like this, like a river that most of the bridges are freeways like this, (a) that can back up really badly due to traffic or to construction or both, obviously. I imagine that Commissioner Clark here remembers the pain that happens when you try to campaign across these sorts of things in the way that volunteers have to go across them at weird hours of the day. I was personally campaigning for the NDP in my riding in Edmonton-South West in 2023, and I often had to go across the Henday. I don't know where any of you live in order to be familiar with the Henday here, but where I personally live, the most obvious way to get on that freeway is the right in, right out, so I can't go west on that road without a big detour that can be quite subjected to congestion. During campaign season, where every day can count in a short period of a month, that's not ideal to have.

As well, I was asked by some other volunteers working with the NDP 10 days ago maybe – yeah; that sounds about right – to point out that it's not a good thing to break up communities that might have ties to national origin or ethnicity or age, senior citizens, younger citizens, people who go to the same school. If possible, these sorts of links that people already have built in the social network that people get via these communities of interest can be the basis of campaigning or coming up with ideas, petitions for whatever may be relevant.

That Citizen Initiative Act: I read the thing last week, all of it. It mentions that there are some requirements to take these sorts of things across the individual ridings, getting a certain fraction in certain ridings, two-thirds of ridings. Having the ability to have these networks in the riding that's not broken up is really useful for people to be able to use these sorts of rights that they may have.

I think that Commissioner Miller has a question.

The Chair: No, no. Well, yeah, I probably do, but I don't want to interrupt you.

Mr. Jarman: Oh, okay.

What else was I going to say? Oh, the city of Edmonton as well as other cities, St. Albert in particular, are getting aggressive on this. I guess that "negotiations" is not the right word. They want to increase transportation availability and safety for people who are using nonmotorized means like bicycles, their own two feet. So looking at which roads here have safe means to get parallel with them and on them is useful.

Oh, one other thing that I just remembered I was going to mention is that when you put a riding boundary on a big road like this, on one side of the road you'll have probably signs or candidates from one riding, and on the opposite side, probably when you're going down the same road the other way when you're getting back home or wherever a few hours later, you're probably seeing a different candidate of either of the same party. The colours, the party, and the symbols probably help, but it can be a bit confusing for some people, especially those who don't particularly pay attention to politics too much.

Maybe try to go for rivers or the biggest roads that no one can put a sign next to, anywhere like the Henday or other freeways. Maybe Fox Drive, for instance, in Edmonton or Shaganappi Trail in Calgary perhaps. Yeah.

I believe that's seven minutes or something like that.

The Chair: Okay. Let me stop you there. Just remain at the seat.
Any questions, Mr. Clark?

Mr. Clark: I hesitate to pre-empt your potential question, but one of the discussion points has been naming. Edmonton-South is specific but also very general. Any thoughts on, if we were to come up with a different name for Edmonton-South, what might make some sense?

Mr. Jarman: Edmonton-Blackmud might be a good name for this riding. Alternatively, Blackmud-Whitemud might be an option given it's easier to disambiguate these areas. This is pretty much the only riding where it would be obvious that those two ravines interact with each other.

Alternatively, Edmonton-Heritage Valley might be another option or Heritage Valley. [laughter] Oh, you . . .

The Chair: Somebody else suggested that earlier today, so that's why I laughed.

Mr. Jarman: Okay. Sure.

The Chair: That may have some potential.

Mr. Jarman: Edmonton-South Henday might be another option, but that could be confused with Edmonton-Ellerslie. Edmonton-Ellerslie is an annoying term given that that's the riding I live in, and the one immediately to the west also has Ellerslie Road in it, so that might be named to not conflict too much if you can avoid it.

Maybe Edmonton-Airport possibly, but that's a bit of a stretch.

Does that answer that question, Mr. Clark?

Mr. Clark: It does. Thank you.

The Chair: Julian, any questions?

Dr. Martin: No. I just wanted to say that I agree with you about the whole area that's north of the Henday. I don't know for a fact, but it sure looks to me like that was done in order to make up the numbers. It's hard to conceive of it, but 10 years ago Edmonton-South was too small, and it's just a function of what has changed and changed so fast. I can't speak for my other commissioners, but that area north of the Henday has got to be a target puzzle for us to solve. I appreciate your remarks about the transportation awkwardnesses that it generates.

I also was interested in your remarks about transportation corridors more generally. Do you feel that south of the Henday there are adequate transportation corridors for people who are on foot?

Mr. Jarman: On this map here that area on Ellerslie Road is to the west of where that right in, right out comes in on the freeway over to the bus barn over there, the eco station as well. That does not actually have a shared use path or similar kinds of paths, so if you want to go that way on pedal or foot, you're walking on the left side of the road where, like, you would in Three Hills, where my mother did as a kid, which she can tell you is not a good idea.

Dr. Martin: Can I push you even further and say: how would you get to the east part of this current riding on foot?

Mr. Jarman: Across QE II?

Dr. Martin: Yeah.

Mr. Jarman: There are some concrete walks that do go that way. My father has tried cycling from our house in Blackmud Creek at the time to the area by that Costco on – what? – 91st Street; close enough to be accurate for this. There are some ways to get that way, but he was a confident guy of, at the time, like 45. It's not something

that you would probably do if you were to volunteer for a party at maybe, like, 15.

Dr. Martin: So, really, the only way to get here is on Ellerslie Road, right? Yeah. Okay. Thanks.

Mr. Jarman: Yeah, basically. The only other way that you can really do that would be to go way onto 41st Avenue.

Dr. Martin: Yeah, and you have to take the overpass.

Mr. Jarman: Yeah.

Dr. Martin: I did that this morning, so I know that. Thank you.

Mr. Jarman: Also, something with these transportation links: I realized that in the Traffic Safety Act regulations apparently it's not illegal to have your doors open on a minivan while you're driving. That was actually quite a useful way to put signs out.

8:30

Mr. Clark: Safety first.

Mr. Jarman: However, I did that at times of day, like 6 a.m. It was May back then, so light out at that hour, so I wouldn't have any traffic issues, and usually on the collector roads, which are usually not busy anyway.

Also, I remember you and the committee commented about the last time that this district was zoned, like in 2017. It was a bit too small. I definitely remember being about 16 years old at that time, and I remember that this area where Heritage Valley is: that was where my parents parked their camping trailer around where that Real Canadian Superstore is now, at 41st Avenue.

Anything else?

Mrs. Samson: I just wanted to say, Robert, I really enjoyed your comments on transportation and how that affects the average person living in that riding. You brought up points I hadn't considered, so thank you for that.

Mr. Jarman: Yeah. I've actually been to the Netherlands, where I've personally ridden around Amsterdam central station at 1 a.m., and it was perfectly safe, and I don't just mean from robberies, also the traffic. I've had quite a geeky interest in this sort of thing for the last 12 years by now, almost. Even once spoke in front of the city council at another hearing in a similar way, wearing my bike helmet at the time.

Mrs. Samson: Good on you. Thank you.

The Chair: Well, Robert, thank you very much. I did have some questions, but my colleagues asked them before I could, and you've answered them. Thank you very much.

Mr. Jarman: All right.

The Chair: Please remain for the rest of the presentations. Thanks for coming.

Mr. Jarman: All right. Thank you.

Ms Grewal: Excuse me. Before you start, this is just regarding Edmonton-South, so I don't interrupt you. That particular area, where it's empty right now: there's so much construction happening just between 127th and 141st, where there is a site for a hospital that the city has been planning, well, the province has been

planning, but it hasn't happened yet. There's an LRT coming down to that area as well. I expect it to get even more dense than it is right now.

The Chair: Like right here?

Ms Grewal: Yes. There's construction happening. Roads are being built. It's crazy, because I live right there.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Okay, sir. Please introduce yourself.

Mr. Raitz: Yes. My name is Stephen Raitz. I'm a resident of Edmonton. I live closer to the core. I'm also an urban planner, and I'm an articling student just about to become a lawyer. The reason I wanted to join today is back in 2019 to 2020 I was part of the city of Edmonton's ward boundary commission, so I thought it'd be helpful to share some of the lessons learned from that regarding Edmonton and also provide a couple of suggestions moving forward. The big points I'd want to make are just the lessons learned around balancing population growth and then the two broader suggestions around a clear line of communications between local to provincial jurisdictions and also finding ways to respect exurban or rural representation.

For my first point around lessons learned, and this is I think common across all ward boundary commissions: you're striving to find ways to balance areas of really high growth with more stable growth. This is something we really try to do because if you have a pocket that's only high growth where you created an electoral district, by the end of the 10 years or so you have MLAs representing thousands more people than other MLAs, so it's an access to governance and engagement and democracy sort of issue that you can nip in the bud by trying to balance that high growth with stable growth. That was something we really strove to do by kind of making almost like swimming pool lane districts or wards locally, balancing older parts of the city with newer parts of the city, so that's the lesson learned.

The two latter points I have are related to the change in the legislation that the government introduced, kind of taking away the restriction on you folks from creating districts that reach from inside the city of Edmonton to outside of the city of Edmonton. I'm not here to quibble with that legislative change. I think it's a recognition that the government respects the commission's discretion and your decision-making abilities. I would just suggest that, if you are going to investigate making electoral districts from inside of Edmonton to outside of Edmonton, that you really put thoughtful consideration into that first. The two sort of considerations that I'd posit for you folks today are those clear lines of communication and then also respecting rural or exurban representation.

For that first one I think that's a really common one that will come up, that if you have districts that stretch across fewer municipalities or stick within one municipality, it's easier for residents, voters, MLAs to understand what each other are talking about because they're all kind of located within one jurisdiction. There's that broader jurisdictional reason to strive for this kind of coherence. You know, prime examples provincially of jurisdiction are, like, schools and hospitals, so, especially in cities, the schools and the hospitals you're going to are the ones within your community, your city and not necessarily outside of them. It's just easier for MLAs, I think, when they have a voter or resident coming in the door, to know if that residence is within their electoral district. They know where that concern is coming from more clearly, and in a time of limited attention spans, constant news, and also, like, weak

understanding of jurisdiction overall, you know, that coherence that comes from provincial boundaries respecting local boundaries is something that shouldn't be frittered away too easily.

For my last point just around protecting rural or exurban representation, making districts that are going to stretch from those really explosively growing suburban communities on the edge of Edmonton or Calgary's boundaries and balancing those really explosive areas with more stable growth that's occurring in rural areas is going to erode rural voices over time. This goes back to my first point around how you want to balance those stable with high growth to ensure that over the 10 years you have less of that variance across electoral districts. The issue with doing that across the city boundary is that, you know, at the start of the process, you might have 25,000 residents within the city boundary and 25,000 residents within the rural areas, but by the end of the 10 years, just based on how demographic and migratory patterns are working right now, you're going to have a district that might have 50,000 within the city and 30,000 within the rural area, so it erodes the rural representation over time.

I can think even personally of my experience growing up in Leduc. Like, the kids who grew up in the county, like got bused in from farms and acreages to go to school with me, having grown up in the city, went to schools in Leduc. They didn't go to schools in Edmonton. So I think it's easier to balance that rural area with some of the smaller suburban communities around because that's where you have those communities of interest.

And to bring the law into this just at the last minute, that's really what the big takeaway from the Supreme Court case regarding this within Canada is, that referenced Saskatchewan electoral boundaries decisions from the early '90s. It's not trying to strive for perfectly equal ridings with equal numbers of people. It's to start with the focus on communities of interest, those local boundaries, focus on that geography, and then try to strive for population balance over time, trying to balance high and stable growth.

I think there are good examples that you folks can look to federally. Edmonton Gateway and Edmonton Riverbend are, I think, really good examples of balancing that more stable part of the city with the higher growth of the city but not extended beyond the city. Locally, and this is kind of shouting out our commission's work, Ipiihkoohkanipiaohsi or Karhiio are more examples, or Nakota Isga on the west end of the city. I'm missing south end examples, but the west end Nakota Isga is another good example of stretch from the core of the city out and you'll have, I think, better balance over time.

Just two final notes to plug. I really encourage the commission to be really transparent with its data and its reasoning. I think recent reports did that well, and the city's report did that, too, so that's just good from an accountability perspective and lessons learned for next time.

I'll just wrap up by concluding and thanking the staff for helping facilitate this event and also thanking you folks for your work. I kind of did it at a local level, and I know it's a lot of work for you folks, but I appreciate the public service that you're doing.

I'll open it up to any questions that you have.

The Chair: Thank you for your presentation, and it's good to know that you know what we're going through on a smaller scale.

Mr. Raitz: Yeah. All the power to you.

8:40

The Chair: Quick question. How many wards in Edmonton?

Mr. Raitz: How many wards? I think it's 20 – like, within municipal?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Raitz: There are 12.

The Chair: Twelve. Okay.

Mr. Raitz: So it's not a good, like – there's 20 to 25 provincially, but even, you know, in that, it's an almost even, like, doubling of the wards, where you have twice as many provincial than you do municipal, so looking into splitting some of those in some ways might be good.

The Chair: Julian?

Dr. Martin: Yeah. I was going to say I'm envious of only having 12 plots this time.

Mr. Raitz: Yeah. You guys got 89.

Dr. Martin: Yeah, but similar issues.

I wanted to probe you further on the concept which you've deployed, really, about high-growth areas balancing out with stable areas. That's a lovely way to think about some of these areas. I almost said "district," but that's a different concept. In each of your three examples you said the same thing. You said: if you're talking about this topic, then balance stable with high growth. So that seems to work for you and your colleagues in most cases, let's say. Now, what to you constitutes stable growth? Less than 5 per cent over an interval of time? I mean, how do you determine that?

Mr. Raitz: I think it's all kind of relative in a way. Like, the more stable growth – I guess, like, compared with the edges of the city, where it's just completely new communities growing there, the growth might be upwards of 50 to 100 per cent within particular quarter sections or that kind of thing. Like, 1,000 per cent, even, if you're looking at that scale. But, yeah, I think maybe less focused – you probably have the data to see how you might see it evolve – on the metrics and more about, like, the circumstances.

It's those built-out areas of the city that, you know, might not be near transit corridors, like mass transit corridors like the LRT lines, where the city is trying to target additional growth. Those stable areas are going to be the existing built-out areas that aren't along some of those targeted growth corridors that follow transit lines and that kind of thing. The local planning around this, like at the city level, like the city's municipal development plan, will help kind of define to look at that right area of the city where there's less growth overall, because it's not the suburbs, and then you'll be able to kind of cleave off. Okay; if this along a transit line, then the growth is actually going to be probably a bit higher than average there because the city is trying to target growth there, whereas the areas outside of those transit corridors would probably be that stable growth that you're looking to balance into it.

Hopefully, that's clear. I can't give you a number, though. I'm sorry.

Dr. Martin: No, no. That's perfectly fine. Thank you.

The Chair: Greg? Any questions?

Mr. Clark: No. I think that's really helpful. Again, just to echo Dr. Martin, sort of the framing of the fast but slow is a helpful way.

Mr. Raitz: Yeah.

I know you're not asking me a question, but I realized I just should communicate one last point. Like, from an order of operations perspective I think it is really important to start with

communities and geography and then use that mathematical approach of balancing the high and low growth at the end. I think if you focus on the numbers first, then you miss some of those community considerations that you really want to drive this work. I'm glad I communicated the message of "balance high and stable," but start with communities of interest and local boundaries and then work here, and then try to balance it later on. Yeah. Sorry to slip that in at the end, but hopefully, that's clear.

The Chair: No, that's very helpful. Thank you very much.

Mr. Raitz: Awesome. Thank you.

The Chair: Leigh Makarewicz. Good evening. Please have a seat and introduce yourself.

Ms Makarewicz: My name is Leigh Makarewicz. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to be heard this evening. You're going very late this evening. Good for you. Just for a bit of perspective on where my mindset comes from, I'm a born and bred Edmontonian who grew up in Mill Woods. I got married in Mill Woods. We raised our daughter in Mill Woods. She's now a homeowner with her husband in Mill Woods. You sense a theme here.

Over the decades I've served in many volunteer capacities in the area, including the Greenview Parent Advisory Council, the North Millbourne Community League, the Mill Woods Cultural and Recreational Facility Association, and I'm currently the chair of the Jackie Parker park sensory playground community and a senator with the University of Alberta.

I served at the pleasure of the Member of Parliament for Edmonton-Mill Woods from 2015 to 2019, and I'm deeply connected to many of the cultural organizations, not-for-profits, and charities that serve the area. It is my lifelong relationship with this community that brings me here today. I hope that the commission has an opportunity to hear from someone like me from every part of the province, but if not, the principles will translate to other areas, and I would respectfully ask the commission that they make sure to seek out these kinds of community nuances before drawing lines on a map.

In the last federal boundary redistribution a decision was made to cut the northwest portion of Mill Woods off into Edmonton Gateway and away from Edmonton Southeast. This small change has disenfranchised the neighbourhoods of North Millbourne, Leefield, and Lakewood from the remainder of the Mill Woods area. What difference does that make? Well, when it comes to governmental representation, it makes a big difference. The common community interests that make areas unique in Edmonton are based on a number of factors such as individual neighbourhood and community leagues as well as groupings into community league districts and associations such as the South East Edmonton Seniors Association and the Mill Woods Presidents' Council. These groups work to develop relationships with the elected representatives in their area and often struggle to be heard if there is a perceived overlap or gap.

An ill-conceived boundary, as was established in the last federal redistribution, impacts the clarity needed for residents to understand where and how they should access their government. I can tell you from experience that the first question constituency offices ask people reaching out to them is "What is your address?" and most who have reached out to the wrong office are adamant that they should be in the riding because that is where they believe they belong. Most often that sense of belonging comes from a feeling of distinct association with the area that they perceive as

being a part of their neighbourhood based on common needs and services.

South Edmonton is growing by leaps and bounds not only through sprawl development but a dedicated push by the municipality for infill development. Mill Woods was built on a vision of mixed-usage housing being thoroughly integrated within every neighbourhood. We have large amounts of green space that have been identified to fill the need to increase density where services already exist, and that combination is propelling growth. In fact, the growth of south Edmonton has been a major factor in both the municipal redistribution of wards for the 2021 election and the federal redistribution that was in effect for the last election.

The population projections must be top of mind for this commission as they make their recommendations for the two additional electoral districts. We also must be mindful of previous attempts to balance the numeric considerations of population with the geographic realities of the urban centres and rural expanses. In another federal redistribution in 2004 Edmonton-Beaumont was created, completely overlooking the significance of Mill Woods that held the bulk of the population that was to be represented. It was then renamed to include Mill Woods in the name as of 2006, but the diversity of the riding meant nobody in the area was properly represented because of the vast differences and competing interests of Mill Woods, Beaumont, and even a portion of Elk Island. They were solely aligned by overview geography but not language, need, or demographic. These federal examples are ones that brought me out today because this kind of incongruity has even worse outcomes for the citizens of this type of compromise if this type of compromise was ever made on a provincial level.

I hope that I've given you a better community-based understanding of the Mill Woods area today and the focus on relevant considerations I think are needed for requirements for effective representation as per the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act. The work that you will do here will have a lasting impact on Albertans, and they rely on their representation to speak for them.

I thank you again for your time and your consideration. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have to the best of my ability.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mill Woods has got good representation here today.

Ms Makarewicz: It's kind of an ongoing frustration, we'll call it.

The Chair: Okay. Questions. Julian?

8:50

Dr. Martin: No, I don't, other than to reiterate the notion that the sense of belonging, as you nicely put it, is something, a theme we've heard all day, so I think this is particularly strong in Mill Woods as opposed to other places, and I commend you and others in the community for constructing and maintaining that.

Ms Makarewicz: There was a period of time where if Mill Woods had separated from Edmonton, it would have been the third-largest city in the province. Now, that was many years ago. I'm getting a little old. But still that itself, and the province – when a previous government wanted to shut down the Grey Nuns, we had tens of thousands of people coming out to support the need for that kind of growth in Mill Woods, that spirit.

Dr. Martin: I was talking to a gentleman briefly a few weeks back who said: hey, there are more of us Singhs here than in Brampton. Right? So this sense of...

Ms Makarewicz: I think I know every single one of them.

Dr. Martin: ... belonging extends to newer people coming into this area as well as the folks who have been here for 40 years.

Ms Makarewicz: Absolutely. We have ethnic groups that have been around for those 40 years and have just grown and built and have a need for those services and those examples to be a continual part. Like I say, that cut off of North Millbourne and Lee field actually affected our Muslim and our Somali population greatly.

The Chair: Greg?

Mr. Clark: Maybe if you wouldn't mind just reiterating your comments on some of the federal examples, not even specifically Mill Woods. I think you've mentioned Elk Island and some of those. I guess I'm interested in your perspective on: what does that community of interest mean in terms of different parts of...

Ms Makarewicz: I think it's just like...

Mr. Clark: Is it just geography, or is there more to it?

Ms Makarewicz: ... the gentleman was saying before, when you talk about sort of trying to find those percentages, if you do sort of a hub-and-spoke model that takes, you know, a large central, whether it's Edmonton or Calgary or Fort McMurray, and kind of go, "Oh, we'll just kind of jig-jog off of it, and that's how we'll get the numbers to work," it actually does a disservice to both urban and rural. I mean, at the time that it was Mill Woods and Beaumont, that aspect – Beaumont is a French language hub, and Mill Woods is not, and here David Kilgour and Mike Lake were trying to represent those areas in a way that they, you know, had competing interests – right? – and could not be as effective as if they spoke loudly and clearly for one or the other.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

Mrs. Samson: I want to thank you for using and reflecting on the federal boundary changes and how that affects the people on the ground at the provincial level. I think it really drills back home how we have to be so sensitive on so many fronts and, again, to remind us that of all the overlays we look at, population will probably be the last. Like, it might be the first trigger that makes us look at Edmonton-Mill Woods, but it's the last overlay to make sure we got it right.

Ms Makarewicz: It really is.

I mean, serving with the Mill Woods Presidents' Council, and that basically is the council of all of the community leagues of Mill Woods, and that organization has been around, again, for approximately 40 years, working together to speak in unison and then all of a sudden, you know, some get cut off but they're still trying to speak in unison over here – even just the simple things, like you have a small organization that wants to invite their representation. Well, what happens? One representative is like, "Oh, I'm busy; you go instead," and they don't get that fulsome coverage and understanding from their representative when two or three are overlapped in the same area. It makes it easier for them; don't get me wrong.

Mrs. Samson: Yeah.

The Chair: Well, speaking of population, the numbers we're looking at – and we don't have the Mill Woods map up there, but 2017's boundary commission relied on a population of 50,265. This

time around we're relying on a population of 58,725, so it's in that target range, and you're asking, "Look, don't touch our boundaries; leave them where they are," realizing we have to move some borders around.

Ms Makarewicz: Yeah. There's just some jiggy-pokery that needs to be done, for sure. Those outlying areas – I mean, we now talk about Mill Woods and Meadows, right? Ellerslie usually falls, you know, to the south, and that's a bit different. But Mill Woods and Meadows and those newer areas – I consider them to be new, but I also consider anything south of 23rd Avenue to be new. Those newer areas are busting with new growth and development, but in those older areas the infill programs that have come to surplus school sites and these initiatives through the city and also a real promotion of private development.

For example, in North Millbourne we have two surplus school sites bringing an additional 250 homes into the area. Plus now there is a private development that's going to be bringing in a four- to six-storey apartment building, which is going to bring in another 250 to 300 units, never mind people but units, into, I mean, just a neighbourhood community within a one-intersection area, all kitty-corner to each other because we have huge amounts of green space, and then a commercial development. You know, times change. So it's not just the growth out; it's that growth up as well.

The Chair: Contrast is the gateway to clarity, and what you've done is you've shown us: don't make the mistake the city made.

Ms Makarewicz: Please. I'm begging.

The Chair: Thank you.

Lloyd Osler.

Mr. Osler: Good evening. Let me just say thank you for having the opportunity to present to you this evening. For us seniors it's almost past our bedtime, so you know how serious we are about this.

Just listening to the former presenter, we did not co-ordinate our thoughts at all, but there are some similarities.

I'd like to share with you the perspective as a long-time Mill Woods resident. My wife and I moved here in 1981, raised our family in this vibrant community. After selling our home to our children and spending 12 years in a condo elsewhere, we returned to the Knottwood area in 2019, drawn back by the sense of community we'd known and loved.

Today we are part of three generations living here. We have built the first garage suite in the community as part of the infill kinds of things that are happening out there, and we both serve as senior representatives on a community board. I personally have been involved in the community all the years we were there and in many, many nonprofit organizations for political and nonpolitical. So I've really been involved in the community for a long time.

Our story illustrates the deep roots that bind communities together. Let me share a concrete example of how those bonds create positive change. Recently the Knottwood Community League, made up of Ekota, Menisa, and Satoo neighbourhoods, worked diligently to build the Knottwood Community Centre. It wasn't just another building project; it represented the power of united community. Through local board efforts and support from all three levels of government, who genuinely understood our needs, we created a facility that now is booked through the summer of '26 for weddings and events. It has become a model for community leagues across Edmonton.

The significance of that is the whole issue of various diverse groups. Mill Woods is made up of so many different groups. Our home was known as the United Nations when our kids were

growing up because we never knew who, or from what kind of ethnic background, was going to show up at the door, but they were all welcome, and I think that's a community spirit that really stands strong in this particular community.

This success story brings me to the core concerns about the proposed electoral boundary changes. First, population growth demands attention, and we've heard that. New seats should reflect current and projected growth, particularly in the south Edmonton area, Mill Woods, and in the adjacent areas in north of Calgary as well. Recent data shows that Mill Woods maintained consistent representation at about a 7 per cent level in 2017 – I think you were referring to that just a few minutes ago – and remains at 6.9 today, which is within the average growth, I think, throughout the province. So there's not big population blow-up here or elsewhere.

9:00

Second, municipality integrity matters. Cities and towns should remain whole within ridings. Each municipality faces unique challenges requiring dedicated representation. Breaking them apart would lose their voice and effectiveness. The previous speaker mentioned that as well. The issue is that you need, even from the point of view of those that are representing as an MLA – how do you represent a constituency that is so different on this end of it than over here? That doesn't make a lot of sense. There is the issue of: what the kind of general community and needs of the group are and trying to keep those within the context of boundaries. I know you're going to have to move something – we all know that; that's the reality of what we're faced with – but just to keep that in mind.

Third and most critically, we must preserve what are called like communities, and that's what I was referring to, areas sharing culture, economic, and geographic bonds. The recent removal of restrictions on maintaining municipality boundaries raises serious concerns. Expanding urban ridings to include rural areas risks diluting the social, cultural, and historical identity that makes communities like Mill Woods unique and effective, and I think that applies across the province. Again, it's a challenge. You are already having debates.

Considering our community centre project is successful, it relied on representatives who understood our local context, our shared services, our cultural makeup, and our history. Kudos to all levels of government: municipal, provincial, and federal governments. This understanding doesn't happen by chance. It comes from maintaining coherence, community boundaries that represent natural connection. The previous speaker spoke to that as well, but I can't underscore that enough, how important that is. Our community strength lies in a shared identity, its diverse population, and its collective spirit. These aren't just words; they're the foundation of real achievements like our community centre. Arbitrary boundaries changes that ignore these connections risk more than just lines on a map; they risk the very essence of effective community representation.

Finally, the issue of transparency. Never before in our history as a country and as a province has the need of transparency been greater. We live in a time when populist politicians, when not getting the outcome desired, create conspiracies and spread misinformation to undermine our very democratic processes. The committee and its work must be transparent and, to the best of its ability, consider fair and equitable boundary outcomes that leave us with a sense of what is right and fair rather than expedient or, worse yet, gerrymandered. I know that comes up in these kinds of things all the time. I do not envy your task. I do believe that you're going to do the best you possibly can. I just want to make it, you know, clear as a long-term resident of this particular community and

others' ones where we have these kinds of mixes. There are overriding issues that we need to consider, possibly first and foremost.

Thanks very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Osler.
Any questions?

Mrs. Samson: Well, you know, we've got that problem with the population over the baseline of 55,000. What we heard tonight over the span of many speakers is how tight Mill Woods is and geographically, like with the curved roads and the tight community leagues. I really see a challenge here to get that electoral division within a number after we have the other considerations.

Mr. Osler: As I said, I don't envy your challenges, for sure.

Mrs. Samson: Yeah. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Any other questions? Julian?

Dr. Martin: No, sir.

The Chair: Thanks very much. You have placed an exclamation mark on the Mill Woods submissions today, so thank you.

Mr. Osler: Thank you.

The Chair: I believe that leaves us with one more, Rakhi Pancholi. Good evening.

Ms Pancholi: Good evening. Way to put a politician between you and the end of your night. I do know that . . .

The Chair: That's why you're familiar. Sorry.

Ms Pancholi: Yeah. That's all right.

I know it's been a long day for all of you, so I thank you so much for your time and your commitment and your dedication to listening to all the presenters. While I only managed to capture listening to a few of the presenters before me, I'm certain you've had some very passionate, articulate, dedicated people speaking today. Thank you for your work.

It's a little warm in here, too. You guys are staying awake all night. Good for you. Okay. I'm not even a senior, and it's close to my bedtime.

Good evening everyone. My name is Rakhi Pancholi. I'm proud to serve as the MLA for the constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud. I've had the honour of representing the over 45,000 people of Edmonton-Whitemud for six years now. Today I want to present to you three principles that I believe the commission needs to consider as you undertake your important work.

As you know, the provincial government recently passed legislation establishing that two new provincial ridings will be created in Alberta, increasing the number of seats from 87 to 89. This increase doesn't accurately reflect the significant increase in population that Alberta has experienced in the last two years alone, leave alone since the last time the number of ridings has changed. However, given that two new ridings will be created, the first principle that I would like the commission to consider is that these two new constituencies should be added where current and future population growth demands it. That is in south Edmonton and north Calgary.

As the MLA for a riding in south Edmonton I can tell you that there has been a significant population increase in this area of the city in the last five years. I'm sure you've heard a lot about that, and

you have the numbers to prove that as well. Now, if you look at a map of my constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud, you will see that the riding has some natural and man-made boundaries that make it quite discreet. The north and west side of the riding are marked by the North Saskatchewan River valley, the beautiful river valley; the east side is marked by Whitemud Creek; and the south is marked out primarily by Anthony Henday Drive.

Edmonton-Whitemud itself has not actually increased in population, because, quite frankly, there isn't much land for developers to build new housing on in the riding. If you look at within the boundaries, we don't actually have a lot of industrial or commercial land. It's almost all zoned residential, and it's quite dense in it's residential, so 45,000 constituents in a pretty small geographic riding. However, the people of Edmonton-Whitemud have absolutely felt the effects of significant population increase in the areas of south Edmonton all around us.

Three of the 10 Edmonton public schools that have to go to a lottery for enrolment in the 2025-26 school year are in Edmonton-Whitemud. Going to a lottery means that the schools are so over capacity that there isn't enough space for all the students who live in that school's attendance area. It means that families, some of whom could see the school from their front doors, had to wait to see if their child's name was randomly drawn to attend the neighbourhood school. I heard from many of them when their child's name wasn't selected and they now have to bus over an hour to another school. Along with Edmonton-Whitemud, these schools serve students living in neighbouring ridings, like Edmonton-South West or Edmonton-South, where the number of schools has not kept pace with the unbelievable population growth.

Similarly, my constituents have to travel further and wait longer for access to hospital and emergency services as the city grows more and more dense to the south, and there's only one hospital, the Grey Nuns, to serve it. Transportation congestion and challenges, whether by car, public transit, or biking, are also faced by my constituents as more and more Edmontonians in the south of the city are travelling north for work or for school every single day. There is no doubt in my mind that the extraordinary population growth in south Edmonton should be a key consideration when determining where new ridings should be established.

Now, the second principle I'd like the commission to consider when redrawing electoral boundaries is that provincial boundaries should align with municipal boundaries. This is very important for a number of reasons, but I'll focus on just one today. Actually, I'd like to give credit right now to the presenters before me who often spoke very articulately on a number of various reasons about why you want to keep electoral boundaries consistent with the community and understanding of their neighbourhoods.

The communities inside of Edmonton have different needs than smaller communities outside of Edmonton. You heard a little bit of that discussed today. In my role as an MLA I've had the chance to travel to many different parts of the province. I like to say I've knocked doors on more than half of the constituencies in this province. I've been to communities like Leduc, Beaumont, and Wetaskiwin. These communities are beautiful and thriving, but smaller communities have their own needs, challenges, and culture.

As an MLA, I can tell you that the possibility of representing part of the city of Edmonton and also representing a small town or smaller city would be a significant challenge, one which could place my constituents at odds with each other. In particular, infrastructure needs can be very different, and the different municipalities can often be asking the province for two different outcomes on the same issues such as land annexation, infrastructure projects, transportation priorities, et cetera.

It makes more sense to link towns of similar sizes together. I think Beaumont, Leduc, and Devon would find they have more synergies with each other than any of them would have with parts of Edmonton. I think that's also true for Morinville and Gibbons on the north end of the city and Spruce Grove and Stony Plain to the west.

9:10

It's not surprising that when you look at how municipalities across our province have chosen to organize themselves for advocacy purposes, they often choose to do so based on the size of the municipalities that they represent. For example, mid-size cities have often found that they have more in common with each other, regardless of where they're located across the province, than with larger cities like Edmonton and Calgary. Smaller municipalities like Leduc, Beaumont, Spruce Grove, Morinville all deserve to have their own representation in the Legislature, to not have their voices diluted by being grouped together with parts of Edmonton. Communities in Edmonton also deserve to have representation that reflects their day-to-day priorities as part of a major urban municipality.

The third principle that I would like the commission to consider is that communities need to be kept together. What I mean by that is that if there is a neighbourhood that has the same community league or cultural community, that visits the same local temple or gurdwara or church, these communities should be kept intact and not split up across ridings. We just heard some great presentations from many individuals from Mill Woods who spoke specifically about this. I'm asking you as commissioners, when you are creating the new boundary map – I urge you to not just look at hard boundaries like roads and rivers but to also look at the way that people live their lives. What services do they use? Where do they travel to for work? Where do they recreate? Where do they do their community work or volunteering? Or where do they find the support that they need? What community organizations or school boards serve that community?

The work in front of you is no small task. The integrity of our democracy relies on how this map is drawn. Albertans are counting on you, and I thank you for your work and your service on behalf of them. I'd also like to thank all the staff – and I know it's been a long day – as well who are helping out on the commission.

I'd be happy to take any questions. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.
Any questions?

Mrs. Samson: That's a lot of pressure. I'm done.

Ms Pancholi: No pressure. I'm between you and the end of the day.

Mrs. Samson: I'm good. Thank you.

Thank you for taking the time to come out because I know you're busy, too.

The Chair: Yeah.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Do we have an Edmonton-Whitemud map we can put up? I've got it in front of me. Sorry.

Ms Pancholi: Of course.

Mr. Clark: Thank you for that submission. We do appreciate you making time to join us. One of the previous presenters – and as you note, tremendous growth south of Edmonton-Whitemud.

Whitemud itself is quite a stable community. One of the things we've heard just recently is perhaps considering blending some of those or putting together high-growth and more stable-growth areas. You're right. We note that Edmonton-Whitemud is slightly below the averages that Justice Miller said we're targeting, the 54,900. Edmonton-Whitemud is about 50,000. It's trending to not grow quite as quickly as the other areas. In that context, I guess, I just wanted to sound you out on if you had an opinion on sort of additions and subtractions, if you will. One of the ideas is – I should have got this right here. My apologies.

Ms Pancholi: I feel like I want to anticipate what you're going to say, but I'll let you say it first because I have a feeling.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. I just want to make sure I've got this right before I decide. Essentially, let's just go north of Ellerslie Road. Is that what you were thinking I was going to say? There's sort of a big bump up that goes along the ravine, that kind of bites into Edmonton-Whitemud. Is that sort of logically connected or not? Or what are your thoughts?

Ms Pancholi: There certainly was in the last electoral boundary review a portion of Edmonton-Whitemud that was carved out to become part of Edmonton-South. Yeah. The neighbourhoods would be known as Magrath and Mactaggart. Certainly, it feels logical. I would say that those would be areas that would – perhaps if we're looking to reach a number of about 55,000 per riding. I don't know what the exact population number for those two additional areas would be, but they seem to be a more natural fit while also keeping communities together.

As I mentioned, there are a lot of these natural boundaries around Edmonton-Whitemud, so to add further to the west or to the east or to the north, frankly, means that you'd be skipping over into very different geographic parts of the city just simply by where the river valley and the Whitemud Creek go. While I don't want to presuppose where the commission will go in terms of growth, I certainly have anticipated the possibility that those areas in those neighbourhoods used to be part of Edmonton-Whitemud, and . . .

The Chair: You'd be happy to take them back.

Ms Pancholi: Well, they're lovely people. I'd take them all even if they weren't, but they are lovely people.

The Chair: Because you've been, you know, around the province and you're familiar with other consistencies, a constant thing that I'm hearing as a southern representative on the commission is absolutely no to a blended or hybrid riding in the Edmonton region – okay? – but would you acknowledge that in some parts of the province people actually like them or don't mind them, and we have to use them, have to utilize that option?

Ms Pancholi: Oh, well, I'm not going to dispute that it might be challenging as a commission with only two new ridings. I think the challenge is that south Edmonton has grown to such an extent that, frankly, it doesn't require blending with other communities outside of the municipality of Edmonton in order to have appropriate representation. To me, I think that given the population growth particularly in southern Edmonton and when I look at north Calgary, you could create or adapt the boundaries of those ridings to make it more fairly represent population and demographics and communities without having to add in the additional challenge of them bringing in other municipalities.

Certainly, we know there are many constituencies across the province that do have these splits between sort of an urban – I think

of Medicine Hat, the two ridings there. Now, I've spent a fair bit of time in Medicine Hat, and I can tell you I think there is that tension that exists, and it becomes a bit of a battle between the constituents who live in the city proper versus those who are in the outside communities, outside the city communities, who do have very different needs. I'm sure you'll be hearing from lots of them if you haven't already about: some will like it and some won't.

The Chair: Next Friday, in the morning.

Ms Pancholi: I'm sure.

You know, I don't necessarily think it's a bad thing for all of us as representatives to be considering the interests of communities that don't look exactly like ours, but the challenge is always as elected officials that we're there to represent our constituents and their interests. While we don't expect unanimity from them in terms of how they view things, you don't certainly want them to be at odds with each other simply because of where they live. They're going to have different views no matter what – right? – within your constituencies. I'm not saying everybody will agree on everything, but if it's simply because of where they're located and it's, for example, competing for transportation priorities or infrastructure priorities, I certainly don't think it serves good representation to have your elected official having to manage those diverse outcomes.

I do want to mention – several of the other presenters added it, and

I do think it's worth noting. You know, Edmonton and certainly Calgary as well – Calgary is the third-most diverse city in the country; Edmonton is the fourth-most diverse city in the country and in terms of visible minority representation. That makes a difference. I look at my constituency, and 46 per cent of my constituents identify as a visible minority. It's a very different makeup than some of the smaller communities. Not good, not bad; just is – right? – just different. And those interests might serve differently as well.

I think we want to have the most effective representation, especially as we are increasing, potentially, the number of constituents that we're all representing. Let's not build in more opportunities for divergent needs based on location rather than on the needs of the citizens.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you very much for closing out our day today. Thank you.

Ms Pancholi: Wonderful. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Appreciate it.

Thank you, everyone, for your presentations. We're going to adjourn till tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock.

[The hearing adjourned at 9:19 p.m.]



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

Edmonton

Tuesday, June 3, 2025
9:20 a.m.

Transcript No. 6

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission

Justice Dallas K. Miller, Chair

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Julian Martin

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Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Edmonton

Public Participants

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Audrey Johnson-McGillis
Kyle Kasawski, MLA, Sherwood Park
Ben Kroeker
Laura Paquette
Victoria Pearson
David Shepherd, MLA, Edmonton-City Centre
Stephen Smith
Hans Smits
Priya Usman

9:20 a.m.

Tuesday, June 3, 2025

[Justice Miller in the chair]

The Chair: Okay. Good morning, everyone, and welcome to our second day of the Electoral Boundaries Commission hearings in Edmonton.

I usually have a lengthy introduction. I think I'm going to shorten it a little bit because the chairs don't need to hear me and I think the people that are going to be presenting know full well what the process is like, but I do want to introduce our commission. First of all, just to remind you, we are an independent body, independent commission established by the Legislature of Alberta. I'm Justice Dallas Miller. I'm privileged to be the chairman of the commission. I serve in a capacity as a trial judge normally, in my normal day job.

The other commissioners. To my immediate left is Susan Samson, a long-time resident of Sylvan Lake, an experienced municipal politician who has served two terms as mayor. She has been recognized for her extensive volunteer experience by way of receiving a citizen of the year award for Sylvan Lake and is a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II diamond jubilee medal.

Next to Susan is Mr. John Evans, a lawyer with a province-wide practice of litigation with a firm with the name of Stringam. He works predominantly out of their Lethbridge office, and he conducts trials across the province. His legal ability has been recognized by receiving the King's Counsel award, or KC designation, and he volunteers on the Alberta Judicial Nominating Committee as well.

Right next to me to my right is Dr. Julian Martin, a retired history professor from the University of Alberta. Julian volunteers on many committees in the Sherwood Park area, where he lives, and has served on provincial tribunals, the Surface Rights Board and the Land Compensation Board.

At the end of the table: Mr. Greg Clark, an entrepreneur and consultant in the area of information and knowledge management. Greg also is a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II platinum jubilee medal for his volunteer service in the community. Greg has served one term as an MLA representing Calgary-Elbow, so his experience on the commission is very valued. He consults widely with organizations in the area of proper governance.

We are your Electoral Boundaries Commission. For a more fulsome description of everyone's bios you can certainly go to our website and read more about us.

There are a couple of things that have been put on our agenda as an Electoral Boundaries Commission. First of all, the Legislature has passed a law expanding the size of the Legislative Assembly from 87 seats to 89, so that's a task we have to ensure is taken care of, adding two seats. Whether that's enough, we don't know, but we will make some recommendations in that regard.

We have a timeline which we have to follow. First of all, the commission was announced by the Speaker in late March, and the clock starts ticking at that point. That means that we have a certain limited number of months to do what has now been come to be known as an interim report. An interim report must be filed with the Speaker of the Legislature by late October. Before we get there, we met as a commission on a couple of occasions in April, and then we planned out the public hearing schedule, which started last week and will end on June 23. We take all that input, and the guidance of the legislation along with the input leads us to develop the interim report, which we will file with the Speaker in October. It will be public. It'll be printed in the *Alberta Gazette*.

Then that brings us to a second round, and then the public and people, like that are presenting today, will have something substantive to chew on and respond to the commission and give us

feedback in that regard. Then, 12 months after our appointment, we are obligated to file a final report, and then members of the Legislature will deal with that and determine what use that report will be, if it'll be adopted in the 89 ridings as we recommend, or the Legislature is free to make changes.

Of course, each electoral district has one member of the Legislative Assembly. I will often use "electoral district," but "riding" or "constituency" is more vernacular terminology.

The second big component in the task before us, after increasing the seat count from 87 to 89, is dealing with the significant population growth that this province has experienced. If we go back to the 2017 Electoral Boundaries Commission, that commission based its report on a population of just over 4 million people, just slightly over. I'll give you the exact figure in the next slide. Our situation is such that we're relying on the data from the 2021 Canadian census, which is regularly updated. We don't want to use just 2021 numbers, so we're using numbers that have been validated and verified up until July of 2024. The precise number that the EBC from 2017 used was the 4,062,609 population. When that is divided by 87 seats, the mean average is 46,697. The target population range for effective representation is that range that you see in the slide, 35,023 to 58,371.

Now we go to the task before this commission. The population figure that we are using, and I want to make this clear, that 4,888,723 figure, is the figure that's frozen as of July 2024. As I said, the act requires us to look at the most recent census, which is 2021, and the act also gives us flexibility to rely on other Alberta-based data, so we have been advised by the Office of Information and Statistics of the Alberta Treasury Board that a safe number that can be verified as of last July is that figure there. When we do the math, the average is 54,929, and the range, as you can see, varies from 41,000 to almost 69,000. Now, of course, the population growth is not spread evenly across the province, and that's part of our task right now as we go through the public hearing. We're hearing from communities across the province in terms of growth in their areas.

The task of our commission is not to come up with a plan based on a one person, one vote formula. That is an American-based formula. Canada doesn't operate on that. Alberta and other provinces have operated on the principle of effective representation, and effective representation, to a large extent, is determined by the legislative criteria and by the case law going back several years.

The factors that we're going to be considering are the relative population density and sparsity, common community interests and organizations. Yesterday we heard a lot about community organizations, community leagues in Edmonton. It was an eye-opener for us as a commission, that's for sure. We received lots of helpful information from presenters yesterday in that category. To some extent in the cities we're concerned about geographical features, and we could take that into account, but more importantly, that's a factor that operates in the more rural context outside of Edmonton and Calgary. Communication lines and transportation routes are also a factor in the legislation that we can consider. Our task is to make sure that we have understandable and clear boundaries, and that's where you as presenters, I'm sure, will provide us with assistance and input. Finally, there's a catch-all phrase in the legislation that allows us to take into consideration other appropriate factors in coming up with our recommendation.

9:30

We now move to the point in time where we want to hear from you as presenters. That gives you a bit of a thumbnail sketch as to how we got here, how we advertised and publicized the meetings.

Now, today and in the weeks ahead, we want to hear from Albertans.

My understanding is that the first scheduled presenter isn't here, but David Shepherd is here. David, would you come forward? As you probably saw in the material that you were provided with, there is a bit of a time limit on presentations, seven minutes, but I've been known to be flexible in that area and let people go on a little further, especially when we're not banked up with a presenter. Mr. Shepherd, tell us a little bit about yourself and where you are speaking from, what electoral district.

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you very much. Yes, I am David Shepherd, and I have the honour of having served for the last 10 years as the MLA for Edmonton-City Centre. I've been a resident of the constituency since about 2008. No problem with the clock; given my position I'm used to making timed remarks on the floor of the Legislature. I appreciate the opportunity to speak with all of you today and thank you for giving your time for this service on behalf of Albertans.

I'd like to just start out by sharing a little bit about what makes Edmonton-City Centre unique. As you're probably aware, the population of Edmonton-City Centre as of the 2021 census was about 48,685, so above that provincial average that you had noted there. That's in part because our neighbourhoods have a very high level of density, about 10,570 inhabitants per square kilometre. That makes Wihkwêntôwin, my own home neighbourhood, one of the densest neighbourhoods in Edmonton, and the western half of the community is the densest in Alberta.

At the same time we have a very low level of single-family housing, about 98 per cent of our residents living in condos, apartments, towers, or walk-ups. That's a general trend across Edmonton-City Centre. In four of the seven communities in it more than 90 per cent of the residences are condos and apartments. We only have two communities that have more than 50 per cent living in single-family homes. You may hear from rural representatives about the challenges they face with how spread out their communities are; we have a unique challenge for representatives in Edmonton-City Centre in that is very difficult for any prospective candidate where we want you as a representative to contact a lot of the people who live in the constituency simply because you cannot knock on their doors outside of an election period. So it creates a bit of a unique situation.

With the exception of one community we're above the city average for couples with no children, ranging from about 48 per cent to 76 per cent of residents. Since 2017 we've seen significant new residential development. We've got hundreds of new units that have gone up in residential towers in downtown and Wihkwêntôwin, strong growth in multiplex infilling in Queen Mary Park, Spruce Avenue, and Westwood, so we've added a lot of new residents to our constituency. Across our communities we have a strong representation from racialized communities, primarily of African and Asian descent. We have a strong population of seniors, with Wihkwêntôwin being above the city average. We've added a number of seniors' residences. We have a wide representation of incomes ranging from individuals who rely on very limited social support programs to high-end professions.

There's certainly diversity in our communities, but there's also a strong consistency in terms of their needs and their interests. I'd say that our communities share a common interest in safety and vibrancy in our communities; maintaining local access to services and amenities; a strong, vibrant local economy; and ensuring a strong system of public services to ensure we're supporting everyone that's part of our communities. A large number of our residents have also made a deliberate choice to live centrally to

facilitate easier access to services, transit, things like the river valley or our arts district, also to reduce the need to commute. That's why I'm here. I loathe traffic. Affordability and housing is also a big issue for a lot of folks that choose to live in some of the communities that are here.

Given all of that and considering the growth in population and the density, it would be my recommendation that the current boundaries of Edmonton-City Centre be kept intact. I think it's essential when we're looking at adjusting our boundaries that we maintain a map that is fair for all communities. I think that with the growth in our constituency's population over the last eight years, the increasing pace of residential growth in our communities, because it is continuing to grow at a steady rate, already some of the densest in the city, I'd suggest it might not be a good balance to add additional neighbourhoods and residents and further dilute representation.

Similarly, I think the most effective and fair electoral map is one that groups communities of like interests and needs together. As I've noted, the communities within our current boundaries, while we, again, are home to a diversity of residents, hold a lot of interests and needs in common.

We have a hard boundary, I'd suggest, both physically and in terms of our demographics with the river to the south, the Yellowhead to the north, and our current western and eastern boundaries follow the contours of the existing community. I think it's also important that racialized communities who hold common interests in terms of their needs and interests in representation are supported to be able to exercise their vote effectively. The communities currently represented in our boundaries are inclusive of some not insignificant communities, as I noted, of African and Asian descent.

Again, it'd be my strong recommendation that we keep the boundaries of Edmonton-City Centre, in fact, and to facilitate that, I'd make a few suggestions, I guess, regarding your consideration of the boundaries of some of the other constituencies in and around Edmonton. Of course, as we adjust one, there's the ripple effect that affects others.

I do recognize, as you noted, there has been some significant growth in Edmonton's population over the last two years with the most significant growth, as I understand it, in the south of the city. I understand there's some conversation around potentially taking some of those most suburban communities, connecting them with other towns, cities, or communities on the periphery of our city.

Personally, I would argue against that. It's my concern that if we start fracturing our city boundaries, we're not only going to compromise the commonality of interest within those constituencies, creating more work for their representatives and potentially weakening their representation, but that doing so could create a ripple effect that would affect constituencies like Edmonton-City Centre by creating inward pressure in the adjustment of boundaries in the weighting of the population.

Much of the communities in my constituency have more common interests and needs than those outside our core and those in the suburbs. Those communities in turn, I think, have more common interests and needs together than those outside our city boundary. I'd particularly note that because of the current boundaries of my constituency, because they're inclusive of a lot of like communities, it's empowered me to build some very effective relationships with local municipal representatives that's allowed for some very strong advocacy on issues that, frankly, require close collaboration across orders of government, something that's a lot more difficult to achieve if we begin to combine Edmonton communities with those from other municipal jurisdictions.

I think those municipalities around Edmonton have their own needs. They have their challenges. They have their own cultures, their infrastructure needs. In Edmonton they can often be asking the province for two different outcomes on the same issues, things like land annexation, infrastructure projects, et cetera. I think it makes more sense to look at how we can link towns of similar sizes together like Beaumont, Leduc, and Devon, for example, or as we've seen with Spruce Avenue, Spruce apartments, Spruce Grove, and Stony Plain.

In summary, it's my suggestion that I think we could best reflect the significant population growth in Edmonton and serve the needs and interests of effective representation and democracy by keeping Edmonton-City Centre relatively intact to what it is now, and then looking at one of the two new constituencies, creating one here in Edmonton, perhaps, with the growth that's happening.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Shepherd. I'm sure there are going to be some questions from the commission, but I want to clarify something at the outset. I thought I heard you cite some statistics at the beginning. Can you just repeat what you said?

Mr. Shepherd: Certainly. Just in regard to the density?

The Chair: Yeah.

Mr. Shepherd: Certainly. Yeah. The current level of density, at least as of the last census, that we're looking at is about 10,570 inhabitants per square kilometre in the neighbourhood of Wilkhewntown. That's the densest community in Edmonton, and the western half is densest in Alberta.

The Chair: Okay. I thought you'd talked about an increase. What I want to make clear is that according to the data we have, the 2017 commission had a population for this electoral district of 47,715.

Mr. Shepherd: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. Then moving forward, the 2024 figures that I talked about put you at 60,544.

Mr. Shepherd: Okay. Thank you. Those are numbers beyond what I had. So there's significant growth.

The Chair: Yeah. That puts you clearly in the target zone but on the higher end, so I just wanted to make sure you were understanding where we were coming from.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you. I appreciate you sharing that.

The Chair: Okay.

Questions? Greg, any questions?

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Exactly in building on that, you've mentioned the tall towers, and obviously as Justice Miller indicated, we've got you at about, I want to say, 10 per cent over, roughly, of our target of 54,300, give or take. One, what do you anticipate the growth to be? As I look at the graph, it looks like it's grown, you know, reasonably significantly since the last commission. Well, I think, actually, it's interesting. I'm looking at the growth of Edmonton-City Centre, and it, in essence, has been approximately 10 per cent above all the way along. Do you feel like it's about to – are people moving in, are people moving out, or are there a lot of big, empty spaces that are going to become tall towers with hundreds of people in them? How would you characterize the growth?

9:40

Mr. Shepherd: I would characterize that we are expecting to see significant continuing growth. There are a number of new towers that are under construction. There is conversation around further conversion of office towers to residential. There is a significant push, I think, from all stakeholders in the community for more residents in our downtown. That's how we create safety. That's how we're going to create more local economic vibrancy. I know the city of Edmonton as part of their CRL is, I think, looking at how they can incentivize further residential.

I would add to that, you know, we are looking at redevelopment plans in the Rosedale area that may lead to further residents there, and within the neighbourhoods where there is more single-family housing, as I'd noted, we're seeing quite a bit. Especially with the new, more open zoning bylaws in Edmonton a lot of single-family homes are being replaced with, you know, duplexes, fourplexes, eightplexes. So I would say yes, we're on track for, I think, significant continued growth.

Mr. Clark: Okay, so at worst you're likely to see a continuation of roughly the past trend.

Mr. Shepherd: At least.

Mr. Clark: At least. So you're not feeling like it's hollowing out.

Mr. Shepherd: No.

Mr. Clark: It's more likely that you actually would see, if some of the policies you talked about on the municipal level sort of land, a little bit more growth. So should we create a little headroom for that growth within Edmonton-City Centre, or do you feel like it's likely the next seven to 10 years is going to be roughly tracking the past seven?

Mr. Shepherd: I find the constituency as it stands as a local representative is manageable. Certainly, with continued growth, I guess I would ask you to weight that against what you're seeing in other parts. You know, I think if we keep relatively consistent ratios to what we have now, I think that's reasonable. If you wanted to consider, I guess, creating more headroom and sort of shrinking the boundaries, I mean, in the 2017 commission they did add two neighbourhoods, Westwood and Spruce Avenue, sort of on the north end of the constituency. There is the opportunity, I suppose, to connect one of those two neighbourhoods, perhaps Westwood at the northernmost. If you were looking to create that headroom, that might be the opportunity to connect that then perhaps with Edmonton-Glenora or one of the other adjoining, but it's tricky because, again, like I said, we've got the Yellowhead right there. That's a hard boundary on the north.

Mr. Clark: Got it. Thank you.

The Chair: Good. Okay.
Julian.

Dr. Martin: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Shepherd. I'm very interested in your remarks about the housing stock. As you may or may not recall, I am on the board of governors of MacEwan University, so obviously housing for students is a perennial issue. I wanted to ask if you felt that in your riding we are replacing older apartment stock with newer, upgraded stock. There are very little unoccupied building pods except right next to the river, so if you anticipate more growth, as I think you rightly should, how's it going

to happen? The conversion of offices into apartments has been a perennial conversation for a generation. It just doesn't happen.

Mr. Shepherd: It's been slow moving, yeah. What I would suggest is that we still have quite a few surface-level parking lots downtown, and those are, I think, primary locations where we expect to see further expansion of housing. Certainly, we know that just to the east of Rogers Place and moving north from there, from Ice District, there are plans there, and that is within the CRL as well, to provide some incentives for a significant injection of housing on that site. There is still a reasonable amount of vacant land within the downtown core, but you are correct, I think. We point to when, in some of the other areas where there's less of that, we are seeing, you know, three, four-storey walk-ups being taken down and replaced with larger towers, so there's that growth there.

Dr. Martin: All right. Thank you.

The Chair: Susan, a question?

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. My question was answered earlier, so thank you.

What I am pleased to hear and understand from you is that there is expected continued growth in your riding, and that's important because we often see downtown communities hollowed out, and that is not the case here. But I do believe, Mr. Shepherd, because the growth has continued and has proven to be so, we will possibly look at those two north communities of Westwood and Spruce View and certainly contemplate taking them off to get the numbers down because, honestly, the next time a commission meets will be eight years from now and things will have changed significantly.

Mr. Shepherd: That's true.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you very much for your time today. I enjoyed that.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Susan.

The Chair: John, any questions?

Mr. Evans: No. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Mr. Shepherd, the takeaway from what you're saying – first of all, would you mind providing a copy of your submission?

Mr. Shepherd: Certainly. No problem. Yeah.

The Chair: I'm mostly interested in the single-family dwelling.

Mr. Shepherd: Yeah. Absolutely. Some of those statistics.

The Chair: Yeah.

Is it fair to say that the takeaway you want us to have is keep the boundaries?

Mr. Shepherd: Mm-hmm.

The Chair: You recognize that other boundaries in the city have to be changed because of strong population growth, but if we have to take away a little bit, it's Westwood and Spruce View.

Mr. Shepherd: Yes. Spruce Avenue.

The Chair: Were those communities given to Edmonton-City Centre in 2017?

Mr. Shepherd: That's correct. Yeah, they were taken from what was Edmonton-Calder.

The Chair: Okay. Good. Well, thank you very much for a very clear and concise presentation.

Mr. Shepherd: Thanks very much. I appreciate it.

The Chair: We appreciate that people are flexible. I know you may have been given a time.

Oh, well, we're right on time for Hans Smits. Mr. Smits, you're scheduled for 9:50, and we've worked out the schedule perfectly to fit you in.

Dr. Smits: Well, good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to present this morning. I'm a resident of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. It's right next to Mr. Shepherd's riding of Edmonton-City Centre. You know, without repeating a lot of things that Mr. Shepherd said, I would say I agree particularly with the latter part of his presentation on retention of borders. My presentation today is really to focus on Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, a very unique riding in Edmonton and, indeed, in the province. I've been living in the riding since about 1977 and I've always voted in every provincial election since then, so I identify really strongly not just as a citizen of the province and the city of Edmonton but this particular neighbourhood, which is part of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

I'm advocating today to retain and honour the boundaries of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, that presently constitute it, for several reasons. First of all, geographically Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood is unique and interesting in that it borders the North Saskatchewan River on the south and encompasses a good part of what we now consider the inner city of Edmonton, butting Beverly to the east and 97 Street to the west, and includes some newer neighbourhoods to the north.

Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has a long history as a part of Edmonton. For example, I live in Virginia Park, and the house in which I reside was partly built in 1930. Much of the housing in other parts of the riding date back to the early 1900s. There are many public schools that date back in time such as Norwood, Virginia Park, Highlands, Crestwood, St. Clare, to name only a few. That means that several generations have grown up in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. Many who descended from graduates of the school still call Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood home or at least identify with the neighbourhood in which they grew up.

I grew up just north of the railway yards in Calder, which offered employment to many people who lived in that area. Socially and culturally the riding is very diverse in terms of occupations, social and economic status, ethnicity, and other forms of identification.

9:50

You might say that Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, as a unique part of Edmonton, has welcomed immigrants from around the world: in the early 20th century from European countries such as Italy and Portugal, and they still have a presence in the riding, as you might know; in more recent history from Asia and Africa; and we have a large population in the riding of people from Indigenous origins as well.

Economically, while much of our riding falls on the lower end of the socioeconomic scale and there is poverty and homelessness and other issues that beset inner city neighbourhoods, there's also much to celebrate and hope for. Neighbourhoods in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood such as Alberta Avenue, McCauley are experiencing a renaissance, with new housing and businesses and a rising sense of hope and pride. There are annual festivals which

draw people from across the city. Beautiful parks such as Borden park now also host festivals such as last week's Ukrainian Festival and, in the summer, heritage days and K Days. Along beautiful Ada Boulevard, we take pride in the expanding Concordia University.

All of this is to say that Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood is a collection of neighbourhoods providing homes to a diverse and thriving population with ongoing urban renewal based on a strong identity that deserves to be represented provincially in our Legislature. Democracy is more robust when people feel connected to a sense of stable place and connected to representatives who understand and can articulate the needs and aspirations of the people in the riding. Given that Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood already has the requisite population required for equitable redistribution, we see no need for alternatives to the existing boundaries.

I just want to add that unlike perhaps Edmonton-City Centre, I would say that the majority of housing is still single-family housing, you know, ranging all the way from, as I said, early 1900s to wartime housing to more affluent housing in the older neighbourhoods like Highlands, Norwood. The population growth there will likely not occur in terms of the kinds of high-rises we see in Edmonton-City Centre. However, with changes in zoning laws, we are starting to see already an increase in terms of density by more duplexes and triplexes and so on. For example, in Highlands many lots are large properties. You know, they're 60 foot lots by 150, and already we see quite a few replacements of those single-family houses with housing that can hold multiple residents.

The other unknown factor, really, in terms of a possible population increase is the future of the Exhibition lands. Right now those lands are sitting empty. It's been announced that the old – where the Oilers used to play is going to be demolished, and there are plans to build housing in that area starting around Borden park, but that seems to be like a long-term project, and I'm not sure how much housing will be built in that area, say, in the next eight years before the next hearing.

Really, I'm not sure exactly what the population is right now. I think we're around 50,000. So I think we're kind of in that range that you're looking at in terms of an equitable distribution.

The Chair: Actually, the numbers we're looking at are well over 54,000, almost 55,000.

Dr. Smits: Okay. I didn't have the latest numbers.

The Chair: You're almost bang on the average.

Dr. Smits: I don't see, you know, where population could be increased in terms of the current riding other than the possibilities of expansion into the Exhibition lands, which are currently part of our riding.

Thank you.

The Chair: Well, thank you. If you can just stay there for questions. Mr. Evans, any questions?

Mr. Evans: Yes. I took down a note. Thank you for your presentation, but I took down a note that you mentioned at the very beginning that there was something unique and interesting about the Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood electoral district. I wanted to know, turning to the legislation, if there are any sort of unique or interesting or identifiable community interests or community groups within this electoral district that you could identify for me.

Dr. Smits: Sure.

Mr. Evans: And then maybe fill me in on some of the background.

Dr. Smits: I think we're a very strong community league. Not sure if any of our community leagues will be presented here or not. For example, I'm a member of Bellevue Community League – Virginia Park is a part of that – and a very active community league, Highlands Community League. The folks that live in Alberta Avenue have done tremendous work over the past few years trying to revive that area. For example, they have an annual winter festival, Kaleido, and there's a summer festival. It's starting to address, you know, some of the admittedly negative features of, not sugar-coating it, real challenges in the riding economically, in terms of housing, for example, a large houseless population in that area. The fentanyl crisis of course has hit our neighbourhoods hard. But what's hopeful is that there are really dedicated groups of people in that area who are really trying to build up those communities.

Mr. Evans: So Bellevue and Highlands communities, are they within this?

Dr. Smits: Yes.

Mr. Evans: Okay.

The Chair: Susan?

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. Thank you for your presentation. I'm interested. Since we've come to Edmonton, we've heard a lot of discussion on community leagues. I do believe – I'll check back with you when I'm done – but I do believe the community league strength in Edmonton is unique to this city . . .

Dr. Smits: Yes.

Mrs. Samson: . . . and that is a critical component to keeping the boundaries together because of the work they do on a volunteer basis. It's a lot of heavy lifting. I'm glad that you focused and brought that again to our attention.

When we talk about the Exhibition lands for an area for growth, I agree with you that that is the unknown but it certainly may not happen in the time that we're at. And because you are sitting at 54,768 – my gosh, we've got 87 ridings to look at. If there are some that are perfect, in my opinion, my opinion is to leave them alone.

Thank you.

Dr. Smits: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you. Julian, any question, comments?

Dr. Martin: Yes. Thank you for your presentation. I was particularly taken by your remark about the new city bylaw changes that encourage densification by allowing you to move from single residency, with the classic bungalows in the area, to densify those. I rather suspect you're going to see growth in population because of that rather than from developing the old Exhibition grounds. That land is too expensive, it's got too much weird stuff under the dirt, and it'll take a long time to build out, I suspect. I take your point that you will see some growth but it's going to be on the pre-existing residential footprint, which is grand, I think.

You also suggested that there's a very distinctive character. You've lived there virtually all your life, and so I want to be mischievous. You know, as the present boundary to the east stops at – what is it, 50th?

Dr. Smits: Yes.

Dr. Martin: So it doesn't go on further to the east, but it seems to me – and am I right? – that those neighbourhoods that are currently in Beverly have exactly the same character as the ones to the west side of 50th street. Is my impression correct? I'm not suggesting that, you know, we push them all into your riding . . .

Dr. Smits: No, no, I understand your question.

Dr. Martin: . . . but I want to understand the character of how this whole area developed.

Dr. Smits: Right. I mean, as you go east of 50th Street, very similar neighbourhoods, but further east of there there is more density. Starting around 34th Street there are, like, multiple row housing units, and there's been recently some new rental, not high-rises but eight-storey units built near the Yellowhead. That makes it a bit more distinct from our neighbourhood where we just haven't seen that form of densification.

The Chair: All right. Well, thank you.
Greg?

10:00

Mr. Clark: Yeah. I don't really have much to add. I mean, I think one of the interesting, unique aspects of this job is that all 87, and now 89, of our constituencies are like our children. We love them all equally. Some of them, however . . .

Dr. Smits: We're a problem child.

Mr. Clark: Or may just happen to fit very nicely within a particular – well, we'll just let the numbers take us where they will take us. I'll just thank you very much for your presentation. Appreciate it very much.

The Chair: Mr. Smits, you'll be pleased to know that yesterday you had another cheerleader from Highlands who said basically many of the same things. One of the side effects of hearing all this as a non-Edmontonian is I want to come visit some of these ridings when this is all over. This Alberta street sounds fascinating.

But I just want to ask a bit of a historic question because of the long nature of your connection with the constituency. In the 2017 commission did they change your boundary at all?

Dr. Smits: I don't know that for sure.

The Chair: It doesn't stand out.

Dr. Smits: No, it doesn't stand out.

The Chair: Okay. If they haven't, then this is really . . .

Dr. Smits: I don't think they have.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you very much. I appreciate your insight and your presentation.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

Dr. Smits: Thanks a lot.

The Chair: Okay. That takes us to our 10 o'clock, Priya Usman. Thank you. Please identify yourself, and correct me if I mispronounced your name.

Miss Usman: No. You got it right.

The Chair: Okay. Good. Thank you.

Miss Usman: Good morning, everyone. My name is Priya Usman. I'm a 19-year-old university student. I was born and raised here in Edmonton, amiskwaciwâskahikan, and I've attended school here my whole life. I remember in grade 6 social studies we learned about democracy. From the ancient Greeks to the Haudenosaunee confederacy to our proud Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, we were taught the value of strong democratic systems. It was those powerful values of democracy that were instilled in me at a young age. My time in the Alberta education system has made me a proud citizen of our democratic society, a society I hope that continues to display these values for the next generation of students and children.

In my own childhood I spent a lot of time driving around Alberta. Whether it was for a dance competition, my brother's soccer, or simply a family trip through our beautiful province, I was able to experience many corners of this province I call home. From Alberta Beach to Valleyview to Lethbridge, I was able to appreciate the uniqueness of the many different communities in Alberta. It is because of these experiences that I'm here before you today. Albertans in every corner of this province deserve a strong democracy. Both Albertans living in a major city or a small community deserve fair and proper representation.

I'm an Edmontonian. I love my city. In order for me, my friends, my family, my students, my colleagues, and my community to have access to democracy and fair representation, it is absolutely essential that the electoral boundaries of the new constituencies respect city limits. While we share common values and a vision for a strong province, the needs of Edmontonians in the city are not those of Albertans living in Sturgeon county or even Strathcona county.

And it goes both ways. My friend living in Beaumont does not have the same needs as someone living in Summerside, in the south side of Edmonton. My friend living in Parkland county does not have the same needs as someone living in Aldergrove, five minutes away from West Edmonton Mall. My friends and their communities shouldn't have to compete against major cities in order to be recognized, seen, and heard by potential elected representatives. They don't deserve that, and neither do the Albertans living in Edmonton or other major metropolitan areas. No one deserves to have the needs, the voices, and the concerns of their community dismissed, diluted, or diminished because of a map, especially a poorly drawn map that disadvantages Albertans across the province.

This issue goes beyond major municipalities and their surrounding areas. We are all treaty people, and Indigenous people living in rural Alberta on-reserve deserve to be represented and have their voices heard in the Legislature.

Ainsi, les francophones de l'Alberta méritent la représentation. Additionally, francophone Albertans deserve representation.

Each of these communities, every single Albertan: we all deserve fair and democratic representation. It would not be reasonable for an elected representative to juggle the unique needs of so many diverse communities both within and outside city limits. MLAs already have a lot of complex roles and responsibilities. Why make their job any more challenging than it already is? Albertans deserve to have an elected official who can accurately represent them, their family, their friends, and their community. Albertans deserve to have an elected representative who doesn't have to choose whether they will prioritize and advocate for the needs of their urban constituents or their rural constituents. We don't deserve a sprawled-out, messy, pinwheeled electoral map that helps no one and renders our representative democracy inefficient. It is crucial that the electoral boundaries map is drawn in a fair, just, and

democratic way. This means, first and foremost, respecting city limit boundaries.

In conclusion, as an Albertan inspired by my education and experiences in the beautifully diverse corners of this province, I am proud to sit before you today to uphold and partake in our democracy. I urge the commission to respect city limits when redrawing the electoral boundaries. This will allow for the promotion of fair, equitable, and democratic representation in our province. This will ensure we maintain a strong representative democracy for future elections and future generations.

Thank you. Hay-hay. Merci.

The Chair: Thank you, Priya.

Any questions or comments?

Mr. Clark: Just briefly, first off, thank you very much for your presentation and joining us. In addition, as Justice Miller said, it's a great privilege and pleasure travelling the province and just seeing all sorts of different places but also hearing from a wide range and broad diversity of people with different views and perspectives, ages, educational backgrounds. It's just a real privilege, so thank you very much for sharing your perspective on that.

As an Edmontonian, I guess I'm curious – and I'm not, unfortunately, an Edmontonian. I'm just curious what your constituency is, and is there anything specific you wanted to share about that constituency, any particular communities of interest? Or if there are other communities within Edmonton that you feel like it's important that they are together, maybe talk about why that would be.

Miss Usman: I live in Edmonton-Decore, which is in the north of Edmonton, and I guess that I would say, reiterating the main point of my presentation, that I would like to stay within Edmonton. I don't want to be pulled out into Morinville, St. Albert, Fort Saskatchewan, Sturgeon county. I'm an Edmontonian, and while I love visiting other corners of the province near to Edmonton and around the province, I'm not interested in having my constituency outside of Edmonton.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

Miss Usman: Thank you.

The Chair: Julian?

Dr. Martin: No. Although I do hope that you leave us a copy of your presentation. We might use it as a preamble or something. Thank you.

The Chair: Any questions, comments?

Mrs. Samson: Thank you, and thank you for the presentation. I'm interested in something that I would like you to expand upon, and that is that you are the first Indigenous person to present to us.

Miss Usman: I'm not Indigenous.

Mrs. Samson: You're not? Okay. Well, then my question is not a good one. Sorry for that mistake.

Miss Usman: That's okay.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for the presentation. It was most informative.

Miss Usman: Thank you.

Mr. Evans: Good morning. You talked about the differences between the rural and the urban and used the example of Beaumont, or just most recently you referenced St. Albert. I appreciate that I might be putting you on the spot. Could you give me three differences that come to your mind that would distinguish what you're considering an Edmontonian urban riding versus the rural, say, Beaumont or St. Albert?

Miss Usman: Okay. I can try and touch on the Beaumont one specifically because I have a friend who lives in Beaumont and we've discussed this.

What I would say is that, for example, my friend in Beaumont would have to drive, like, an hour every day to come to school, because we went to school together. If she had to access a lot of services for school or university or for personal matters, that was difficult, you know, a significant distance compared to, for example, someone like me who lives in Edmonton-Decore. It's a 10 minute drive to go to the doctor's office for me, which I recognize is a privilege. It's again a 10-minute drive to go to the grocery store, where I can get groceries for me and my family.

I think those are some differences. Yeah. That's off the top of my head what I can speak to.

10:10

Mr. Evans: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Priya, thank you very much. I echo one of my colleague's comments. If you can, leave a copy of your presentation.

I'm curious. Are you studying these days? Are you in university?

Miss Usman: Yes, I am in university.

The Chair: What are you taking?

Miss Usman: I'm taking political science and sociology at Campus Saint-Jean.

The Chair: Great. I'm sure Alberta will see more of you.

Miss Usman: I think so.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Miss Usman: Thank you.

The Chair: We are just only slightly behind time. Our next presenter is Ms Sarah Hoffman. Good morning.

Ms Hoffman: Good morning, Justice Miller. I think Priya is studying pre-Prime Minister probably.

The Chair: Pardon me?

Ms Hoffman: Priya might say she's in poli-sci, but I think it's pre-Prime Minister.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms Hoffman: Yeah. I'm really excited to be here to present today. I don't have a script, but I have some key points that I want to touch on with each of you and have an opportunity to have a bit of a dialogue.

I'll start by talking about my experience living in this province. It's been my home my whole life. I grew up in small town rural Alberta, a number of different communities: Altario, Castor, and Kinuso, all communities of 1,000 or fewer. Then I moved to Edmonton for university, and Edmonton has become my home.

After university I worked at the university, and I also eventually ran for the Edmonton public school board.

I brought maps of where the schools are within Edmonton public and Edmonton Catholic as a bit of a guide, because the first time I went through electoral boundaries as an elected official was when I was on the Edmonton public school board. There was a proposal at that time to consider . . .

The Chair: Sorry. Can I interrupt you – and I just did. Tell me what riding you represent.

Ms Hoffman: Oh. Edmonton-Glenora, where we are right now.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms Hoffman: Yeah. This is the east side of Edmonton-Glenora.

Maybe I'll take this moment to back up a little bit and say that growing up mostly in Kinuso in the middle of Lesser Slave Lake constituency, I knew our representative Pearl Calahasen quite well because she was able to attend events in the riding on a somewhat regular basis. When she'd run into me at the Save-On-Foods near my home, she'd ask me the last time I was home to visit my parents and if I needed a ride home next Thursday, because she was driving home on constituency break.

I think one of the advantages of having like communities together is that you get to know your representative in a meaningful way because you have consistent events and relationships and demographics. I found the same thing when I moved to Edmonton. Some of the issues I'd advocate for when meeting with Pearl were mostly around emergency preparedness. It seemed like every three or four years we had a flood that prevented buses from getting to the school, so either making sure that we addressed flood mitigation or found other routes to be able to ensure that my classmates who lived outside of town could get to school was a priority. Some of the things that I advocate for now as an urban MLA are quite different. Overcrowding of schools would be one of the key issues that we're dealing with.

I did bring these maps here to be able to talk a little bit about electoral boundaries as they relate to other elected representatives, specifically school divisions. I didn't draw on the boundary maps. But the key thing that I wanted us to reflect on with these maps is the way that families engage in their community is often with a school as the hub. The school as the hub when your children are young is usually in your neighbourhood, within, you know, a 10- to 15-minute walk of your neighbourhood if you choose the neighbourhood school, which more than half of Edmontonians in Edmonton public do choose.

Even with programs of choice, which I'm very proud of having here in Edmonton, there are schools that feed in. There's a natural pattern of how people move from elementary school to junior high to high school, and typically there's a goal with choice programs to have them in the same geographic quadrant of the city. One of the benefits is that you have the same trustee whether your child is in elementary, junior high, or high school or if they're in a Spanish bilingual program, for example.

At one point we did discuss, when we were redoing the boundaries for Edmonton public, potentially cutting it into a wagon wheel so that everyone would have some of the suburbs and everyone would have some of the core. We decided against that, and I want to give you some of the key reasons why. One of the big ones was being able to develop and maintain long-lasting relationships with people in the same sector of the city and being able to make our decisions with the values of the electorate top of mind so that I wasn't pitting the priorities around building new schools outside of the Henday against the priorities of maintaining

schools in the core of the city. I could focus on the folks that I was there to represent, who had generally comparable, consistent priorities, and people who represented other areas could also keep that voice consolidated and intact.

We very, very rarely have anyone who lives outside of the city attending schools in the city. It's partially now because our schools are so full, but also because people choose the school as a hub, crossing those boundaries is not something that happens on a regular basis. Also, with the fact that schools are so full, we just don't have the space to accommodate people who live out of division. That's partially why I wanted to bring these, and I know that for Calgary public it's the same. Calgary public schools are only within the bounds of the city of Calgary, and their electoral map also is only within the bounds of the city of Calgary. Calgary Catholic is different. They've reached out into the suburbs, so there are some pressures there when it comes to their board prioritizing school projects around those initiatives.

Then I wanted to touch a little bit on my riding because I know you're going to ask. Edmonton-Glenora is beautiful and very dynamic. If you look at the data, we're pretty much smack in the middle when it comes to things like income, education. We have all extremes. We have people who are brand new to Alberta, and we have many First Nations folks who live here. In terms of Edmonton we're one of the higher Indigenous population ridings. We also have a mix of new development, including Blatchford right next door to us here; a ton of infill, where corner lots that were single-family homes are now four- or eightplexes; and then a number of seniors' residences that have been built since the last redraw of the boundaries. Two of them are Christenson at Westmount and Glenora Park also in the Glenora/Westmount area. These have added hundreds of new electors and constituents in general.

But the main thing I want to say again is that, like Priya, keeping like communities together and respecting municipal boundaries I think is one of the ways that we can make the work of MLAs most effective and that piece of: the things I was advocating for when I'd go meet with Pearl Calahasen are not the same things that the people are advocating for when they come to meet with me, even, you know, young and very politically-engaged folks.

Yeah. Those are sort of the key messages I wanted to leave, and I would like to have as much time for questions as possible.

The Chair: You'll see on the map the population levels both last time and then with this commission.

Ms Hoffman: Yeah. Oh, I should probably also say that I know you're allowed to add two new – or you are tasked with adding two new constituencies. I shouldn't say allowed.

The Chair: Yes.

Ms Hoffman: I believe that the vast majority of the growth has happened in the two largest cities in our province, so my proposal would be that they be added one to Edmonton and one to Calgary.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Evans, any questions?

Mr. Evans: Yeah. I just got introduced to a new concept here in Edmonton, the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues. How many community leagues do you have in the electoral district of Edmonton-Glenora?

Ms Hoffman: Yeah. I think it's 21. Yes. Not all of them have buildings. They all have representatives who are elected to help do programming for that area. For example, Blatchford doesn't have a

building where they meet at, but there are a number of individuals that get together and put on block parties and other fun activities and advocate to the city as well. They have civics representatives to advocate around development issues.

10:20

Mr. Evans: So it would be 21 geographic community leagues with a member that would sit on the board?

Ms Hoffman: EFCL allows people to represent for a region, so each of those individual community areas has representatives, president, vice-president, and so on, to make decisions for that specific neighbourhood. Then I believe it's Edmonton west that can represent somebody to sit as a director for EFCL at large. There is a director from the 21 combined, basically one representative democracy.

Mr. Evans: And that's considered Edmonton west? Is that what that is?

Ms Hoffman: I believe that's the name now, but they've changed the names a few times, so I could be off. I work mostly with the individual community leagues for each of the neighbourhoods.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for presenting the school board information. We hadn't been tasked with looking at that overlay yet, so that will raise some interesting conversations with us. Thank you for that. I have no questions.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you.

The Chair: Julian?

Dr. Martin: Thank you again. The information about schools is instructive because it is a canary in the coal mine about where neighbourhoods need infrastructure. Of course, it's the perennial difficulty of your cities growing like wildfire for school construction to keep up. I take seriously your point about schools, particularly elementary and junior, as being a hub for communities. I mean, high school students tend to range further afield, but nonetheless these are useful maps in spotting how Edmonton public and Catholic are trying to catch up, as it were, with their building programs.

I have a couple of very specific thoughts about Glenora when it comes to building. We asked Mr. Shepherd, as you may recall, about where the growth pods may be in his district. I'm going to ask you the same question. Where we're sitting right now, there's a growth pod happening on the airport land. I can't think of anywhere else in your riding where it could happen. You know, I'm looking at the map – and you'll get a kick out of this – and I look at Stony Plain Road, and the map is Google, and the map has a big sort of stop red light thing on Stony Plain Road . . .

Ms Hoffman: Because of construction.

Dr. Martin: . . . and the construction goes on forever, right? I don't want to belabour that point, but it just brings to mind that your riding has not grown its population at a rate we see in other parts of the metro and other than on the airport lands, I don't think you have any growth pod at all.

Ms Hoffman: Oh. May I come and touch the map and talk about that a little bit?

Dr. Martin: You may indeed.

Ms Hoffman: Okay. Good. One of the largest towers that was constructed in Edmonton was over here on 149th and Stony Plain Road just north in this area here. They're really focused on transit-oriented development in the city of Edmonton right now, so 149th and Stony Plain Road is an area where there's going to be a transit station.

Dr. Martin: Is that Jasper Place?

Ms Hoffman: No. This is Glenora. It's technically in Glenora still, just east of 149th. Or it might be 142nd, actually, 142nd and Stony Plain Road. My apologies. There's one massive tower that was built recently. I think they have about 400 units in it, and then there's a bunch of commercial on the main floor. There's also been, as I mentioned, two large seniors' buildings that came in since the last redraw, Christensen's in Westmount right by the Dairy Queen, if you feel like swinging by Dairy Queen on your way home. I often see a lot of my constituents from the seniors' building there.

Then the other one is Stony Plain Road and just off 124 Street there's one, and then this area on the east of 124th Street, Westmount east and Inglewood east. There are a number of areas where there were four-storey walk-ups that are being replaced with eight or higher towers. Those are the highest-density construction areas, but throughout the riding, especially, I would say, in the east half of the riding there, you can't drive through a neighbourhood without seeing at least four or five places where there was a single family and now there are either four or eight units being built on that same lot. Often the ones with eight or even nine look like traditional townhouses, but each has a basement apartment as well. Then there's a garage suite above the four-car garage.

So there's a mix of high-density construction as well as infill, up to three storeys, I would say with that.

Also, along 111th Avenue, the city has been purchasing some of the lots and so have prospectors around land where density is going to be happening. There's a ton of brownfields right now where there used to be single families, or gas stations, or other types of small commercial available.

The population has risen by 8,000 since the last redraw, so maybe not as significant as southwest Edmonton, but definitely more than we've seen historically in Edmonton in this part of the city.

Dr. Martin: Well, thank you for that. That's very helpful. What I draw from it is that there is imminent and tangible construction activity for residential as we speak. Thank you.

Ms Hoffman: You're welcome.

The Chair: Greg?

Mr. Clark: Yeah, thank you. Building on those questions, and just looking at my trends, the population trend for Glenora has been pretty stable and pretty much tracks the same population trend as the rest of the province. Glenora was slightly under in terms of percentage growth. I'm looking here. Right now we've got 52,496, which is about 4.5 per cent below provincial average.

What I'm curious about is, given the growth you're talking about, do you anticipate that picking up? I guess I've seen, you know, Blatchford is right here. Those are almost ready to occupy by the looks of it, but what's the scale of that? What's the timing? We're looking here for the next 7 to 10 years. Is the population growth likely to track the next 7 to 10 the same as the last 7 to 10, or is it likely taking a bit of a pick up?

Ms Hoffman: In the last provincial election I believe I had conversations with a hundred residents, a little over two years ago,

who lived in Blatchford already. While there is a lot of construction happening currently, some people have been living there for six years, I think, already because it's just being phased out by individual developers who buy up small parcels.

I don't want to try to anticipate how quickly they'll go. Obviously, it depends on the economy, it depends on building permits, but when you look on realtor.ca, which I do often, things are moving in there incredibly quickly; like, they don't stay listed more than 48 hours, even things that are significantly more than houses, six blocks to the west. I think it's a very desirable community. A lot of people like that it's going to be a lower carbon footprint. There's a transit station that's already built there that isn't operational yet until they have enough demand. I think for the supply and demand piece: as fast as the supply goes, the demand is going to keep up.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Ms Hoffman. I said this yesterday: all presenters are equal, but we do appreciate when a member of the Legislature comes and gives a presentation because we know the travel, the foot traffic you do through your constituency and you know your riding better than anybody else, probably. We do appreciate your presentation very much.

The theme that, as a non-Edmontonian, I'm learning from that inner urban core is consistent and I appreciate it, but we have work to do in the south and how we deal with that.

Your comments are helpful, so thank you very much.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you.

The Chair: Now is the time where – we're 10 minutes late, but we're going to have a break now for 10 minutes, so we'll be back at about 10:41.

[The hearing adjourned from 10:29 a.m. to 10:40 a.m.]

The Chair: The break is over. Let's get back to work.

Our next presenter is Mr. Nathan Ip. Please come forward.

Mr. Ip: Good morning, commission members. Thank you so much for the opportunity to be here and to provide input on the important work that all of you are embarking on. I especially want to recognize the staff, as well, who are supporting this work. My name is Nathan Ip. I am the MLA for Edmonton-South West.

The riding of Edmonton-South West, as many of you know who've been there, is vibrant, fast growing. It's often described as an oblong shape and was once described by the *Edmonton Journal* as having "the vague appearance of an abstract cockatoo looking over its shoulder," something that I like to mention to folks when I describe Edmonton-South West. My roots in the riding run deep on both sides of the river. I'm a long-time resident of Glastonbury, which is a neighbourhood in the riding. Previous to my current role I also served as the Edmonton public school board trustee for a good portion of the riding, specifically in the communities of greater Windermere in the southern part of the riding. I've witnessed first-hand the growth of the area of the city.

When I was first elected to the Edmonton public school board in 2013, the Glenridding and Keswick neighbourhoods in greater Windermere were still mostly farmland, and now it boasts a diverse community of young families and thriving businesses. It also has one of the larger concentrations in the city of folks from an ethnic and culturally diverse community, including Albertans from Chinese, Filipino, and South Asian background. It also has one of

the youngest average ages in the city with an average age of just 34 years. I have seen and experienced the unprecedented growth in population and the dire need for investment in community infrastructure such as libraries, schools, and hospitals, all of which are still lacking, and I've been part of many of those community efforts to advocate for schools and playgrounds and otherwise support community building. I have a vested interest to see the riding of Edmonton-South West be fairly represented.

Electoral divisions shouldn't just be a collection of disconnected communities and arbitrary boundaries to make numbers work. They should reflect and respect how people live and move, how they connect, their affinities and identities, and where they find community. I would strongly advocate to the commission to consider the following principles when undertaking their review with the goal of encouraging meaningful, democratic participation and representation.

First, we need a map that is fair to all communities. The first principle is that like communities along cultural, economic, and geographic communities should be respected. That why it's imperative that city boundaries be respected. One way to approach and to think about this principle is to ask the question: how do folks participate in community? This will tell you where their affinity may lie when it comes to the geographic community. I'll give you an example. Folks in Devon, despite their proximity to the southwestern edge of the riding, will rarely – and I don't think I've ever actually met a person from Devon participate in Glastonbury movie nights or the Summerfest that happens every year in the west end part of the city, but folks from neighbouring communities such as the Hamptons or Edgemont often will. I think this tells you how folks identify with their community and where they gather.

It is also important to note that cultural and racialized communities should remain intact. An example of this is that the western part of the riding has a sizable Filipino-Albertan population, and their needs and perspectives will be very different from those that might live in Stony Plain or those outside of the city.

The second principle I'd like to highlight and advocate for is that it's important to consider how people live and move. Edmonton-South West, because of its shape and size, is really bifurcated by the river. Folks in Windermere, which is in the southern eastern part of the riding, will access amenities such as the Terwillegar rec centre, shops and businesses, and schools north of the Anthony Henday. Many students are actually designated to attend high school north of the Anthony Henday, and this reflects a much more natural travelling and gathering pattern. Fewer folks will necessarily move from east to west of the riding.

Almost always, without fail, when I speak to residents in Windermere, which is in the southern part of the riding, they're often very surprised to hear that they're part of the same riding at the northern tip, which is Granville by the River Cree casino. They don't see themselves necessarily as part of the same area of the city, and vice versa. I mean, that's just within a riding that is intact within the city of Edmonton, so I can only imagine the kind of confusion that might cause if we consider a rural-urban riding.

Similarly, when we talk about these natural patterns, there's a greater sort of likeness between neighbourhoods in the western part of the riding with neighbourhoods further east. For example, folks in the Glastonbury neighbourhood will often shop and gather minutes away at Callingwood MarketPlace even though it's sort of not within the riding.

The third principle that I'd like to submit to the panel is that there needs to be fair representation by population. I think every member is perhaps aware that Edmonton-South West is often double the size and population of the average of many ridings across the province,

so that certainly needs to be addressed, but again, I would emphasize that like communities and city boundaries are respected.

For Edmontonians – and I think Edmontonians in this room would probably agree, whether you're from Edgemont or Cameron Heights or Windermere – we take pride in our community. We don't necessarily see ourselves as part of folk in a municipality outside of city boundaries such as Devon. I would say, if I use Devon as an example, that residents of Devon similarly take pride in their town. I've spoken to city councillors and residents, and they certainly don't see themselves as an extension of Edmonton. Devon and Edmonton are different not only in geography but in perspective and identity.

In summary, like communities as well as municipal boundaries should be respected, and I would also encourage the commission to really consider what I refer to as identity and affinity, which is often harder to grasp. It's really this concept of where folks see themselves. Where do they see themselves as being a part of? I think that if we create boundaries that are ill considered, there is the risk of fragmenting communities, which would cause greater confusion and ultimately disengage voters.

Thank you very much for your time and for your consideration. Happy to answer any questions if there are any.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ip.

We'll start with Greg.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Boy. Gosh. Edmonton-South West and the whole south Edmonton is a huge kind of tough nut to crack as it relates to how we reshuffle things. It's really undeniable that something has to change. Just legally, Edmonton-South West or Edmonton-South can't be as big as they are. I guess I'll ask – I guess I'm developing a bit of a theme here. Clearly, there's growth in Edmonton-South West. That's undeniable. Where is it happening? How present tense is it, if you will? What sort of hard evidence do you have around a forecast for what the next seven to 10 years might look like? I guess what I'm really asking, to quote a great Edmontonian, is if we can skate to where the puck is going to be on some of these things, you know, looking at what the growth is.

Again, this one, I think, was set – let me just look at my magic data. It was set pretty much exactly at the average in 2016-17, and it's now 39 per cent over, right? So is that growth likely to continue in a linear fashion? Is it going to go more, or have we sort of peaked and it's sort of levelling out? I guess I appreciate your comments on that.

10:50

Mr. Ip: Well, when I was an Edmonton public school board trustee, I was chair of the infrastructure committee, and at one point in time I had stats readily available. I don't know if these stats are still completely accurate, but I'm going to use them sort of for illustration purposes and just as an anecdote for our discussion.

Back in 2021, I believe, in the communities of Windermere, for example, that community was only about 50 per cent built out. If you're using sort of census data from 2021, the build out at that particular point in time was only about 50 per cent. If you drive down there, you'll see the differences. I mean, for me who lives in the riding and is there every single day, I am surprised at how many new houses pop up by the week, and anybody who sort of will take a drive along new and fast growing neighbourhoods in the city will see that. I think the trajectory will continue to rise quite quickly as we have seen in the last 10 years.

I do have a suggestion. In my school board days planners would often sort of address the risk of growth, because we don't really know how much the growth will be. We can certainly anticipate.

They will often make the boundary smaller, attendance area boundaries, rather, if we're using that as an example. They will make the attendance area boundaries smaller rather than larger because of that anticipated growth. Even with that kind of prudence, the Edmonton public school board was not able to fully accommodate all of the students that ultimately came into those neighbourhoods, even with a smaller attendance area boundary that they had drawn. I think if we use that as an example and we liken it to electoral boundaries, I would say that growth in those new neighbourhoods continues to be fast paced, and if we're to mitigate some of those risks, probably a smaller boundary, a smaller area would make more sense.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

The Chair: Any other questions? A quick question?

Dr. Martin: Yes. Thank you very much for your presentation, and yes, it is quite obvious this district has grown and keeps growing very rapidly. You know, it only takes a brief look at a map to see that the area that was on the inside of the Henday when your riding was small and cuddly probably has to be given back, because you're now so large and sprawling that other accommodations are going to be made, I think. I think that's pretty obvious.

The other thing that strikes me here is the river. I mean, obviously we have a long-standing tradition of straddling the river with respect to Edmonton-Riverview, but ordinarily we try to avoid that sort of thing. You know, the growth in your current riding is so massive, I mean, we're a bit bewildered, but, you know, the whole area to the southwest of the current riding immediately west of Windermere, that's growing rapidly as well. I'm looking at a Google map here. There's a very large area on 23rd Avenue. The ground is being scraped out. There's no doubt that this is being developed for residents.

Mr. Ip: That's correct. West and north of Windermere you'll find that there's – I think you're probably referring to the River's Edge community. That is a newer community that is there.

I should note that when the city approved the area structure plan for Windermere and the surrounding areas, at one point it was the largest area structure plan in the city. That'll give you a sense of how much anticipated growth there will be.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you. We have time for one more very direct question. We're pressed for time.

Mrs. Samson: I'm good.

Mr. Evans: Very structured plan, specifically 077 on the map, so trending south: I'm not from Edmonton, so I'm not exactly sure where Windermere is, but I want to know about what area structure plans you're aware of or the development moving south. I think that's south.

Mr. Ip: Yeah. Sometimes I wish I was still on the school board. I would know this information. I'm not currently aware of any area structure plans right now south of kind of the city boundaries. Essentially all of the farmland that can be acquired has been acquired, and it would have been included in the Windermere restructure plan. But I could be wrong. You may have new information.

Mr. Evans: Is everything moving south all farmland?

Mr. Ip: Yeah. It is essentially farmland, all of that. There's a good chunk right before the city boundary that is farmland.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: No supplementary. Sorry.

Mr. Ip: Thank you, sir.

The Chair: Thank you so much for coming in. As I said before, we do really appreciate when members of the Legislature come and present, so thank you so much.

Mr. Ip: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Our next presenter is Ben Acquaye. Sir, tell me if my pronunciation is close.

Mr. Acquaye: I'm a teacher, and I'm in a very gracious mood today. I'll give you 97 per cent.

The Chair: Okay. Okay. Thank you. Can you tell me how I get a hundred per cent and introduce yourself.

Mr. Acquaye: My name is Ben Acquaye. I'm a voter from Edmonton-South West constituency, and my family and I have lived in the riding since 2012, when we moved to Canada from the U.K. I have been following the work of the Electoral Boundaries Commission, and I have a strong interest in the outcome here. I want to express my gratitude to you, the commissioners, for your dedication to this task. Redrawing boundaries is complex and it demands careful consideration, and you have the opportunity to do that. Unlike the last one, in your case you actually have a luxury of two new ridings, so there's room to work.

I am a parent of three young people, and we are active in the community through church, through hockey, and a few other engagements. Now, as you alluded to in the last presentation, Edmonton-South West has really grown, is growing, and will continue to grow. Through a number of volunteer opportunities I've had, I've seen, you know, a growth in this community in terms of diverse communities growing. That's one thing about a lot of racialized communities; their growth is fast, it's quick, it happens, and it's sustained. I have seen lots of pockets of racialized communities.

Just connecting with a question from the last presentation: is there room for growth? Absolutely. Racialized communities grow big and quickly. As you've seen across the province, especially in that middle section of that map, it is definitely growing and growing fast. When I've been there to speak to kids about hockey, about public speaking, and other things I'm involved in, you see lots of new families moving in, and that trend will continue.

11:00

There are a lot of neighbourhoods which make up Edmonton-South West at the moment: Glenridding, Keswick, Glastonbury, Windermere, the Hamptons, the Uplands, Edgemont, Ambleside, Stillwater, Glenridding Heights and Glenridding Ravine, Cameron Heights, Riverview, Wedgewood Heights, River's Edge, Jamieson Place, the Grange, Woodbend Estates, river valley. Uplands, Edgemont, Riverview area: those areas are mostly around the river; they are growing so fast. Because a lot of these are minorities, ethnic minorities, I expect that growth to be even quicker than it has been.

Now, one of the biggest reasons why it's such a community is because of the diversity in there and our connection to the city. Our kids go to the same schools and have done since we moved here. These kids play on the same sports teams and, therefore, that brings parents together. Edmonton Whitemud hockey club pulls from this area. Then when you grow and you are a bit better, or very good,

you go play at CAC. This is CAC's catchment area, and as you know, CAC stands for the Canadian Athletic Club. It's one of the most treasured hockey clubs in Alberta and perhaps in the country. It's over 100 years old, or nearly. My kid plays at CAC with kids who have grown up from this area. You are looking at a group of kids throughout this area who have grown up together, done similar things together, and will grow into adulthood together, and we want to keep that the way it is. That is my plea to you. I think that given how fast and how much it's growing, it may even be better to split this into two so that we would have a dedicated Edmonton-northwest riding to accommodate this growth.

We've talked about population growth, and we also need to talk about the people who make up Edmonton-South West. When it comes to economic activity the activity according to the stats from the Alberta government, it's quite spread out, you know: some retail, some professional services, educational services. It's a good mix of people and a good mix of levels of education as well. A lot of, again, young people would have grown up with people similar to their circumstances, all connected to the city of Edmonton. That makes this quite a nice area to live in.

I would say that I expect that the growth will continue. It's a young population, and you want to give people the chance to grow together to be able to share those memories as they grow older, and especially to connect with their politicians and the city, talking about the challenges and hopes and aspirations that they have as they grow up.

Essentially, I think the case for Edmonton-South West to perhaps end up as Edmonton-northwest and Edmonton-South West would be a good one.

This is essentially my presentation to you. I admire your work, and I wish you nothing but the very best. Thank you most kindly.

The Chair: Thank you very much, sir. I'm sure we're going to have questions, so I'm going to start with Mr. Evans on this side, and we'll go across. Any questions?

Mr. Evans: Yes. Thank for your presentation. You mentioned first racialized communities.

Mr. Acquaye: Yes.

Mr. Evans: Can you tell me what you mean by that, and then can you identify any identifiable groups.

Mr. Acquaye: I mean communities that are not White. There's a strong Filipino, Chinese, Black, from so many different backgrounds that are growing and thriving in Edmonton-South West. A lot of people have moved out of province and even within province to Edmonton-South West. It is an amazing community to visit and that is what I mean. At this rate it wouldn't surprise me if in the next 10 years the racialized communities are at par. We're getting quite close now, and that trend continues. We could easily be at par with the nonracialized community. But the beautiful thing is that we work together, we live together, pray together. We do everything together. And our kids are growing up together. The challenge is that the hopes, the aspirations they face will be similar. Our connection to Edmonton is the one universal thing, and we would like to keep it that way.

Mr. Evans: I'd like to ask you about communities of interest.

Mr. Acquaye: Yes.

Mr. Evans: In terms of the racialized communities that you talked about, would you identify them as communities of interest, and where would they be located, in the central or north of...

Mr. Acquaye: The beautiful thing is – thank you very much, Commissioner Evans – that it's not just like we are all in one little pocket. In every community I mentioned, there's a strong racial presence, neighbours left and right to you. This is just a beautiful mix. You see it in the schools as well, when the kids go to school. You see it in the sports they play. It's a beautiful mix, and that will continue to grow. That is the point that I'm trying to make.

Mr. Evans: One last question. Do you know the number of community leagues within your electoral district?

Mr. Acquaye: Because this is a new area, it's taking a while. The more established ones like Glastonbury and Edgemont have a community league. But, believe it or not, we don't even have buildings for our community leagues because it's such a new area. We expect way more growth to happen. I'm excited that kids in this area will see the Canada that we all see: a diverse, respectful, collaborative community living, growing, and thriving together.

Mr. Evans: Thank you.

Mr. Acquaye: Thank you, Mr. Evans.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you, Mr. Acquaye, for the definition and expansion on racialized communities. I found that very informative. Thank you.

Mr. Acquaye: You're most welcome.

The Chair: Julian, questions?

Dr. Martin: I just want to follow up on a couple of points in your characterization of these new communities. You suggest that they are younger populations, not just the children but the adults as well. That sort of makes sense. Since they're new, there aren't, you know, people my age already there. I think you're quite right to point to team sports for youth as an indicative measure of the growth of these communities.

Now, earlier MLA Hoffman gave us these quite useful maps of the schools, and I noticed there really aren't any in your district, so you better get on to your school trustee.

Mr. Acquaye: Absolutely. You know, to that point, for me, it's about the children. They growing up, they're making good memories, and they represent the Canada that we all enjoy. They are growing together. They are playing sports together. They are all connected to the city. For those of you who are outside the city of Edmonton, look up the Canadian Athletic Club's storied history of hockey. These kids grow up, play – you know, up until you're a teenager, you play for Whitemud. The dream is to play for CAC because this is their catchment area. You want to make CAC, and you want to get there with your friends. The beautiful thing is that I as an immigrant who came here – my kids are playing with kids whose parents played together. I can imagine the possibilities for these kids into the future. That is something I would want them to have as well.

Dr. Martin: Great.

Mr. Clark: I cannot possibly top that as a closer, so I will just leave that. Thank you very, very, very much. That was incredible. Thank you.

The Chair: Sir, one thing I haven't mentioned today is that one of the tasks of the commission is to name the new electoral district. I thought I understood you to say that if we divide the current

Edmonton-South West into two constituencies – did I hear you say that they should be named Edmonton-North West and Edmonton-South West?

Mr. Acquaye: Yes.

11:10

The Chair: Okay. Would you be content with Edmonton-West and Edmonton-South West?

Mr. Acquaye: I would be, but you know . . .

The Chair: It's not really north.

Mr. Acquaye: Well, true, but the key thing is, well, most postal codes in Edmonton say northwest, even though when you look at where they are in the city, it's not really northwest. So we do take some liberties with our geographical placement in Edmonton here, but I would like the riding to be contiguous. Yes, Edmonton-West, Edmonton-North West; so long as we retain our connections to Edmonton and these kids do. So for the sake of the children, please keep us within Edmonton.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much, sir. Appreciate it.

Mr. Acquaye: Thank you most kindly. Have a wonderful rest of the day.

The Chair: Thank you.

We're going to move on now. We're running about 20 minutes late, so if questions can be shorter and briefer and the answers equally so, we'll make it through by noon.

Kyle Kasawski.

Mr. Kasawski: It seems like you all have an image of the riding.

Thank you for having me. We'll get this set up. I'm Kyle Kasawski, the MLA for Sherwood Park. As I like to tell everybody in the Assembly: all roads lead to Sherwood Park. But as the MLA for Edmonton-Glenora would also say: all roads also lead out of Sherwood Park.

I grew up in Sherwood Park. I lived there from the age of 4 to 24. I've lived in Edmonton, and Calgary, and B.C. My family has been in Sherwood Park since 1978. My brother actually bought the home from my parents, so that family home has been in the family for almost 50 years.

Within my role I'm also the Municipal Affairs critic and shadow minister for the opposition, so I have a chance to visit and communicate with people from rural municipalities and villages all across the province.

Within Sherwood Park, I'd like to point out, probably the boundaries commission in 2017, I think, got it quite right, so if you're looking for an advocate for change, that won't be me. I feel there's some history and experience with other boundary commissions, with the federal commissions. A couple of times we've had past experiences where there was a riding of Edmonton-Sherwood Park. There was also an attempt, this last boundaries commission federally, to have a riding of Sherwood Park-Beaumont which received quite strong protest from the municipal leaders in Sherwood Park, and they retracted that change in the drawing.

The county, which you see on the map here, I'll bring reference to, but I'll finish through a couple of details that I want to make sure I highlight. In terms of services like utilities, for Sherwood Park we have Arrow Utilities; Edmonton has EPCOR. For electricity we have Fortis; Edmonton has EPCOR. For police we have the RCMP, and fun fact: they surveyed Sherwood Park; 87 per cent of

Sherwood Park loves the RCMP. They asked residents at the University of Alberta in Lister hall if they would like free beer: 86 per cent said they would like free beer, so the RCMP are more popular in Sherwood Park than free beer.

The food banks: you know, we have our own Strathcona county food bank. We have our own housing foundation, the Heartland Housing Foundation, versus, let's say, Edmonton, which has Civida. We have a really amazing organization for people with disabilities called Robin Hood Association, and I know that people move to Sherwood Park because of the services provided by Robin Hood. Our service clubs like Rotary Club are independent. We have strong retail. We have our own Costco, but also the Go Auto group started a new retail group called L'oca, and they brought their flagship to Sherwood Park.

We have our own sports clubs, minor sports clubs, arts and recreation clubs. We have our own museum which is documenting our history. Sherwood Park is only as old as 1955. It was a community that was built as a place to have residences for Imperial Oil. We have the Strathcona Industrial Association. If you look on the map, within my riding you will see a very empty area that is full of energy refineries. Keyara is there. Imperial Oil is there. Suncor Energy is there. Gibson has tank farms there. Pembina Pipeline has their head office in Sherwood Park, and Enbridge has a large presence in my riding.

In fact, on the map you'll see a road that kind of goes from the urban parts of Sherwood Park into the industrial parts. It's called Petroleum Way. It goes under the Anthony Henday. When they built that road, they made sure we had a direct connection for workers from Sherwood Park to get into the industrial area for their shifts.

Strathcona county has a population that is about 75 per cent urban. There are roughly 100,000 people living in this area. It's 25 per cent rural. The electoral districts 1 to 8 are largely – we have 62. Five of eight are urban, and then we have the rural present as well.

I noticed what the questions were getting into from some of the other presenters. On the website you've noted that our riding is about 8 per cent off the provincial average, so we're about 8 per cent below, but we have a lot of urban growth happening.

If I can just put the map up here. Within this area here we have a neighbourhood called Cambrian, which when I got elected two years ago had no houses. It now is well on its way to a thousand homes. It can add 12,000 people to the riding. North of it, there's Hearthstone, which is a Mattamy development. Another probably 12,000 people will be inside that part of the riding. Deep down here in the contours of 3, there's a high-density area called Salisbury Village. We'll have about 1,200 people that will be living in it. So we have quite a lot of urban growth happening within the area.

I would also just like to acknowledge and look at something that you have to look at for Strathcona-Sherwood Park or some other ridings here, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville. Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville actually borders right here into Strathcona county, which is an interesting delineation. Bremner is a planned community. It'll be starting its first subdivision this year. Ground work has started. Within Mr. Clark's question about the next seven to 10 years, for sure they'll have about 12,000 people within the next seven to 10 years. It's a planned community of 70,000 to equal the population of Sherwood Park. It's been quite a large thing to be considered.

Ardrossan. The developers call it the kingdom of Ardrossan. It's planned to be an urban centre of about 15,000 people. That's within the borders of Strathcona Park right now. Bremner right now: I think this would be one of your more interesting questions to answer, where should this be? It currently is within Fort

Saskatchewan-Vegreville, but again just keep in mind where that is going into the future.

I think I've covered off the developments. I've covered off the federal boundaries commission's errors and praised this commission, your predecessors, for their great work.

I'll just, lastly, mention about Sherwood Park. I'm quite proud of the electoral history there. It's always number one or two in terms of voter participation in provincial elections, or voter turnout. It's had four parties represent the urban riding of Sherwood Park since 1986, when the boundary was formed. I would say that from a Sherwood Park perspective we feel quite independent and really love the identity of being the riding of Sherwood Park. It is a place we're quite proud of. We are still the world's largest hamlet, and we will continue to be that, hopefully, going on into the future.

I'm happy to take questions from you and have discussions about whatever's on your mind.

The Chair: Greg, starting with you.

Mr. Clark: You are an excellent listener, so you've pre-empted my question about where things are. That's exactly what I was curious about and to sort of quantify it. And just to make sure I heard correctly: Bremner within the next five-ish years is 10,000 to 12,000. Is that sort of the working plan?

11:20

Mr. Kasawski: Yeah. Like, the whole plan is for 70,000 in that area that's identified there. Like, it will be a community very similar to the population of Sherwood Park. The groundwork is just starting, so me just thinking like a – I'm falling on that a little bit. I'm looking at Cambrian, which is, on that map, where number 4 is, which is in my riding. It's expected to be 12,000. That's their I think it's called an area structure plan. I saw that was 12,500, their plan. So now they're starting the first, I guess, division within Bremner. This is a Qualico development, so I'm just going to say about 12,000 is what they'll probably have before the next boundary commission.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

Dr. Martin: Thank you for your presentation, and go mighty hamlet. I live in Sherwood Park, and I have read the area structure plans because I'm a geek for that kind of thing.

Mr. Kasawski: You gotta be.

Dr. Martin: So I have – no, they're actually very well written. There's better prose there than most of them. But I wanted to press a little further on your identification of these growth pods. I mean, you're absolutely right, but Bremner: if they're cutting ground this summer, you know, that's very good. Cambrian has already started. Ardrossan: no, not yet, right?

Mr. Kasawski: Ardrossan?

Dr. Martin: Yeah.

Mr. Kasawski: They're selling lots and building homes in Ardrossan.

Dr. Martin: Okay. That's good. We've been having a discussion among ourselves about what counts as new growth. You know how people go on. A developer buys a parcel and then maybe doesn't develop it for donkey's years. You have identified parcels that are tangible and imminent growth zones, and that's what we like to hear, so I thank you for that. As you point out, Bremner's not in

your electoral district, but it's so adjacent that it is worth bringing to our attention.

Mr. Kasawski: Yeah.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

The Chair: Susan?

Mrs. Samson: No. Good presentation. Thank you.

The Chair: John, any comments, questions?

Mr. Evans: No. Thank you.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, sir. As I said, we do appreciate your presentation, and I look forward to the rest of the morning. Thank you.

Mr. Kasawski: All right. Thanks for your work on this.

The Chair: That now brings us to Laura Paquette. We're only 25 minutes late from what they told you, but please proceed.

Ms Paquette: I'll try to keep it short. Good morning. My name is Laura Paquette. I am born and raised in Edmonton, and I would like to speak about Sherwood Park as well but also Edmonton-Meadows.

I've travelled to about 25 countries, so you can say I love maps. I'm familiar with them. I have some thoughts on the naming of the ridings as well, but I have a deep appreciation for both how communities function and how they're represented. I was a teacher for 15 years, in Edmonton Catholic schools for 12 of them, and I also own some rural property in Tofield, which is at the far end, basically, just off the boundary of Strathcona county down highway 14.

I want to talk about the importance of keeping Sherwood Park intact as a riding largely unchanged with a few tweaks perhaps to take into consideration the new areas. Also, Edmonton-Meadows is another growing area. If you're familiar with the map that Kyle had up, just imagine it's still there. Good.

Sherwood Park, actually, Strathcona county came up with their own map, and I ripped this one off a stack of them at the town hall. One side has Strathcona county, the expansive area all the way up to Elk Island national park, and then on the other side – very interesting – they've decided what to focus on in terms of the urban map, and I like what they did with that. I'd like that to be the riding of Sherwood Park because it really has a sense of identity of the urban population in Sherwood Park.

As I said, I have some rural property near Tofield. Lived there on that acreage for three years, and now I've moved back to Edmonton-Meadows, where I've spent most of my adult life, but I work in Sherwood Park, so I commute back and forth all the time.

There is Sherwood Park. A lot of these ridings look like jigsaw puzzle pieces, and I do love a good jigsaw puzzle, but I think it can be a bit confusing for people when you try to explain that there are two MLAs for Sherwood Park and there are two ridings both called Sherwood Park. One is Strathcona-Sherwood Park, not to be confused with Edmonton-Strathcona. We get that quite a bit, too.

It's divided down Clover Bar Road, and I would advocate for moving that over to highway 21 because certainly it's a weird place to divide it, where even the county itself identifies the urban catchment of Sherwood Park, the hamlet itself, as being more of a square shape. I would love just a nice cube of Sherwood Park and to take into consideration one other new development that Kyle didn't mention, Hillshire. That is just south of Wye Road. There are

houses being built and bought and sold there right now, including some higher density homes that look like single-family homes, but they've built in a legal basement suite. They're thinking with higher density in mind, so you have these legal basement suites already part of the plan. I believe that the riding of Sherwood Park should include that Hillshire as well because the routes that people travel and get to school and work are all along Wye Road.

I'll skip over what Kyle has already talked about. He's a great advocate for Sherwood Park.

On a personal note, my daughter attends a francophone school in Sherwood Park. We speak French and English at home. Her francophone school board is a public school board, the Conseil scolaire Centre-Nord, that covers all of Sherwood Park, and it goes up to Fort Saskatchewan, all the way out to Tofield. Really, a great school because I could live anywhere in that whole zone and she would stay in the same school. They are growing so fast. They're building a brand new building, and it's opening in September in Sherwood Park, and that is along Regency Drive, so just outside of what the boundary is now because of the dividing line being Clover Bar Road. It's another example of how Sherwood Park has kind of this unique identity, that everyone at this school might live all around but all the birthday parties and all the events, everything is in Sherwood Park, the bowling alley and Millenium Place rec centre. The schools, the services, the community programming all reflect a cohesive urban identity. Sherwood Park residents vote together, learn together, and live their lives together, so they should be represented together by one representative.

As the community grows, we want to take into account Cambrian, as Kyle said, north of highway 16; Hillshire, which is south of Wye Road; as well as Salisbury Village. All the neighbourhoods are identified on this map as well, so I could leave it here. They're beginning to have community associations. Some of them are more well established, so a lot like the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues. Sherwood Park has some community associations as well.

Right now the boundaries confuse voters in Sherwood Park, and a lot of people don't understand why the county map is very different from the electoral map provincially.

Because I want to keep it quick, I want to switch over to Edmonton-Meadows. It's thematically very similar, but it's an odd puzzle piece that could be a square. I love the simplicity of very natural boundaries. I believe Edmonton-Meadows includes a lot of new growth as well. My son is starting high school in Edmonton-Meadows. They have a brand new high school – it's been open one year already – called Elder Dr. Francis Whiskeyjack. It is right beside the Edmonton-Meadows rec centre and along 17th Street there. There we go. It's an interesting shape. We've got a by-election happening in Edmonton-Ellerslie, which is south of 23rd Avenue, but I do believe Edmonton-Meadows should extend all the way to 50th Street and follow the Anthony Henday and the Whitemud although the sense of identity as being part of the Meadows really starts at 34th Street. East of 34th Street people consider themselves more in the Meadows. There's even a sign that says "welcome to Mill Woods," and that's the west side of 34th Street. So Meadows is unique.

11:30

All along that bottom chunk there looks like Florida maybe, the panhandle. It is Aster. All of that is serving the new high school. Brand new developments there as well and a lot of high-density apartments and things, too. That population is going to go up. Other than that weird blip at the bottom, it could go over to 50th Street. I think it's great the way it is, so that cut-out should probably be part of Edmonton-Meadows.

The Chair: Would you mind going to the map?

Ms Paquette: Sure.

The Chair: I have two disabilities: I'm not from Edmonton, and I can't read the street names. Would you mind pointing those out?

Ms Paquette: I live here, and 17th Street is right here. There is the Anthony Henday Drive freeway here, and just going up here is all new neighbourhoods there. The new high school and the rec centre are right in here.

The Chair: But you suggested cutting off at 34th.

Ms Paquette: Right now 34th Street is here. East of 34th Street people identify as being part of the Meadows, and things are called the Meadows. They have community leagues as well. Laurel and the Meadows are two different community leagues. Really, this whole area, the natural boundary for it would be 50th Street. Right now part of this is Mill Woods, and part of it is Ellerslie, so it's a bit of a hodgepodge, a bit of a pinwheel thing going on there. I do think that Edmonton-Meadows could just be a nice, simple square from 50th Street to the Henday and Whitemud at the northern boundary of it.

The Chair: That's going to put us at a really high population level, though. You're at the max right now.

Ms Paquette: Yeah. Ellerslie is quite big, so we needed to reduce some of Ellerslie, and that's what I would lose. You know, there's some give and take there of the growing city. Certainly, it's great the way it is, but it's worth taking into consideration the growth happening east of 17th Street.

The Chair: Okay. Good.

Mr. Clark: South of 23rd Avenue logically belongs as well.

Ms Paquette: Yes. This is the Laurel neighbourhood, and they've got their own community league as well, but that certainly is a weird cut-out to belong to the rest of Ellerslie, which is south of the Anthony Henday.

The Chair: You did indicate you were going to talk about names.

Ms Paquette: I do think there should only be one Sherwood Park.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms Paquette: Edmonton-Meadows is just fine the way it is.

Ardrossan and Bremner are two great names. Strathcona county, Ardrossan, and Bremner are real hubs for that second Sherwood Park riding. Tofield probably more closely identifies with Strathcona county as well. That's another community that could be ...

The Chair: So Strathcona county, Ardrossan, and Bremner.

Ms Paquette: Yeah. And Sherwood Park is unique and distinct as its own hamlet identity.

The Chair: Perfect. Okay.

Ms Paquette: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. I'm pushing a little bit on time. Where do we start? Mr. Evans, a very quick question?

Mr. Evans: No question.

The Chair: Susan?

Mrs. Samson: I'm good. Thank you.

Dr. Martin: Just one. Strathcona county straddles three electoral districts and has done so for a long time. If people are confused, have they been confused for a very long time?

Ms Paquette: Probably. It really is because of the word "Sherwood Park" being in both and the proliferation of googling everything. I think when they look up "Sherwood Park MLA" or "Sherwood Park, who do I vote for?" or "Where do I vote?", that confusion happens.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

The Chair: Greg?

Mr. Clark: No, I'm fine.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much. Do you want to just pass that up so we can take it along?

Ms Paquette: Strathcona county on one side, and the little neighbourhood names are all over the map.

Mrs. Samson: Great. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Victoria Pearson.

Ms Pearson: Good morning, panel. I imagine it's been a very long few days for you so far. My name is Victoria Pearson. I am a lifelong Edmontonian, and I come before this panel as a community volunteer and advocate that has spent the past decade poring over electoral maps to connect communities with their elected representatives. I recently moved to Edmonton-Gold Bar, which is where I am raising my family, but I previously lived in Edmonton-Riverview, and I still do work there. I'm going to be talking about both of those ridings.

I believe that a fair and inclusive electoral map needs three things. It needs to be easy to understand and navigate, it needs to be a reasonable size to effectively represent the communities, and it needs to respect existing boundaries like municipal borders. Specifically talking about the third point there, rural representation versus urban representation, I think those communities have very different needs. They really have, in Alberta, specific differences between rural and urban but also between large urban centres like Edmonton and smaller urban centres like Leduc or Sherwood Park.

The recent legislation changes state that the boundary commission may consider municipal boundaries when drawing the map, but I believe it's imperative that these borders are respected. This will ensure elected representatives can focus on specific issues that impact their communities and better advocate for their constituents.

A pertinent example that has been brought up a couple times here: Edmonton-Gold Bar extends from the Mill Creek ravine in Edmonton all the way out to the edge of the city, where it buffers up against Sherwood Park. So the industrial area between Edmonton and Sherwood Park forms a really natural barrier between the two regions, and if we don't respect the municipal boundaries, a potential riding could encompass the two municipalities. It's simply illogical to have a riding that represents the edge of Edmonton and the edge of Sherwood Park but is separated by large swaths of industrial land and highways. The

populations may look the same on the surface level, with many families, a high likelihood that people work in Edmonton and are commuting by car, but the barrier of the industrial area would make it very difficult for an MLA to effectively engage both sides of the riding.

Further on that, to consider rural-urban, or urban ridings would result in MLAs needing to triage the concerns of constituents and would dilute their ability to effectively advocate for their communities. Different concerns could get ignored entirely depending on the makeup of the riding, if it has a higher proportion of rural or urban constituents, and their corresponding concerns.

Another pertinent example would be the federal boundary commission, because they just completed their work. They did a really effective redistribution, in my mind, where they changed the previous Banff-Airdrie electoral district into the Yellowhead riding, where Banff is now encompassed with the other areas in the national park and then Airdrie-Cochrane. I think that just really helps emphasize the more appropriate representation that constituents will receive, with people in Banff, Canmore, and Jasper being represented by the same MP since they have similar interests and challenges with being a tourist hot spot and existing in a national park. And then the MP for Airdrie-Cochrane can focus on issues that smaller urban centres may be facing and rural areas as well, like industry and development.

Next, I want to talk about population growth because Edmonton has seen a very significant increase in population growth and density. The new ridings that we're talking about – the commission is preparing on adding two new ridings – I believe should be placed in areas with increased population growth. The federal boundary commission split the two south Edmonton ridings into three, where they're adjusted to respect the Whitemud as a natural northern barrier. They also added a riding in northeast Calgary and the above-mentioned Airdrie-Cochrane.

A key factor when considering population growth, particularly in Edmonton, is recent densification. The central ridings of Edmonton-Gold Bar, Edmonton-Strathcona, Edmonton-Riverview, and then Edmonton-Glenora and Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood all have increased housing density because of the new zoning rules that the Edmonton city council has put in place. They allow for multiple units on one lot anywhere essentially in the city, and it's up to eight units. We are seeing in Edmonton-Riverview, in particular, a drastic increase in these four- to eight-unit lot developments, which means that the population and density is going to be increasing significantly but not in the same way that it is increasing in the south. In the south you're seeing a lot more, like, single-family dwellings, and there's a lot of newcomer populations that are coming into the south, but then in Edmonton-Riverview you're looking at just an increased density. So I really don't think that the central ridings in particular, Edmonton-Riverview specifically, should change significantly at all because their populations are still going to be representative of what is the current makeup, but I do think you would want to consider that densification when looking at the boundaries in the city here.

11:40

Lastly, I want to talk about use of navigation. I think it's important how residents conceptualize their immediate area for any electoral map. Residents within Edmonton would be more likely to feel closely connected to the city rather than connected to nearby communities like Sherwood Park or Leduc. If we again look at Edmonton-Gold Bar and Edmonton-Riverview as examples, residents in Edmonton-Riverview are separated by the river but connected by the Whitemud for vehicle travel and the river valley path network for biking and walking. Their daily habits frequently

take them from one side of the river to the other for work, school, or errands, but in contrast the residents in Edmonton-Gold Bar do not frequently travel to Sherwood Park and more often are travelling toward Edmonton's downtown or toward the University of Alberta. My trips to Sherwood Park are for specialty stores and visiting family mostly whereas – it's a specific trip rather than something that I do daily.

Overall, that is my presentation. Thank you for taking my perspective into consideration. I look forward to seeing the proposed map in the future.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Pearson.

Questions? Starting with Mr. Evans.

Mr. Evans: No. But thank you for your presentation.

Mrs. Samson: I'm good. Thank you.

Dr. Martin: Well, to be consistent, we have asked several other presenters, and perhaps you've heard us ask the question about growth pods. I very much appreciate the remark about the zoning bylaw having changed so you can densify pre-existing lots. I think we heard a presentation this morning about Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, and I think we are going to see that bylaw as a significant driver of population growth there.

Now, Gold Bar itself doesn't really have any more space to put in more ground-level residences. Do you, off the top of your head, know of any imminent and tangible construction of residential units in Gold Bar?

Ms Pearson: Well, my home neighbourhood is Bonnie Doon, and a fair amount of the buildings there that used to be small, single-family houses that were built from the '50s and '60s are now being turned into a duplex or even a fourplex. I specifically live in a duplex that was built 10 years ago, and as I was wandering around the neighbourhood, there was a particularly remarkable development a few blocks away where it was eight units on one corner lot within Bonnie Doon. They were like quite large. It wasn't just two or four in one house and a couple of garage suites. It was, like, two townhome rows on a corner. There are these significant developments that are happening within our mature communities. We're seeing the real estate turnover to be pretty quick, and the lots are not just sitting. They're either being developed or new families are moving in.

Dr. Martin: I would ask a similar question about Riverview.

Ms Pearson: Riverview is similar.

Dr. Martin: Particularly west of 149th Street.

Ms Pearson: That's exactly where I was thinking. Yeah. If you're looking in the areas around where the new LRT is being built, 87th Avenue and 156th Street, there are a lot of developments that are coming up on the fourplex kind of build with four basement suites. We're seeing them along 95th Avenue. Not so much on 87th Avenue, because there are more apartments, but in that kind of Sherwood, Jasper Place, Meadowlark area.

Dr. Martin: Okay. Good. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Pearson. Appreciate it.

Ms Pearson: Would like a copy of my remarks?

The Chair: Please. Leave it with Aaron.

Okay. We've got three presenters before noon. Ben Kroeker.

Mr. Kroeker: Well, good morning, everybody. Let me just first off say that I just want to acknowledge that you guys have difficult decisions to make as a commission, and I recognize that populations shift and move and change, and so Albertans need appropriate and equal representation. It's important, obviously. I also have to beg the commission's pardon. It's the first time that I have done this, and so I have to apologize for my inexperience. I'm not bringing with me a lot of stats or political theory, but just some observations as someone in the community.

My name is Ben Kroeker. I am a pastor. I serve at Steele Heights Baptist Church in the Edmonton-Manning riding. I also live in the neighbourhood of McConachie, which is about seven minutes north of Steele Heights Baptist Church in the McLeod-Steele Heights area.

I didn't become a pastor for power and prestige. In fact, I feel like a little part of my soul dies a little bit each time someone addresses me as pastor. I became a pastor to serve the congregants that are in our midst and also our community as well, which is why I'm here today. One of the things that encourages me as I speak to MLAs and MPs and councillors and candidates is that, oftentimes, what I hear from them is that they are in their position to serve their communities as well. I'm thankful that I see that a lot of the times.

I find that it is easier to serve a community in an area when there is cohesion and history. One of the pastors that I work with, the lead pastor at our church, Darren Platt, often talks about community or Edmonton being built up around community leagues, community associations, and neighbourhoods. Edmonton is a federation of those aspects. So there's a cohesion to being identified together. As you serve each other as neighbours, live together, as your children go to schools together and play sports together, there's a cohesion that comes from being in a neighbourhood. There's also a cohesion that comes when you're interfacing with representation as well. In our area, it's MLA Heather Sweet. I think that makes it easier when neighbourhoods can identify together and bring their concerns together as well.

It also makes it easier to serve out of history. The church I work at and serve at celebrated 50 years in that location in 2021. I've been able to serve there for eight years, and you definitely get a sense of the history and that they have been there for so long. Oftentimes we talk about, starting that church, there was a field, and then houses grew up around that church. When you have a history together, you build an identity together as well. So it doesn't help when, at a representation level, an identity gets split as well when history builds up connection with each other.

Breaking up a community makes it harder to interface in a cohesive manner and also build a collective history together. So my encouragement to the commission would be to consider bringing whole communities and neighbourhoods into new boundary lines if that's what's necessary to balance out population growth, which is definitely something that we're experienced in in that far northeast of Edmonton, and divide that by clear distinctions and separation by things like major roads.

That, I suppose, is my encouragement as someone who serves in the community and lives in the community as well. So thank you for indulging this inexperienced representation.

11:50

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Kroeker. Appreciate it.

Questions, Mr. Clark?

Mr. Clark: Yeah. We have Edmonton-Manning, as you can see from our population. Gold Bar, which is a fabulous place as well, is

over quite a bit, about 21, 22 per cent over. I'm curious if you have some thoughts on where we can shift things around. You know, I do take your point and find it very compelling about communities of interest, with, like: what are those sort of magnets? It's sort of question one, but also: where's the growth? We know south Edmonton is growing a lot. We were chatting earlier about Edmonton-Manning. I'm kind of curious what the status and state of that growth is. Where is it happening, and what do you think belongs with what?

Mr. Kroeker: Do you want me to head to the map?

Mr. Clark: Sure, if you can. We'll send you the microphone so our friends at *Hansard* can grab your comment.

Mr. Kroeker: Oh, walked right past it. That's great. Yeah, definitely.

My house didn't exist six years ago. The neighbourhood isn't built around that, and we're seeing that just in this corner up in here, where I live. The church that I serve at is on 149th. That is in here, right around here. Definitely growth is coming up over here, and there's still – we walk around the neighbourhood and there are houses being developed and growing, single-home dwellings as well as apartment buildings as well. Also, the Gorman area around here is also scheduled to be developed, and then the Horse Hill community up in this direction is kind of up and coming as well.

I don't know if I have any major suggestions as to kind of where that representation should be distributed, you know, other than to kind of really encourage, like, keeping distinct communities together. One suggestion might be in terms of kind of, like, dividing it by major thoroughfares or roads, might be to kind of redistribute this section right there. Again . . .

Mr. Clark: Sorry. I was playing with my map when you did that. Is that Manning Drive?

Mr. Kroeker: Yeah, so Manning kind of around to the Henday. It looks kind of funny, but . . .

Mr. Clark: Sorry. Everything west of Manning kind of belongs together, and everything east of Manning belongs together?

Mr. Kroeker: Maybe even just this kind of triangle might be a suggestion, and there would definitely be some community distinctions within those as well.

Those are some of the things that we're observing, the church, and then just as someone who lives in the community.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

The Chair: Great.

Unless there's a burning question, I think we need to conserve time.

Mr. Kroeker: Absolutely.

The Chair: Take no offence that we only let you answer one question, sir.

Mr. Kroeker: I don't, and I thank you for listening to the ramblings of an inexperienced . . .

The Chair: Yes. Thank you very much for your presentation. They weren't rambling.

Okay. That takes us to Stephen Smith.

Mr. Smith: Hello, everyone. Thank you for having me here. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this commission. My name is Stephen Smith, and I am from west Edmonton, specifically the riding of Edmonton-West Henday. If we can get that on the map there, I would appreciate it. I had originally intended to make this submission just a text-based one, so if your takeaway is that this could have been an e-mail, I agree with you. I just ran out of time. Fortunately, that means that I won't take up too much of your time.

I wanted to, you know – just a little background about myself. I grew up in Edmonton-West Henday, sort of in this west Edmonton area, for my entire life, went away to school, came back and now live here again. I'm currently seeking a house in this constituency as well.

I wanted to speak to the commission today to just reflect on one concern that I had about the redistricting, which is the possibility of breaking apart parts of cities. I think it's very important to keep cities together as a piece of effective representation for the people who live in those constituencies, and I think that would also track with the way in which communities have developed here in this constituency. What I mean by that is – having grown up in this neighbourhood, I wanted to discuss what may look like a natural boundary but is in fact not.

If I can go to the map. Is it working? All right. One of the previous folks did this, and it looked like fun. Here on the Anthony Henday Drive this may look like it would be a natural place to put a boundary. I think one of the previous presenters suggested that, you know, using major arterial roads. But I wanted to just emphasize that there is a substantial amount of community that sort of goes overlapping from these neighbourhoods through to these neighbourhoods, right? Over here in this west Henday area you have local grocery stores, local community areas, gathering spaces, libraries, even a golf course that is consistently and repeatedly used by people who live in this neighbourhood, which is where I am, but also kind of all the way north up in this area northwest of the constituency.

Anticipating some of the questions that I've seen you discussing so far: in terms of where the growth is, in the next seven years it will be almost entirely in the northwest section of this constituency. That is, as I've emphasized, somewhere that does have a deep tie to Edmonton. Those are areas where you have new development that is occurring already as well as new development that is scheduled to go. You can see that they've plotted out areas for both new homes and new homes that will include basement suites.

Yeah. I just wanted to emphasize that all of that is, in fact, a natural part of Edmonton, a place where there is quite a bit of overlap with the folks further to the west. I would strongly suggest to the commission that it continue to hold those places in the constituency and indeed connect them with Edmonton rather than – I believe the next riding to the west would be Drayton Valley-Devon. I don't think there would be a substantial community overlap among folks in Drayton Valley and folks in Edmonton, if that makes sense to everyone.

The other thing that I wanted to ensure that the commission was discussing: I understand that you have the opportunity to put in two additional seats. I wanted to make at least a strong suggestion that one of those seats would be in Edmonton because that is where we're seeing a substantial amount of growth, as you've heard both in this presentation and in previous ones.

Questions, please.

The Chair: Well, actually – oh, sorry. Go ahead.

Mrs. Samson: I'll take one quick one. Thank you for your presentation. I'm just looking at the population. It's over, as you

know. You're sitting next to Edmonton-Glenora. You have expressed your opinion of respecting the city boundaries. Do you see a natural cut-off in that area, which is the top of your riding? It would be the northeast portion of your riding, to move it over into Edmonton-Glenora.

Mr. Smith: I think that would make quite a bit of sense. There's a large industrial area between the population centres. In the southwest area of the constituency and in the northwest area of the constituency is where the bulk of the houses are, and then that industrial area makes sense as sort of a boundary. If you were to cleave off the area sort of north of Yellowhead and connect that with Edmonton-Glenora, I think that would certainly make sense. Then that would allow, I would assume, for those west areas to continue to be in the same constituency that they are now.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Evans: Just one question. You would say that north of the Yellowhead would be the dividing line?

Mr. Smith: I think that would be – that's one reasonable suggestion.

Mr. Evans: And your significant growth that you were talking about: isn't it, really, north and west of the Anthony Henday?

Mr. Smith: Allow me to clarify. North and west of the Anthony Henday is where that significant growth would be. On the east side of the constituency, north of the Yellowhead, is where I would merge with a different riding. Again, that was the one suggestion there I wouldn't object to.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you.

12:00

The Chair: Thank you.
Julian?

Dr. Martin: I have one question, in that we are charged with thinking about names. Do you like the name of your electoral district? Is it distinctive or directive enough?

Mr. Smith: Well, the current name is Edmonton-West Henday. I like that. As someone who lives adjacent to the Henday, it feels like home to me. But if you were to, you know, come up with an Edmonton-West – I don't know. I think I've always described myself as from west Edmonton, so that seems reasonable to me.

Dr. Martin: I can't wrap my head around the fact that Calder, which is not west by anybody's stretch, is part of a riding called Edmonton-West Henday, and a large part of your riding is not west of the Henday. I find it confusing, personally.

Mr. Smith: Yeah, I think that's reasonable. Having spoken to many people in that area, I think they also are sort of surprised to discover that they're in the same constituency as Lewis Estates and some of the other neighbourhoods there.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay.
Greg?

Mr. Clark: No. That's fine. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Smith.

Mr. Smith: Thank you.

The Chair: I believe our last presenter now is Audrey Johnson-McGillis.

Audrey Johnson-McGillis: Should I curtsy?

The Chair: Good morning.

Mr. Clark: Definitely not.

Audrey Johnson-McGillis: All right.

Anyway, I appreciate you giving me some time to give my suggestions. It's been quite confusing for me because I don't usually sit around looking at maps and wondering about boundaries. Not usually. I think about personal boundary space, usually.

You know, when we talk about renaming, I've been hearing a lot of the discussion here about how confusing it is to have these names with electoral districts. In the spirit of reconciliation I suggest that these names be changed to Indigenous names. South of the border would be Blackfoot Nation. Historically that is the nation that existed here long before Edmonton was Edmonton. North of the North Saskatchewan River is all Nehiyaw, the Cree nation. I would suggest that names all be changed to that to accommodate the true history of Edmonton, or amiskwaciwâskahikan, as it used to be called. I would love to see it go back to that name because that is the original name. A lot of people don't understand that history.

I also don't think districts should be racially motivated. I don't think that anything should be put in place along the lines of where communities are built with just Blacks living with Blacks, Whites living with Whites, Chinese living with Chinese. We're supposed to be a multicultural city, multicultural province, multicultural Canada. That's what we spout all over the world, you know. As treaty holders we agreed to that. I just wrote a few notes on things I've heard people saying. You know, that's the pride of Canada, this multicultural expression, so I think it's important that that continues, where people learn to immerse into the Canadian culture versus bringing other cultures here and expecting us all to be accommodating to other cultures.

You know, we as Indigenous people have accommodated many, many other cultures without any licence and any consultation and no permission given, right? I really think it's time that we sit at the table with some of these things. People are not asking us what needs to be done. You know, I asked to sit on the commission because I really believe there needs to be Indigenous representation. I wasn't invited to sit on your commission. So I think we need to move forward in that area somewhat.

We all know that every culture has its own beliefs and values. What is Canadian culture? That's been a big, huge question lately. What is the culture of Alberta? I don't believe we're just oil rig pigs. I don't believe that at all. I believe we're more than that. We used to be great for beef. We used to be great for wheat. We used to be great for other things and well known for that throughout the world in economy. I think that we need to get back to understanding that this multiculturalism – people need to immerse in schools. I work part-time at a school right now, and instead of just teaching the Indigenous students that I'm there supporting, I am inclusive of all the other nations that come because I know some children are traumatized from other lands. I want them to have a sense of belonging to Canada. I bring them into my teachings, into my classroom that I have every now and then, and I explain things to

them, how things are done in Canada, which are different than their country.

You know, we need to express that throughout the school system. We need to express that throughout the electoral systems, and we need to not create this division. I know that in India they have a concept of higher and lower – I can't remember what that's called off the top of my head. Class system?

Mr. Evans: Caste.

Audrey Johnson-McGillis: Caste system.

I do believe that if we continue this road of separatism, creating little small pockets of communities that are separate from each other, we will create that here in Canada, and we need to not do that.

You know, in our culture there's no such thing, and I think Indigenous values and beliefs need to be taken into consideration in all of these talks and all of these meetings because our values are quite inclusive. They are quite inclusive. We've had to learn the English language. We've had to learn Canadian values. We've had to learn non-Indigenous beliefs and ways of being, so if people want to be Canadian and want to live in Edmonton, Alberta, then they need to know these values as well.

I strongly recommend that you do not – do not – create according to race. You're going to hurt the children. They're not going to learn how to be productive in a business world that is more inclusive. They're not going to learn how to be productive in high schools that will not be able to just be formed according to race. Universities are not according to race. So you're limiting. I know that personally as an Indigenous person because we had to immerse to get education, and we've benefited from that. You see me here talking? I'm one of the benefits.

Please take this all in consideration, and I ask that you please consider creating Indigenous names for the electoral districts.

Also, the other point, there was an electoral district that was put in place across the street from Enoch. When the construction was taking place, they didn't pay due diligence for research, and now there sits a graveyard that was once part of Enoch reserve in the middle of a community. That shouldn't happen. There should be some research done on all these electoral places prior to anything being changed so that there's nothing destroyed that has spiritual, historical significance for our people.

That's all I have to say.

The Chair: Thank you very much. Can I zone in on your naming suggestion? Do you have a particular electoral district that should be renamed? If you said it, I missed it.

Audrey Johnson-McGillis: Well, what I said was that historically – a lot of people when they do the welcome to Treaty 6 territory, which we're on right now, they are inclusive of all the nations that live here presently. They don't take in the historical accuracy, which is: south of the border, Blackfoot; north of the border, Nehiyaw.

The Chair: Okay. Which border?

Audrey Johnson-McGillis: Pardon me. The river is the border; that's how we looked at the border.

The Chair: Okay. Good. Yeah.

Audrey Johnson-McGillis: I'm sorry. South of the river, Blackfoot; north of the river would be the Nehiyaw.

The Chair: So south of the river, all Blackfoot names.

Audrey Johnson-McGillis: Yes. That would definitely demonstrate an act of reconciliation but also demonstrate an act of true historical accuracy.

The Chair: Can I ask you to do some homework? There are several ridings south of the river. There are several ridings north of the river.

Audrey Johnson-McGillis: Uh-huh. Are you going to pay me?

The Chair: I'll pay you what I get paid from this.

Audrey Johnson-McGillis: Absolutely. You pay me; I'll do all the research you want me to do. I can do that.

Mr. Evans: He doesn't get paid.

Audrey Johnson-McGillis: What did you want, though? You're not going to have me forever. What kind of research are you looking for?

The Chair: I didn't ask for research; I just asked for suggested names for ridings.

12:10

Audrey Johnson-McGillis: Oh, suggested names.

The Chair: For the riding. Yeah.

Audrey Johnson-McGillis: Oh, all right. I can give you that. I'm an elder in the community. I can do the ones for – and know I have friends who are south of the river.

The Chair: Because maybe you're part of our past.

Audrey Johnson-McGillis: Okay.

The Chair: Okay?

Audrey Johnson-McGillis: All right.

The Chair: Good.
Any other questions?

Dr. Martin: Thank you for your presentation. I wanted to pick up on your remark about the graveyard. Is that immediately east of Winterburn Road?

Audrey Johnson-McGillis: Yes. It's actually between Anthony Henday and the Winterburn Road, and it's right in the middle of a community. When the Indigenous people – and I went there and did ceremony before they broke ground for construction, because nobody did their due diligence for research. The people that asked me to come and help with ceremony, they said: you know, our ancestors are buried here; how can they do this? I said: you need to address this before they even go to permit.

But how do you address it if you don't know that people are doing things? Like, we're not accustomed to meeting people and discussing things, and I think there needs to be more of that, right?

There are grounds – like, I mean, maybe if you look in the south side, we have the one just before the bridge. They built that after everything was done. You know, moving forward, we can start taking care of these things rather than having to have a battle or protests and rallies happening. There's a way of preventative measures, if you will, but also respectful measures, right?

The Chair: Greg?

Mr. Clark: Just to thank you so much. We genuinely appreciate and honour you coming and talking with us today. Thank you.

Audrey Johnson-McGillis: I truly appreciate you listening and not looking at me with incredulous views, like, soft looks or whatever. I appreciate that, you know. It makes me feel good, just like Jell-O.

Mrs. Samson: I just wanted to make the same comment as the rest of us up here, in that I really appreciate the fact that you came out today and shared with us a part of your history, heritage, and culture. We haven't had a lot of input like that, and we've been seeking that input to no success, successful today, so thank you.

Audrey Johnson-McGillis: I'm an elder of the community at large, right? I've travelled throughout the land everywhere and did all kinds of things. I hold a pipe. You know, what they should have maybe asked me to do was be an elder who travelled and be part of the committee meetings because that makes it more comfortable for Indigenous people, plus I get the word out.

Mrs. Samson: Yes.

Audrey Johnson-McGillis: Right? And then people are comfortable coming to talk because then they know they can talk their way. There's a fear of doing things properly. Like, the pastor coming, he was afraid; well, multiply that 100 times. Indigenous people just don't feel like they'll ever be heard.

Mrs. Samson: I'll make a note of your comments. Thank you.

Audrey Johnson-McGillis: Yeah. You can reach me any time. If you want me to come to other meetings and just be present, I'm willing to do that. I think our voices are important.

The Chair: Please leave your information with Aaron, your contact person.

Audrey Johnson-McGillis: I will. Thank you. [Remarks in Cree]

The Chair: Mr. Evans, anything?

Mr. Evans: No, thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much. We appreciate it.
Okay. That closes out our morning now. I think we'll adjourn and reconvene for 1 o'clock if we can get lunch in the meantime.

[The hearing adjourned at 12:13 p.m.]



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

Edmonton

Tuesday, June 3, 2025
1 p.m.

Transcript No. 7

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission

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Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Edmonton

Public Participants

Brooks Arcand-Paul, MLA, Edmonton-West Henday
David Eggen, MLA, Edmonton-North West
Dave Hardman
John Kolkman
Bobbi-Sue Menard
Aaron Paquette, Councillor, Edmonton City Council
Nathan Poon
Peggy Wright, MLA, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview
Ruth Yanor

1 p.m.

Tuesday, June 3, 2025

[Justice Miller in the chair]

The Chair: Well, good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to this afternoon session of our second day of public hearings in the city of Edmonton.

We, of course, are the Electoral Boundaries Commission of Alberta, which has been recently appointed by the Speaker of the Legislature. I am going to divert my usual introductory remarks and just have you – if you wish to know our background, please go to our website. We want to increase traffic to our website. You'll learn about Mr. Evans, you'll learn about Susan, you'll learn about Julian, you'll learn about Mr. Clark and myself by reading the bios on that website.

There are two things that we have to do as a commission, two highlights or factors that we're tasked with. First of all, the current Legislature is made up of 87 members. The legislation that has been given to us and given us our marching orders is to provide a plan with electoral boundaries marked out for 89 electoral districts, so we're moving from 87 to 89.

In terms of a timeline for our commission, the commission was appointed by the Speaker of the Legislature in late March, and from the time of our appointment we've got a one-year window to do our work. In April we met as a commission on a couple of occasions, and starting late May, last week, we started public hearings in southwestern Alberta. We've now come up to Edmonton and going east this week, and we will be conducting public hearings from now till the week of June 23rd.

We take the information that we receive from the public hearings, and we proceed then to provide a report based on the information we hear from the public hearings, based on the population data that we've received, and based on the existing boundaries. By the way, we've also received many written submissions through our website, leading up to about 10 days ago. We take that information and prepare what's come to be known as an interim report – it's not called that in the legislation – and we file or register that interim report with the Speaker of the Legislature by late October.

That immediately becomes a public document published in *Alberta Gazette*, and we will then hear public feedback based on that initial report. Throughout November to February we will hear public submissions. We don't know the dates yet or the manner in which we will host those public hearings in response to our interim report. And then based on that feedback, we complete a final report and register that report with the Speaker of the Legislature, and the Legislature will then take it from there and pass appropriate legislation.

Of course, you know that we're moving to 89 ridings, and our second big task is to deal with this huge population growth that this province has experienced in the last several years. According to this graph you will see that for the 2017 Electoral Boundaries Commission they relied on a population figure of just over 4 million people in the province. With that population of 4,062,609 the average electoral district perfectly would have 46,697 population. Of course, that's not necessarily the target. The target is plus 25 per cent or minus 25 per cent, and you see that range there. This time around, some eight years later, we are using a population figure of 4,888,723. With that taking into account 89 electoral districts, that brings us to a figure of 54,929, and the range is spelled out for you there in the bottom, 41,000, approximately, to almost 69,000. That's our target. That's the number of ridings, and those are our two big tasks.

In working to reach those two big tasks, we are doing the public hearings, for which we are grateful we have had a full day yesterday

and last evening, a full morning this morning, and this afternoon is busy and this evening is busy, too.

So we welcome and thank you for coming to participate.

Very quickly, our legislative mandate – and if you are here, and if you're keen on the process and have done some background work, you probably looked at the act – we have to determine the criteria that we use to come up with our report based on the points in the legislation in order to achieve the term “effective representation.” We do not have the one person, one vote principle like in the U.S. Our principle is more effective representation. In achieving that goal, we will be considering several factors: the relative sparsity and density of population throughout the province, common community interests and organizations – and I have to say that I as a non-Edmontonian have learned so much about your communities of interest and the community leagues in this city; it's been a real valuable exercise for us – and in the city but more importantly in the outlying areas we rely on geographical features to create boundaries. We'll also consider communication and transportation routes and marks of delineation throughout the province.

Our goal is to create understandable and clear boundaries. That is a big challenge. We've heard a few complaints about: well, they're in this community, they live here, but they vote – some confusion, so we're really going to work hard to make sure we have understandable and clear boundaries. Of course, the legislation gives us the option to consider other important factors that we think are important in constructing the rationale for all the new boundaries. In order to do that and complete our task, we need to hear from you, and that's why we are so grateful that you are here to assist us in this regard.

We do have – you probably received a note from the administrator of the commission. By the way, I should introduce our clerk and assistant, Aaron Roth, who's just put his hand up. Many of you know him. He is keeping the trains on time, for which we are grateful on the EBC railway, so if you have anything in writing you want us to receive, please leave a copy with Aaron.

You probably heard that we are restricting presenters to seven minutes with a three-minute time space for questions and dialogue. I have probably honoured that time limit more in the breach than the observance, so if you want to go on a little bit far longer than seven minutes, don't feel I'm going to cut you off or open a trap door or anything like that for you.

Let's head into the first presenter. In fact, for the first time we're ahead of time. Mr. John Kolkman, if you're here, we're ready to receive you. Thank you.

Mr. Kolkman: Good afternoon, hon. Justice Miller and fellow commissioners. I am a resident of the Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood electoral division. I am appearing before the commission in a personal capacity. This submission looks at boundary changes through a province-wide lens rather than making recommendations for boundary changes in specific electoral divisions.

In drawing an electoral map for its interim report, the commission should follow municipal boundaries wherever possible. In the case of Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge, and Red Deer, this means all seats should be contained within city boundaries. Within these cities, recognized neighbourhood boundaries and major geographic features should also be followed where possible.

Apart from respecting municipal boundaries wherever possible, population parity is the other important principle that should guide the commission in establishing electoral division boundaries. The 2017 commission based its boundary recommendations on 2016 federal census population. The 2025 commission – your commission – made the correct choice to instead use Statistics

Canada 2024 provincial population estimates to establish new electoral divisions. Using more recent population data is allowed under the redistribution rules of the act. The 2021 federal census is too outdated to be useful for establishing boundaries for an election not scheduled to take place until 2027.

1:10

Population growth since 2016 has been very uneven across the province. The populations of the cities of Calgary and Edmonton have been growing at over twice the rate of the rest of the province. As a result, the population variance in city of Calgary electoral divisions has grown from 1.7 per cent in 2016 to 9.8 per cent in 2024. The population variance in city of Edmonton electoral divisions has grown from minus 0.3 per cent in 2016 to 8.5 per cent in 2024. The metro area around the city of Calgary, especially the cities of Airdrie and Chestermere, the town of Cochrane, and Rocky View county are also experiencing above-average population growth. The metro area outside of Edmonton and the larger regional urban centres other than those cited above have experienced population growth at about the provincial average. The rest of the province has been experiencing much slower population growth if any at all.

To achieve population parity while still allowing for effective representation of rural and remote areas, electoral divisions in an 89-seat Legislature should be distributed as follows. Twenty-eight seats for the city of Calgary, an increase of two. Each Calgary seat would on average have a population 2 per cent above the provincial average. Twenty-one seats for the city of Edmonton, an increase of one. Each Edmonton seat would on average have a population 3.3 per cent above the provincial average. One additional seat for the metro area outside the city of Calgary, centred around the rapidly growing city of Airdrie.

This would remain the same: two seats each, as is currently the case, for the cities of Lethbridge and Red Deer. Only minor adjustments to existing boundaries are needed to equalize population between electoral divisions in these cities. One seat each within the boundaries of the cities of Grande Prairie, St. Albert, Airdrie, Medicine Hat, the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo, and the hamlet of Sherwood Park, with an adjoining seat in the immediate vicinity of these urban centres. These urban centres have populations too large for a single seat but too small for two seats.

Then a reduction of two seats in the rest of the province. While regrettable, a reduction of rural seats outside the major population centres is necessary to ensure that all Albertans have roughly equal representation in the Legislature.

To summarize, an 89-seat Legislature should add two seats to the city of Calgary, one additional seat to the city of Edmonton, one additional seat to the metro area north of Calgary, and a reduction of two seats in the rest of Alberta.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this presentation. I welcome any questions you may have.

The Chair: Thank you very much, sir. Can I get you to just repeat the one-seat city? You rattled through a list. St. Albert . . .

Mr. Kolkman: Grande Prairie, St. Albert, Airdrie, Medicine Hat, the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo, and the hamlet of Sherwood Park.

The Chair: Good, thank you. We have lots of time.

Mr. Evans, any questions?

Mr. Evans: I thought you were suggesting two seats for Airdrie.

Mr. Kolkman: Pardon me?

Mr. Evans: Two seats for Airdrie. Isn't that what . . .

Mr. Kolkman: Well, currently – if you look at the current configuration for Airdrie, the city is kind of divided in half with the western half of Airdrie being combined with rural parts of Rocky View county and the town of Cochrane. Then the eastern side of Airdrie is, you know, parts of Rocky View county going down to the town of Chestermere.

What I'm suggesting is that Airdrie could have a seat all by itself. With the current population of about 85,000, it's still going to be about 30,000 above the threshold, so a chunk of Airdrie would then have to still be combined either on the east or west. Whatever works best from a community of interest point of view or just a numbers point of view. I'm actually suggesting that there will have to be a net addition of one seat in that entire metro area that encompasses the cities of Airdrie and Chestermere as well as the town of Cochrane and the rural parts, which aren't so rural anymore, of the Rocky View county.

In fact, one of the things that's interesting about Rocky View county is that it's developing several fairly dense urban centres. Langdon has certainly grown. Now there's one on the west side called Harmony. Its population has been growing considerably above the provincial average.

Does that clarify?

Mr. Evans: Yes. Thank you.

The Chair: Susan?

Mrs. Samson: My question, if you want to just expand on it a bit more, is your take on – you would like to see the commission follow the municipal boundaries and then, drilling down further, respecting the communities, but in your list of seats we will have some urban-rural mix. Do you consider – like, when we talk about the cities, we talk about Calgary, Edmonton. Cities like Medicine Hat, Airdrie, St. Albert are the smaller cities, and there would be a hybrid model there. Did you want to speak to that?

Mr. Kolkman: Yes. That is inevitable. I mean, you can only stay within municipal boundaries in four cities: Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge, and Red Deer. No other city is really large enough to have two seats. Several of them, the ones that I cited, are too large for one seat. So it is a bit inevitable. I think that, obviously, the goal should be to try to minimize the number of additional municipalities. That's actually probably fairly easy with the hamlet of Sherwood Park because currently most of the rural portion of Strathcona county is in a separate Strathcona-Sherwood Park riding. A number of the other cities – like, St. Albert actually has an urban seat, but then it does have about maybe a third of its population or a quarter in with the adjoining municipal district of Sturgeon, where I think there is a community of interest.

Instead of just trying to, you know, recommend specific boundaries, I mean, you obviously have demographers available that can try to ensure that those rural seats, if that's what you call them, which are inevitable in the cities that I cited, have as much community of interest as possible in terms of where they extend into the adjoining municipality.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: Julian. No questions?

Greg.

Mr. Clark: Just really thorough. I do appreciate that. Yeah. You've suggested one more for Edmonton, yet if we did that, we'd still have a 3.3 per cent population.

Mr. Kolkman: Correct.

Mr. Clark: And we have growth – significant growth – certainly in south Edmonton but, you know, a lot of new inflows. One of the struggles is that if we're already – you mentioned that in 2017 the average for Edmonton was a little bit below average, .4 per cent or something.

Mr. Kolkman: Yeah. Well, my number is .8 per cent.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Whereas if we start at 3 and a half over, by the time seven or 10 years goes by to the next commission, potentially we're in a similar situation. If we were to add yet another seat to Edmonton, do you have a thought as to where that would come from?

Mr. Kolkman: Well, it would have to come from more rural and remote parts of Alberta. I guess the reason I'm suggesting – I can kind of give you a bit of a number. I kind of ran the numbers. You know, if Edmonton were to receive two additional seats, up to 22 seats, the average population would be 1.4 per cent below the provincial average.

It's kind of interesting. In some ways Calgary got a little bit shortchanged last time. They had, you know, several per cent above average in terms of their population. It's also just reflective of the fact that Calgary has added more people than Edmonton. I mean, the percentage growth has been similar since 2016, but because they started as a larger city and because they were not at parity – they were above average in population, the average riding – that sort of tipped the balance toward two more seats for the city of Calgary and one more seat for the city of Edmonton.

1:20

I mean, it's pretty clear in Edmonton where the additional seat has to be. It has to be on the south side. You know, there are three or four ridings there that are all more than 25 per cent above average in population. Calgary is a little bit more complicated because there's been growth in more places north and south and even some growth in, like, that Beltline area. It's surprising how much the population of Calgary-Buffalo, which is in that Beltline area south of downtown, has actually increased.

I mean, two additional seats give a significant amount of flexibility in terms of where, but it goes without saying, you know, that you create one additional seat or two additional seats, and you then have to change boundaries in surrounding seats as well. That's kind of inevitable.

Mr. Clark: We have observed that, yes.

I just want to say thank you very much. You've obviously done a lot of work and research and a very thoughtful and thorough analysis, so thank you.

Mr. Kolkman: You're welcome.

The Chair: You've caused more questions. Sorry.

Dr. Martin: Yeah. Thank you for your presentation. I want to put a hard case. Given the principles that you asserted, reasonable in and of themselves – namely, respecting municipal boundaries and also, wherever possible, the internal boundaries within a city like Edmonton – well, what are we going to do, then, with some of the so-called mature neighbourhoods that are not growing at the rate at the periphery, which is pretty much what we would expect? In your initial propositions would you tolerate us moving boundaries around in some of the internal existing electoral districts?

Mr. Kolkman: Yeah. I mean, this is the work that your demographers are going to really have to get busy with.

Dr. Martin: No. It's actually us, unfortunately.

The Chair: We're all demographers now.

Mr. Kolkman: Oh, you're all. Okay.

There's no question there are some of the ridings that are in more established parts of the city that are probably going to have to grow a little bit, and if they do have to grow, as much as possible, I think, you know, do it with an adjoining neighbourhood that has somewhat similar socioeconomic characteristics if possible. That is sort of something that's likely going to have to happen.

Some of these ridings have already grown. I'll give you a good example. I live in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. When I first became politically active back in the '80s, they were two separate ridings. Now they're one riding, and even then, you know, I think today they're a little bit below average in population, not a lot but a little bit. I mean, Calgary-Buffalo is a bit of an exception to that in Calgary because of the incredible growth that's taking place, well, downtown but particularly in that Beltline area. It's actually, I believe, about 10 per cent above average, but that's not the difficulty. There's a little bit of evidence of that, not quite as much, in the Edmonton-City Centre riding as well according to the 2024 population.

But it goes without saying, yeah, that some of these established neighbourhoods are – you know, there's going to have to be a little bit of expansion. I think the most critical thing is to follow neighbourhood boundaries in Edmonton because we strongly identify with neighbourhoods, and the city is clearly identified. Each of these neighbourhoods are, oh, anywhere from maybe 3,000 – some on the edge of the city are bigger, but in the mature neighbourhoods they tend to be 3,000 to 6,000 people. You can sort of work with the variances often and instead of cutting a neighbourhood in half, try to, you know, if you have to add a neighbourhood, have the whole neighbourhood rather than, let's say, cutting it in half down a residential street or whatever.

I guess that's the only advice I can give.

Dr. Martin: No. That's good advice. I mean, I was teasing a colleague perhaps from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood this morning who described extremely well the neighbourhood character and the cohesiveness. I was teasing them: what are you going to do with 50th Street? Is that really a divide of a community? How did that happen? It is not immediately germane to our task, but here you have what looks to be very, very similar if not identical residential patterns on either side of 50th Street in your riding.

Mr. Kolkman: Right. Yeah.

Dr. Martin: It was artificially done at some point.

Mr. Kolkman: Yeah. Well, it's inevitable. Like, every riding does have – it'd be very few ridings that don't have some sort of a major roadway bisecting them. Again, I think the most important principle is – I do believe the 2017 redistribution did follow neighbourhood boundaries even though there were a couple of ridings that had to cross the river, but even in doing so, they were able to not divide neighbourhoods. I believe that they were successful in following neighbourhood boundaries even if some of the ridings looked a little odd because maybe they have to cross the river or something. I guess that's going to be your job and the job of the commission. I haven't really looked in detail at this point in terms of, you know, what neighbourhoods could be added where. I think for Edmonton

it's pretty much a given that there will have to be a seat added to the south side, but even there you can do that in different ways, right? Yeah.

The Chair: Mr. Kolkman, thank you for your comprehensive presentation. When I say comprehensive, I mean you not just focused on your own riding but a good overview of the province. I have one question, though, relating to your percentages. I just want to make sure I understand how you came up – in your proposal part of your presentation you said 28 seats to Calgary. That means plus two, and they would be about 2 per cent above the average. By average do you mean that figure up on the screen?

Mr. Kolkman: Yes. That's the figure I mean in terms of that. Yes. It would be 2 per cent above that average.

The Chair: Okay. And in Edmonton it's 3.3 per cent.

Mr. Kolkman: Correct.

The Chair: Okay. How did you calculate to get those percentages? Did you take, for example, Calgary and add up the 28 seats?

Mr. Kolkman: Yes.

The Chair: Yeah. Just walk me through that range. Those are helpful communication tools for us. I think we want to crib those in our report. How did you arrive at them?

Mr. Kolkman: Here's the spreadsheet. What I did is that I took the 2024 populations from your website, but instead of just – and that was a really helpful map. Whoever designed that did a great job. Kudos to that person. What I did is I took all the ridings, you know, based on their current population, the 2024 populations, the existing ridings. I totalled them all up, and that was a total of 1,568,519, and then I divided that by the 28 seats, an increase of two seats, for Calgary.

The Chair: Okay. So that's the way you did it.

Mr. Kolkman: That's the way I did it. Yeah. I just kind of, you know, ran your numbers into a spreadsheet, and that way I was able to divide out the Calgary seats, the Edmonton seats, and so on.

The Chair: Okay. Can you leave that spreadsheet with Aaron?

Mr. Kolkman: Sure. Yeah. I have it. It's kind of, you know, a working sheet, but I'm happy to give it. Should I give it to Aaron, then?

The Chair: Yeah, please.

You know, seriously, the comprehensive nature in which you've approached this is helpful. Sometimes we just get so focused on the boundaries, and you've taken the broader view, which is very helpful, and you've also balanced it. We hear a lot about: don't touch the municipal boundaries; no hybrids. You recognize that hybrids are effective, like, in Alberta somewhere.

Mr. Kolkman: Well, I mean, particularly once you get into rural Alberta, you have multiple municipalities. Even there you should try to follow – like, if you add in 10 municipalities or something rather than carving the municipalities up, you know, instead of trying to have the MD of Opportunity all in one riding rather than split between two ridings, for example.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much. We may call on you when we go to the rural parts and tell them we're taking away two ridings.

1:30

Mr. Kolkman: I guess you'll give them my e-mail address.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much. Thanks.

Our next presenter, Kathy Telfer, is not here. Hopefully, she'll be coming.

Brooks Arcand-Paul, please come forward. Good afternoon.

Member Arcand-Paul: Good afternoon, Commissioner. Thank you so much for having me. [Remarks in Cree] Just introducing myself in my language. I just said: hello, my name is Brooks; I come from the Alexander First Nation. I am the MLA for Edmonton-West Henday, and I'm presenting today on two topics of interest, Edmonton-West Henday and Indigenous rural identity.

As an Indigenous person and very likely one of the only Indigenous voices at these hearings I bring a different perspective than you may have heard about with respect to those rural ridings. I've also had a chance to visit every corner of this province since being elected and thereby have a good flavour of the unique circumstances facing the different communities around Alberta, particularly for Indigenous nations.

Before I get into that, I'd like to discuss Edmonton-West Henday at length as I have direct, first-hand knowledge of its riding given my connection to it. As a resident in one of the communities of West Henday for three years and counting and particularly on the west portion of West Henday, I see the immense growth that has occurred since the last boundary redraw in 2017. In particular, the house that I live in now was an empty lot in 2017, but so were many of my neighbours' homes not only in my neighbourhood but the nearby communities within West Henday and also south of our riding in Edmonton-South West.

Since 2017 and even since the last census data was released in 2021, there's been considerable growth in the communities of Hawks Ridge, Kinglet Gardens, Rosenthal, Secord, Starling, Trumpeter, and Hawks Ridge. As of the last census we have added 11,000 new residents in these communities alone. I would add, though, anecdotally from living in the area, that number sorely underrepresents the number of folks that actually now call these communities home in present day. I would guess that that number might be a few thousand more today. When we get to the new census data, I would not be shocked if we were well above the target population of 68,000 today.

This poses a unique challenge for Edmonton-West Henday as a riding, because we try to balance between representing the northeast portion of the riding, which has had static growth in that time – those neighbourhoods, Athlone, Calder, and Wellington, grew between 2017 and 2021 around 200 people. The more established neighbourhoods such as the greens, which I refer to as Lewis Estates, Belmead, La Perle, and Terra Rosa in the west end of the city have only collectively grown by 400 people.

Anecdotally, this is consistent with the development and growth that I've seen in the communities at Lewis Estates with the exception of Stewart Greens, which continues to experience growth and expansion and which I will anticipate will add a few thousand or so new West Henday residents in the next five years should growth remain as steady as it is. So going over the numbers, it is very clear that with the strictly west-end neighbourhoods, those truly west of the Henday, we've added the equivalent of the three northeast communities of Calder, Athlone, and Wellington to West Henday and then some.

Commissioners, Alberta was indeed calling, and many people responded, and our city must be reflected in that growth by adding another seat or two, I would argue, in this fine city to reflect the fact that Edmonton has grown by over 200,000 since the last redraw. Keeping that in mind, I think at least one of the two seats that you must allocate should be in Edmonton-South.

All this to say I do think that Edmonton-West Henday needs to be largely the same given the growth. As an MLA I'm often asked to mediate on city issues, as you can appreciate, which is a difficult task to balance without stepping on the toes of the incredibly capable public servant councillors that we have. Adding in county councillors and different jurisdictions that have different needs, desires, and realities will create an unevenness that Albertans do not want.

I grew up on my First Nation, which meant that I spent a considerable amount of time in Morinville. People move to these small towns to escape this city. The needs of those residents are different than even nearby St. Albert and are even further departed from those in Edmonton. To ignore this reality would be a great disservice to the people we are all charged to represent. For example, crime and policing are very different than in the rural portions of what abuts West Henday, and each side of the current border deserves an MLA who understands their very unique needs.

Finally, I do not think adding any further rural communities – that's to say, anything outside of the city of Edmonton limits – would be smart. The urban connection is something that is full even in the communities in the north by Big Lake, and you can see the difference with the estates that may be considered more rural right next door along 231st Street. The commercial development, access roads, and city services make these communities – Kinglet Gardens, Starling, Trumpeter, and Hawks Ridge – way more urban than even the few estates that are a few kilometres away.

I want to stress the need for ridings to be kept intact with municipal boundaries and would add further that to split cities or add a rural counterpart is doing a great disservice to the residents in communities like the ones I represent as they're much more homogeneous in interest than their rural counterparts even just across the road.

I'd like to now turn to another issue I'd like for the commission to consider throughout this province, which is fair representation for Indigenous communities. If we look at how we've split up similar communities in southern Alberta – namely, I think of Cardston-Siksika and Livingstone-Macleod, which separate three First Nations that are all Blackfoot. These First Nations share much more than just the language. They share the same constituent concerns and deserve one MLA that represents them and their unique needs. While that is just one example, I do think there is some use for the commission to consider First Nations or Métis communities when it comes to redrawing the boundaries in these areas because oftentimes a local representative can have better success being able to represent each of them equitably as oftentimes they have overlapping political needs. For example, we already have this in Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin, which includes the four nations that share much social and political reality.

Then on the other extreme we have one lone First Nation, Horse Lake, in the riding of Grande Prairie-Wapiti who are minorities in that riding, just as Enoch Cree Nation is in Drayton Valley-Devon. The commission should not allow for this to happen because it drowns out First Nation voices when they are just one First Nation in a riding that includes many non-Indigenous voices. For example,

Horse Lake should be added to Central Peace-Notley, and Drayton Valley-Devon should include O'Chiese and Suncchild First Nations to adequately represent these First Nations' collective interests into Drayton Valley-Devon. Good examples of this are already happening, like I just mentioned, including Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche, Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul, Lesser Slave Lake, and, to an extent, Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

Finally, I do see some separating of First Nations in Livingstone-Macleod. The Eden Valley reserve and the Big Horn reserve in Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, which are both part of the Stoney Nakoda Sioux Nation, and where they are presently divided up by electoral boundaries which disconnect them from their First Nations in Banff-Kananaskis: I would recommend reuniting those areas.

Thank you, commissioners, for listening to me today. Those are my submissions. I appreciate the time that you have taken today to hold this public meeting and the work that you've undertaken. It is a great public service to the great province of Alberta.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'm going to exercise my chairmanship here and ask the first question. I want to just highlight what our numbers say for West Henday. The 2017 report relied on 43,046. You've built a house since then, as did many others, and we're now relying on 63,212. So you're content with those figures.

Member Arcand-Paul: I wouldn't say that I'm content with the figures. I would say that, anecdotally, you can see there are numerous high-rise structures, multilevel units that are being built within West Henday, both in Rosenthal and Secord and Starling. We are seeing that growth.

The Chair: Okay. Yeah. Maybe I should have been more clear. Our figures that we're relying on were as of July 2024. My next question was future growth. Future growth has already happened, obviously, based on what you've answered. Is it too hard of a question for you to crystal ball and say: well, what do you think? If your boundaries are untouched eight years from now, do you have any idea what this 63,212 figure would be?

Member Arcand-Paul: I would guess that it would be at least in the 70s if not 80s, particularly because there's a housing crisis. We need people in homes. And right now ...

The Chair: And you've got the land.

Member Arcand-Paul: We have the land. You know, the city councillors have been very clear that there's no other place to develop within central boundaries in Edmonton. They're moving to the outskirts, and ridings like mine are going to be absorbing that growth. Right now I'm fine representing these amazing numbers, but I worry that we will be well above that figure that we proposed, which is 60,000-plus. We will be well above that before the next rebound.

The Chair: So you'd be content with us taking some of your district away?

1:40

Member Arcand-Paul: If it comes to that, I would recognize that there would be some need for that, but I would not want to lose it to another rural riding. It needs to stay within an urban centre. Arguably, if that is the case, then we have to crystal ball and prepare for the future of Edmonton.

The Chair: Okay.

Your second point, which was very well made – it's close to my neck of the woods – is that you commented on Livingstone-Macleod and Cardston-Siksika and a third riding.

Member Arcand-Paul: Yeah. Livingstone-Macleod, Cardston-Siksika, and Banff-Kananaskis.

The Chair: Okay. How do we square that circle?

Member Arcand-Paul: It would be quite simple. Piikani is right next door. If you're looking at the electoral maps, there are little Indian reserves that are contemplated within Livingstone-Macleod, and that is a timber line that is held by the Piikani Nation. There are very few residents on that timber line, but it would be an inclusion of Piikani because it abuts the boundary of Cardston-Siksika as well, so an inclusion of them into Cardston-Siksika would make the most logical sense because they have that interest with the Blood and Siksika nations.

The Chair: Is there any way we can bring that riding up?

Mrs. Samson: Is it the Alberta map we want to look at?

The Chair: Yeah. Bring up the Alberta map.

If you could come up to the map and show us, then, that would give us some reference. You'll need a microphone.

Member Arcand-Paul: Oh, right. You know, I'm an MLA, a politician. I should know I should always have a mic on me. Thank you to the great staff making sure this is all working today.

Mr. Clark: While we're waiting, because I don't want to diminish from this, first off, I appreciate you very much sharing that perspective. It's something we've been talking a bit about as a panel, seeking out and finding more Indigenous perspective on boundaries, and this is incredibly helpful for us. I just want to thank you very much for that because it's something we've been thinking about, and we want to make sure we do our best to get that right.

While we're just getting that up, if I can ask an unrelated question, somewhat unrelated, I suppose.

Member Arcand-Paul: Sure.

Mr. Clark: Your Legislature colleague MLA Turton suggested a hybrid – I'm just trying to find my notes here, and my fellow commissioners can correct me if I'm wrong on the exact notes I wrote down – proposing that Spruce Grove-Stony Plain be carved out, Stony Plain heading into a combination of Drayton Valley and similar and Spruce Grove taking a piece of Edmonton-West Henday. His belief is that there's a lot of similarity across that Edmonton boundary, sort of people shop back and forth, good to have MLAs hearing different perspectives while acknowledging that different communities have different identities. That's the note I took yesterday when MLA Turton made his presentation. I just note you seem to have a different perspective.

Member Arcand-Paul: Yeah.

Mr. Clark: Same data set, same facts, different perspectives, so maybe you can just speak a little bit more to that.

Member Arcand-Paul: Well, first I live in that part of the riding, and I don't access Spruce Grove whatsoever. The highway there at

rush hour is the worst highway in the province, I would argue. It is very difficult to navigate that especially during high-traffic rush hour.

They are very unique in flavour. The municipality of Spruce Grove is of a different flavour than anything within the urban riding, so that split that would exist – there are different needs. Like I mentioned, St. Albert, Spruce Grove, particularly, they're the same type of flavour. They do not have the same needs and desires of the municipality.

I would argue that we need MLAs in those particular ridings to be able to represent their specific unique needs. I talked about policing and crime. Crime and policing in Spruce Grove is different than the city of Edmonton, and to split that up would cause disarray between the urban centre, which is Edmonton-West Henday and Spruce Grove. To add them to one riding, to say Edmonton-West Henday-Spruce Grove, would be a great disservice to the residents of Edmonton. Like I said, I mediate for city matters, and it is oftentimes a very difficult thing to even talk just solely about Edmonton police. Adding in another complement, which would be the RCMP, would create further disarray and further difficulties to provide adequate representation for the people of Edmonton, particularly the ones that need adequate representation for these issues.

A good example of this, Commissioner, is when there's crime happening on the edge of the city where I live, just off of 231st Street. That's the edge of Edmonton. I live right there. The RCMP do not respond. They do not have jurisdiction to respond. When we have any calls, it's oftentimes the fire, the Edmonton fire, that responds to anything of emergent nature, even with the pileups that happen on that highway. I'm just waiting. We've had one highway traffic incident there, and Spruce Grove does not respond. They do not send their county response team to us. We have to rely on the city. So to add that further complication would just be unnecessary, and it would create unevenness in representation for the MLA of that area.

Okay. Here's the map now. Do you mind if I show it, Commissioner?

The Chair: Yes. Please. Absolutely.

Member Arcand-Paul: Okay. I'm sorry. I have to walk right in front of this.

So right here we see Piikani, which is this little pink square right here. These are the two nations that I mentioned before. This the Blood Tribe and Siksika. As you can see, these are together in Cardston-Siksika. There's that little kind of cut-off, which abuts the actual reserve boundaries of Blood Tribe. If we cut Piikani to just include that little portion, that little corner, to include that representation, that would provide evenness this in that voice to provide adequate representation for the MLA. Right now you have two MLAs that are representing the same distinct, unique needs of the Blackfoot communities in southern Alberta.

Being able to just include them in that one insert – because right here, I mentioned, this is a timber line. This is an addition to reserve. For those not familiar with additions to reserve, they're not oftentimes habitable. They're oftentimes things that were added to them because they were supposed to be added to them under treaty. You see them dotted across. You'll also, when you're considering this, you will see that my nation has a little portion within – up north.

Sorry. Aaron, you can scroll up. In West Yellowhead. Sorry. Too far. Too far. Too far.

In West Yellowhead, you'll see, up north, there's a little pink portion there. Then just over – I think that's Central Peace-Notley.

This is Alexander First Nation. You have two carve-outs; they're not actual habitable nation. We have all of our oil and gas leases here, and you'll think that is a reserve that needs to be included. No. Those are not what I'm arguing to be included. I'm including where there are actual electors that need to be included in that.

I'm happy to come back and talk about those specific insets because this was the work that I did prior to getting elected. I'm an Indigenous law lawyer, and I have a great deal of interest in this, and I can come and explain.

Those aren't what I'm talking about. What I am talking about are things like this, where O'Chiese is one voice in Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, and then we have Enoch as well in Drayton Valley-Devon. Just north I mentioned Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, which does represent three different First Nations, including my First Nation, Alexander, Alexis, and Paul First Nation, whereas these two are alone in themselves, and same with up north here. Just north of Grande Prairie, Horse Lake is all by itself in Grande Prairie-Wapiti. Those are minorities in those ridings. I am just arguing to add them to our items that already have additional Indigenous First Nations communities or Métis settlements.

The Chair: What I hear you saying is that if we just expanded the boundaries for Cardston-Siksika to go west and encompass Piikani, that would bring Siksika, Piikani, and Blood all in Cardston-Siksika.

Member Arcand-Paul: That's right.

The Chair: That's very helpful.

Member Arcand-Paul: I forgot to mention, too, that Eden Valley, the one I also spoke about, is right here, and this is part of Stoney Nakota Nation right here in Banff-Kananaskis. So the inclusion of these two into Banff-Kananaskis would bring them back in line with their counterparts in Banff-Kananaskis.

The Chair: In Eden Valley there are residents.

1:50

Member Arcand-Paul: Yes, there are residents, about 200 or 300 people, but they still deserve adequate presentation.

The Chair: So it would be a minor adjustment.

Member Arcand-Paul: Yeah, precisely.

The Chair: Okay. Good.

Member Arcand-Paul: Any other questions, Commissioner?

The Chair: Yeah.

Sorry. I jumped in there.

Mr. Clark: No, I'm taking my time. That's great. Thank you.

Dr. Martin: That explained exactly where I was going.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you, sir. That information was very valuable. We weren't sure when we were looking at Livingstone-Macleod – no. It was Cardston-Siksika that was long and skinny, if it's the figure-eight one.

The Chair: Figure eight, yeah.

Mrs. Samson: We weren't sure because we have no input on: do those First Nation reserves even want to be together?

Member Arcand-Paul: Yeah. You can see it with their Blackfoot Confederacy. They're represented politically through the Blackfoot Confederacy.

Mrs. Samson: Okay. Good to know. Thank you.

Member Arcand-Paul: Thank you for the question.

Dr. Martin: I did have a question.

The Chair: Yeah. I did, too, and I forgot it.

Member Arcand-Paul: We'll come back to you, Commissioner.

Dr. Martin: What are we going to do with Calder?

Member Arcand-Paul: With Calder?

Dr. Martin: You know, we have this really sort of very odd, almost desperate set of boundaries for your riding, which now that I am a commissioner I can appreciate the difficulties they had 10 years ago with such matters. In the middle is the railway yards, the warehouses, the strip malls, the metal bashing. It's not really likely to generate a lot of residential development because it's a purposefully a commercial and industrial zone. The growth that you see is typically to the west of the Henday, but you know, none of that really affects the parts of your riding that are to the east of St. Albert Trail. Is that a fair characterization?

Member Arcand-Paul: I think that's a fair characterization. I would add though that the growth is very static in those areas, so we're not adding more development. If anything, this new type of development that I'm seeing in the community is infill. We're adding maybe one extra family on a lot that may have only had one, so we will only see a difference of a few hundred. If we are keeping them, I would imagine that pending a bust in the oil cycle, we won't see further growth in homes in the riding, which is totally possible with the way that oil is currently being projected.

I would argue that perhaps that growth may slow in the western part of the riding, in those ones that I argued that we already have well over 11,000, perhaps even 20,000, I would maybe say, right now today, presently. With that riding, I would really be sad to lose them, particularly because they have been part of Edmonton-West Henday since Edmonton-West Henday was created after the last boundary, that creation, and one of the things is that they know the people that they are voting for, and they just underwent a change from federal redistricting where they were under Edmonton Griesbach and are now under Edmonton Centre. So that lack of even representation will be felt if we lose those communities.

Dr. Martin: I bring it up because it is a hard case given that you and many presenters are talking about the cohesion of communities, whether it's through community league activity or any other theme along that line, and here we have an instance of quite the opposite. You have – I don't even know what the right word is – almost a distant satellite and in between is a nonstarter. There's no community there after 5 o'clock. I mean, it puts you in a bit of an odd space. Relative to an aspirational philosophy of a coherent community, you don't have one.

Member Arcand-Paul: Well, I would argue against that because there is a cohesion with respect to industry. The Walker yard is connected to Calder, Athlone, and Wellington. There are a lot of workers that go and work in the Walker yard for CN, and then we have the intermodal over closer to Starling, Trumpeter, and the Big Lake area.

The industry workers: I know first-hand of engineers that live and work in Starling that access intermodal, and Walker yard is also accessed by Calder and Athlone, so there is that connection with that industrial park. A lot of them also work in the industrial park nearby, so I wouldn't say that there is not a connection with the industrial yard whatsoever. A lot of the workers that work in those industrial parks, because there are multiple, as you identified, do also live within.

Another added complication is that there are conversations with the municipality to create supportive housing in the industrial parks, so that may mean that we have other residents that will be moving into the industrial park areas. That is something to be considered by the commission, keeping in mind the municipal moves that will be happening with respect to residents in those industrial areas. So, yes, there are no people that are currently living there, but there are plans by the municipality, by the city of Edmonton, to create supportive housing in those areas.

I wouldn't want to lose them because they do have that flavour and you don't see that anywhere along the line here in Edmonton, maybe except for the centre, where you have the main hub right in Edmonton-City Centre. But, again, if we are stranding intermodal, the workers around that CN Rail yard, we will then lose the flavour of CN Walker, which is a lot smaller than even across the road with Edmonton-City Centre.

Dr. Martin: That's a lovely answer, and I want to have a follow-up.

Member Arcand-Paul: Yeah.

Dr. Martin: Because you have now identified that residential growth potential in your last remarks, would you say that that is imminent and tangible or aspirational?

Member Arcand-Paul: Well, I think it is real. I think it is a real possibility. On both sides of the spectrum of this conversation about where supportive housing needs to go, they're both leaning towards putting them in industrial spaces. We saw that here in the riding of Edmonton-Glenora, where there was some push-back by residents in the area because it was too close to their community, so we're going to likely see them being moved further. The industrial parks in my riding: there's a large part of undeveloped area where they could put these supportive housing units.

On both sides of the spectrum of people arguing for, for lack of a better term, shelters for homeless folks, on one side they say to put them in the industrial parks, and on the other side they say: let's support them by putting wraparound services in industrial parks. So they're both landing on the same space. And where are these industrial parks? Well, they're on the edge of the city, including in Edmonton-West Henday. It is very likely that these will move forward because all candidates right now are arguing for that moving forward.

Dr. Martin: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Arcand-Paul. One last question, names.

Member Arcand-Paul: Sorry?

The Chair: Names of the constituency. Are you satisfied with Edmonton-West Henday?

Member Arcand-Paul: I don't think it reflects the community. I think because we have Calder, Athlone, and Wellington, it does kind of create that confusion.

The Chair: What's your recommendation?

Member Arcand-Paul: My recommendation would be, because we are purely Edmonton west, I would say Edmonton-West, but I know that name is already taken, I believe.

The Chair: Well, Edmonton-South West and Edmonton-North West.

Member Arcand-Paul: Edmonton-South West, yeah. Edmonton-West because the Henday is not the delineation mark. It doesn't touch Calder. I personally as an Indigenous person and reflecting, Henday is pretty interesting because they brought the Haudenosaunee; they brought the Iroquois over here, which are my friends and family, so I would like to keep that name very secular, if you will, to be reflective of the fact that we represent Edmonton west.

The Chair: Edmonton-West. I like it because of its simplicity.

Member Arcand-Paul: Yes, exactly. I think the Speaker will also agree with you.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you very much.

Member Arcand-Paul: Thank you, commissioners. I appreciate it.

The Chair: Thank you.

Moving on to our next presenter. Is Kathy Telfer here now? No. Peggy Wright. Okay. Good afternoon.

Ms Wright: Oh, I feel very short. I'm going to sit down in the chair.

Dr. Martin: I understand that feeling, feeling very short.

Ms Wright: It's a thing.

Thank you very much, commissioners, for having me here. I very much appreciate the opportunity to speak to a few of the issues that collectively you are dealing with over the next number of months. I certainly very much do appreciate your work.

2:00

As you've heard, my name is Peggy Wright. I am proud to serve as the MLA for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, which is up in the northeast end of Edmonton. I'm here today because I do indeed have the distinct honour to speak on behalf of the folks I represent. I also bring a somewhat unique perspective to things as well because I've not only represented the community since 2023, but I also had the privilege of teaching in the northeast of Edmonton for a period of about 24 years. I taught in the Beacon Heights area, which is in Beverly; taught in the Sifton area, which is in Clareview; taught at John Barnett, which is in the Kilkenny area; and also taught at Northmount, which is in the Northmount area. I really concentrated my teaching career in the north and northeast end of the city.

As a result, there certainly were some things that really shaped me as not only just a teacher but also as a person, that idea of north side pride. That indeed has also very much shaped the folks who call the north side and northeast part of Edmonton home. Whether folks have lived there for generations or whether they arrived a little bit more recently, people in the northeast of Edmonton really do share a fierce pride in community, a fierce pride in where they live, where they work, and where they raise their family.

Before I delve into some of the issues, I'd appreciate you considering as you go forth – I just wanted to take a brief moment to explain about the history of Beverly and Clareview, about some of those things which, although there are two names in there, they

actually really very much do share in common. Again, though it bears two names, Beverly and Clareview, and they are indeed divided by the Yellowhead, the riding is one that is absolutely unified by community. Its roots go back to the towns of Beverly and Belvedere in the early 1900s. Both were annexed to Edmonton in the 1960s, and their identities, both of them, were shaped by hard-working immigrant and working-class families, many of whom had a hand in building Alberta's energy, health, and education sectors.

This is a working-class riding. It always has been and I suspect always will be. It's a place where folks put in very long hours on job sites in warehouses, in care homes, and in classrooms. It's a riding full of folks who work hard and who often juggle multiple responsibilities and sometimes juggle multiple jobs. Many of the folks in the entirety of that area are not just working one job; they're working two, sometimes three, jobs. There is indeed, though, an ethic of hard work and as well an ethic of mutual support and an attention to community.

Folks may know about Beverly's coal mining roots. At one point I think Beverly supplied about 60 per cent of the coal that was required for electricity here in the city. But also that area of Belvedere, which was called north Edmonton at one point, was very early on anchored by the Fort Road Business Association. In both communities you will find very active small and medium-sized businesses, and that, too, has very much shaped the communities there.

Clareview came along in the 1970s to accommodate some new growth on that northeastern part. What you will often find – and this is something I found very, very true in my work as a teacher – is that you will have folks who maybe grew up in Beverly, grew up in that Belvedere area. They go off, they go to university, they go get a job, but oftentimes they will indeed return home, sometimes, particularly in both Belvedere and Beverly, to do things like buying their grandparents' or their parents' home. So there is indeed that sense of community, a multigenerational sense of continuity. Certainly, it's that idea of collective history that really does join the two together.

One of the things that I would urge you, as a result, to consider, then, is that idea of respecting municipal and community boundaries and, as I've spoken to a wee bit, talking about and considering those shared histories that some of these ridings do indeed represent and how those lived realities of the folks who live in those communities then make sure, because of the way in which the ridings are created, that that effective representation is indeed followed through and something that people can really depend upon. Representation isn't just about numbers; it's about identity, and it's of course about connection, and it's about ensuring that all voices are heard in our Legislature.

Further to that issue of considering that like communities must be kept together, I certainly know, given that we have Sherwood Park and a few communities to the north of us as well, that there might indeed be some discussion as to whether or not that eastern side of Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview might join with Sherwood Park. I'm here, first of all, to say that there are quite distinct differences between the folks who live in Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview and the folks who live in some of those outlying communities.

For instance, there are distinct differences in the type of housing that the folks live in in Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. It's about 40-ish per cent who live in single detached homes; 23 per cent live in row houses; 30 per cent live in apartments. When you contrast that with Sherwood Park, for example, 71 per cent of folks in Sherwood Park live in detached homes; in Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview it's 39 per cent. In Edmonton-Gold Bar, which is a riding to the south

of us, it's again higher, where 58 per cent of folks live in detached homes, and in Beaumont we're back up again to 79 per cent.

Median employment income I think is also a factor. Again, I spoke about Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview being a thoroughly working-class community. In Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview the median income is somewhere around \$60,000. Now, granted, that's a 2021 stat, so it could have risen a little bit from there. In Sherwood Park it's around \$83,000, and in Beaumont about \$86,000. Those are distinctly different communities even if you look at just those two things.

When you look at the diversity of the population involved, in Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview there are about 10.8 per cent of folks who are Muslim versus in Sherwood Park, 1.2 per cent, or Beaumont, about 1.6 per cent.

Visible minority populations. Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview is I think one of the most diverse communities in all of Edmonton. Certainly, Edmonton itself is diverse, but in Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview the visible minority population is somewhere around 34.9 per cent – I guess not somewhere; that's pretty exact – compared to Sherwood Park, where it's about 10 per cent, and Beaumont, where it's around 16 per cent, which really speaks to the diversity.

That really brings me to my final point, which is all about making sure that you also consider the diversity of the communities that you are looking at in your deliberations. Again, more than one-third of Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview's residents – and I know we're not the only constituency out there – identify as visible minorities, and more than 10 per cent of folks as well in Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview are Indigenous. That diversity becomes very much a strength and becomes very much central to that community's identity.

We've got one community in Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview – I'm thinking of the community as a whole in Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview – where there are halal grocers, culturally diverse schools, many, many prayer spaces, but another neighbouring community simply does not have those resources. These are two completely distinct, disparate communities. Again speaking to that issue of representation for racialized and diverse communities, representation in order to be effective needs to be as equitable as possible, so the diversity of ridings as well needs to be not only considered but I think needs to be one of the most important factors in your deliberations.

Now, I'm thinking I'm very close to my time at this point, or am I okay to continue? Okay. I will stop.

Dr. Martin: We want to ask questions. We're on the clock here.

Ms Wright: As Aaron will know, I can go on.

The Chair: Very good.

Mr. Evans, any questions?

Mr. Evans: No.

Ms Wright: Oh, thank you.

The Chair: Susan?

Mrs. Samson: Ms Wright, excellent presentation. Our figures show that the population in 2024 was 54,557. With the amount of work we have to do, it's nice to have some that are just nicely dropping into the parameters that we've been given.

Ms Wright: That's kind of neatly in the middle of the populations that you're looking at, right?

The Chair: Right in the sweet spot.

Ms Wright: Well, and we can indeed see that growth particularly in the Clareview area, but also I know that even in Beverly you find many, many more developments in terms of municipal housing happening, so it's right there in front of you. Folks can certainly feel it and I know are also experiencing it.

The Chair: You're a hard person to keep notes with.

Ms Wright: Because I talk really quickly. I know. I try and get through everything.

The Chair: I just wanted to confirm something. Did you say that one-third of your riding identifies as a visible minority?

Ms Wright: Yeah, about that. Well, yeah, 34.9 per cent.

The Chair: Okay. And 10 per cent Indigenous?

Ms Wright: Ten per cent Indigenous, yeah.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.
Julian?

Dr. Martin: Thanks. I know it is a fact that there is a community on either side of the Yellowhead, but it's passing strange that it survives with that massive divider in between and only two bridging roadways. And then, on top of it, Belvedere is divided by railway tracks and all sorts of things. You're suggesting that these three components cohere.

2:10

Ms Wright: Yes. Certainly, when you look at Beverly, much of the population of Beverly, for instance, will shop at the Tuesday farmers' market, but people from Clareview as well will go to what folks still term the Abbottsfield mall, Riverview Crossing mall. They might take the bus there, but many, many folks from both the Clareview side as well as the Beverly side go to that farmers' market. Likewise, many folks from the Beverly side know all about Jerry's Sobeys up in Clareview. Jerry is a fabulous human being, which is why people know about his Sobeys.

People do shop that corridor, and there are many folks, too, who work in the community and who use the public transit. As you've alluded to, we certainly do have the LRT. We've got buses that will take folks to Belvedere, will take folks to Clareview, or will take folks downtown or wherever it is they need to go.

Dr. Martin: Thanks.

Ms Wright: You're welcome.

Mr. Clark: I am learning so much about Edmonton – it's great – just the different neighbourhoods, communities.

I'll just say thank you for being here. The statistics you provided in quantifying communities of interest in Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview as distinct from Sherwood Park are very helpful. Thank you.

Ms Wright: Thank you.

The Chair: Can we mark you down as saying yes to keeping the name Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview?

Ms Wright: Absolutely. Yes.

The Chair: Okay. Good. That's what I thought.

Ms Wright: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you so much.
Ruth Yanor.

Ms Yanor: Hello. I'm wearing a face mask because I had oral surgery recently and don't want to get any immune challenges. I'm clear enough on the mic?

The Chair: Yes.

Ms Yanor: Okay. Thank you.

Well, good afternoon, Chair and members of the commission. I'm Ruth Yanor. I appreciate the hard work that you and your commission are putting in today and will be putting in in the months to come, and I thank you for your efforts. I must say that I'm not a fan of the conditions that you're forced to operate within. I was under the understanding that the current work is to receive statements of principles and concerns, and that's my focus. I have four for your deliberations.

First, the principle of equity. Presently there's a wide range in electoral boundaries and the voter populations they contain. This falls under point (a) in your list of directed considerations. For example, in 2024 Lesser Slave Lake had 15,704 listed voters; Edmonton-South West had 41,428. Each riding had one representative. There's no equity in giving 15,000 voters the voice and power of 41,000 voters. That put an Edmonton-South West vote around a third the value of a Lesser Slave Lake vote. The next rural riding sits at just over 19,000. The lowest urban riding is at 23,000.

Recent news states that Alberta has reached a population of 5 million. When Alberta had 2 million residents, we had 79 representatives, 25,000 constituents per representative in an ideal province. Eighty-nine representatives to manage more than a doubled population is vastly inadequate and does not match democratic aspirations. We'd be asking each representative to speak for over 56,000 Albertans if the ridings were equal. Merely adding two ridings is not adequate.

Canada committed long ago to representation by population. Rural overrepresentation needs to be corrected in a way that allows an adequate but not a deafening voice. The boundaries should be set so that every single rural vote is worth one vote or at worst 1.25 according to that 1991 Supreme Court decision. But definitely do not give rural votes the voice and power of three to four times an urban vote. That's simply not democratic.

Second, population growth, still point (a) of your consideration. From what I found, many Alberta counties have lost population while Calgary, Edmonton, and the bedroom community of Airdrie-Cochrane have gained. Calgary-North East had 66 per cent growth; 40 per cent growth in Calgary-South East. There's been a 50 per cent increase in Edmonton-South; 43 per cent in Edmonton-South West; 40 per cent in Edmonton-Ellerslie. Some of these urban ridings have 50 per cent more than the provincial average. That could make a vote in some of the rural ridings worth far more than four times a vote in one of those ridings. Not ethical. Also, a consideration in promoting voter apathy. Why vote if my vote is worth one-quarter of a rural vote? It's lost before we start. Any new ridings, it follows, should be in Calgary and Edmonton, and I do suggest a few rural ridings might need to be absorbed into their adjoining ridings to achieve a more even population distribution.

Third, the principle of fairness. This touches on points (a) and (e) of your directed considerations. Urban voters pay more in both income and property taxes than do rural voters. Urban voters receive more services, and their property taxes reflect this. Urban centres: their services, including care centres, are utilized by rural voters whose taxes don't much support these services. Urban taxes

subsidize rural services such as health care, infrastructure, emergency services, schools, and education. It's good that we support all Albertans in having a decent standard of living. However, blending rural and urban into a single riding makes for divided needs and might likely serve one of the pair or both poorly.

I raised my three children in rural Alberta. I lived rurally for 23 years. I understand something of rural concerns. There are certainly issues commonly shared across ridings – crime, safety, cost of living, jobs, access to care and services – but municipal boundaries should be respected. Urban voters have a number of urgent and expensive concerns not shared by rural voters: homelessness and encampments, parks, emergency services, affordable housing, aging surface infrastructure for a booming population, public transportation. Most AISH recipients live in urban dwellings.

Juggling between competing values is not good for any representative's mental health. Crazy, bicycle-spoked boundaries that simply follow the bedroom-community commuters would not honour point (e) of your directed considerations. Nearly 90 per cent of Alberta's population lives in urban municipalities. Nearly 90 per cent. This should be heavily weighted in your deliberations. There should be a respectful recognition of the share of the provincial needs that are carried by urban voters and their paid taxes. Electoral boundaries can go some way to recognizing that urban and rural voters require distinct ridings and dedicated representatives.

My final point, point (d) of your considerations. The province-wide broadband program to improve Internet access has made possible remote care, remote education and access, and remote working. This has reduced some of the urgency for improved transportation. It's created options: being a health care provider online, working remotely, and creating online searches in a timely rather than time-out fashion. Improved Internet access may have resolved communication issues and reduced some of the pressure on the transportation. Constituents can access their representative online and vice versa.

2:20

The pandemic advanced our ability to participate in Zoom meetings, and we discovered that online meetings are a cost-effective way of connecting. Online communication has been an equalizer. Accessibility has been improved and continues to improve. Communication access is less a concern for rural residents due to this. It should be a reduced concern for this commission.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Yanor. Did you say what riding you were in?

Ms Yanor: Edmonton-Gold Bar.

The Chair: Edmonton-Gold-Bar. Okay.
Any questions, starting with Greg?

Mr. Clark: No. Thank you very much. I appreciate your presentation.

The Chair: Julian?

Dr. Martin: No. I like the clarity of how you lay out the values, the principles, as you call them, that should underlie our work. We on this commission have been debating these ever since we were appointed, so we're not unaware of the difficulties in this regard. You will appreciate that by the act we have been given two new ridings. So point taken, but we have to struggle with a set of practical problems even though we are fully alive to the principles

that you announced. We're not forgetting these principles, but we are trying to accommodate them in the straitjacket we live in.

Ms Yanor: I appreciate the straitjacket you're in, and it needs to be pointed out that it's an unrealistic one.

The Chair: Susan?

Mrs. Samson: Thank you again for your presentation, Ms Yanor. It was quite good. Thank you.

Mr. Evans: Nothing from me. Thank you.

The Chair: Yes. Thank you again, Ms Yanor. You did encapsulate for me the historic challenge when you said: 2 million people, 79 ridings. We now have eight more – no, sorry; 10 more ridings for 3 million more people. What's complicated about that?

Ms Yanor: Yup. Exactly.

The Chair: Thank you. Thank you for your comprehensive presentation.

That leaves us one more presenter before the break. Mr. Eggen.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Justice Miller and members of the boundary commission. I appreciate this opportunity to have some brief comments and a discussion about Edmonton-North West specifically and around provincial boundaries and constituencies generally.

I think I might be in a unique position as MLA for Edmonton-North West. This is the third boundary commission that I have seen since my tenure as an MLA, and I can see the challenges that each of the boundary commissions that I've seen respectively in the past and now are facing. Some of them are unique, but although the volume of population increase here in the province of Alberta is unprecedented with your commission to deal with, certainly the trends in regard to urbanization, growth of suburbs, and some specific growth in other areas have been a trend for the last three boundary commissions. You know, perhaps some of these problems are exacerbated this time because of volume, but the general situation is the same.

I think I have Edmonton-North West up on the screen now. Some of the specific issues that I will discuss in regard to Edmonton-North West, I guess, provide a case in point or an example of other places and more general circumstances around the province. If I can just maybe direct your attention to the north – maybe can I just get it up there, and I'll just point, please?

The northern edge – this is the Henday, and you can see that my constituency jumps the Henday just over by that cloverleaf interchange there. That's actually where the Remand Centre is, right there, as well. On the west side now there is a new development going in which is going to be called Goodridge Corners. We saw that this is a trend on the south side of the Henday, where you get new developments on the south side because it opens up the land, meaning opportunities and so forth for people and more affordable places to live, too, for young families and so forth.

But, you know, again, seeing another development just on the edge of not just the constituency but the city I think provides a case in point for us about the importance of retaining the integrity of municipal boundaries so that we can serve these communities that are popping up still within the Edmonton city boundaries but on new land, basically. All of the services that you need to start a new suburb – for example, all of the infrastructure around sewer and water and electricity, roads, schools, policing, social services – all of those things are dealt with through a single MLA as well as the

municipal, in this case the city of Edmonton, helping to provide those services.

Now, it just creates a stark sort of view of the problem with jumping over a provincial constituency and into a rural area on the other side of that boundary. Goodridge Corners is going to require all of those services: the city police, Edmonton city social services, the Edmonton transit system, the city of Edmonton sewer and water and roads, manufacturing, and so forth. You know, to split that and then the interests of a rural area that's immediately north of there, the county and so forth, just doesn't make sense.

I note that I'll acknowledge and certainly Mr. Kolkman's presentation acknowledged the reality of requiring some urban areas to be split. Let's say the city of Medicine Hat: it can't just be by itself, right? Or St. Albert or, I should say, Grande Prairie, for example, and – there are many other places – Airdrie. But with the big cities, you know, you're just creating an artificial sort of concoction that defies the reality of what's happening in cities like Edmonton and Calgary.

On the edges of the city of Calgary a similar thing is happening. I can think of Calgary-North West, for example, where they're way over the median, for sure, already, and there's lots of growth that is happening within those very generous boundaries of the city of Calgary, which extend far into the prairie sometimes. You know, to think that you could, then, create a hybrid from that when you already have a full house on the city side and all of those services that I just described that are required by the citizens that live in a new area like Edmonton-North West or Calgary-North West, then I think that it invites more problems than it does, in fact, opportunities.

We know that we need to increase, and you have a mandate to increase by two MLAs in the House. Certainly, there's room for that in the Chamber, I can tell you, but you are also – you know, and I appreciate your problem where you need to move some of these boundaries around to make sure that we provide some degree of equity in what the value of any given Albertan's vote is. The previous presenter, I think, described it quite well. You know, if you hit a ratio between how many people are represented in a place like Edmonton-North West compared to a place like Lesser Slave Lake or some place like that, where it becomes 3 to 1 or 4 to 1 in terms of voters to that constituency, then that does undermine democracy, so I would be very careful not to just keep those same boundaries in some of those really low-population areas.

I know that you need to represent those areas, and they need accommodation, too, because of the added costs associated with living in a very large constituency. I mean, some of those northern Alberta ones are the size of a small or medium-sized European country, right? So we do need to accommodate for that, too. Anyway, I just thought I could use Edmonton-North West as an example of the challenge and, I would say, you know, resisting the temptation to jump the municipal boundaries of the cities, the big cities like Calgary and Edmonton, when there's lots of work to be done just right there.

2:30

In fact, Edmonton-North West in the last boundary redraw: you can see it's got a bit of a funny shape, right? This is because – I mean, I can work with it, for sure; it's not insurmountable – it's to accommodate for future growth, and they nailed it on the head quite well, I think, in regard to places like Edmonton Griesbach, which used to be federal military land. You have a similar district area in Calgary, right? You see tremendous growth, lots of wonderful urban design and different living accommodations and so forth and lots and lots of population growth. We see it as well up in the northern boundary on the other side of the Henday with the

community of Albany, for example. There are lots of houses in there that, you know, are just a few months old. I really don't mind the sort of section that has neighbourhoods down by the tracks there where my office is. You know, there are houses in there that are 120 years old, and in Albany there are houses up there that are probably 120 weeks old at most. I mean, that is not a problem.

Another issue, and I think I heard the MLA for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview talk about it, is the culture of the north side. Edmonton-North West, I think, reflects that really well. You have a very large population of Muslim people moving in there because you have the largest mosque in Alberta and the largest Islamic Academy, the Muslim school, the biggest one in Canada, for sure, I think. You know, you see this delightful thing where people are moving in to create community with like cultural compatibilities, right? And not just Muslims, because of course Islam represents – you know, there are 30 or 40 different countries represented at the mosque, right? Also, the African population is increasing, the South Asian population is increasing. People are trying to cluster and live in an area, especially if it's a new one, where they can buy houses in proximity to each other, and then they're creating their community and supporting each other in that way as well. So although it's a bit of a funny shape, there's a certain coherence in Edmonton-North West, you know, around churches and mosques and cultural organizations, around shopping, around schools and the like.

I mean, I know – and I can appreciate changes to the boundary. I've seen it a couple of times before. But there is a certain core and a certain essence there that I think really does represent the population really well and services that are provided by the province of Alberta, the provincial government, and what people hope and aspire to for themselves and for their families.

Happy to take any questions there.

The Chair: Thank you. I just have a clarification question first. I may have misunderstood you. Is it Goodridge Downs or Goodridge Corners?

Mr. Eggen: I think it's called Goodridge Corners, the new development. Yeah.

The Chair: Oh. Is that in your riding, or is it just outside your riding?

Mr. Eggen: No. It's in. It's on the other side. It's just, you see . . .

The Chair: When you say the other side, the other side . . .

Mr. Eggen: On the other side of the Henday. Yeah. And then, you know, just by that traffic intersection there, and then it's going be to the west of there, right? You know, we can see that in Edmonton and Calgary where you put these ring roads in, lots of development, which is great. It provides affordable, single-family dwellings and mixed-family for the people.

The Chair: Okay. Well, I'm sure we've got some questions. Mr. Evans, any questions?

Mr. Evans: No questions.

The Chair: Susan?

Mrs. Samson: Are you happy with the name Edmonton-North West for the riding?

Mr. Eggen: Sure. Yeah, I mean, you know, it has a certain generic element to it, and that's fine.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: Julian?

Dr. Martin: Thank you. Thank you very much. I asked your colleague a question earlier about Calder in that district, that's in his riding. I'm looking at a large-scale map now rather more closely, and I could see his point about the historical character of Calder and so on in the very way the streets are laid out. That's indicative of a much older set of communities and the like.

Mr. Eggen: Oh, for sure. It was a separate town, right?

Dr. Martin: Yeah. Would you see a uniformity or something approximating that in the housing types and housing stock and the configuration of neighbourhoods throughout your district?

Mr. Eggen: Yeah. For sure. I mean, obviously, like I said, there are houses that are a hundred years old and then there are ones that have been put up in the last couple of weeks, right? But there's a certain value, you know, like a monetary value, which is similar for property from top to bottom. Still, the majority are single-family, stand-alone houses, right?

Like, in some of those older neighbourhoods like in Rosslyn and Lauderdale and so forth, where they maybe are 60 or 70 years old, you're getting a whole new generation of young families moving in and buying those because they're a little bit more affordable and people buying to be close to the mosque, quite frankly, that's right there. A great spot because it's a beautiful, unique development that is very desirable, high property values, and lots of new condos and apartments going in, too, like, put up very quickly, driving up that population very fast. As I said, Edmonton-North West is kind of designed to accommodate for growth, but, I mean, the numbers from 2017 show 52,000. That's quite a few years ago. Of course, we've experienced an historic increase since then.

The Chair: Thank you.
Greg?

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Thank you. Just quickly, your population of Edmonton-North West seems to have tracked quite nicely the general average growth. It's been quite steady, tracking again, roughly, with the population of the province. Do you anticipate—you've noted that there are some areas for future growth. The ring road tends to attract that. Is it fair to say, then, that you expect the growth here to be ticking up a bit over the next little while, ticking down, staying steady? Is the past a good prediction of the future? Or do you feel like we're going to see more growth in Edmonton-North West, perhaps, relative to other places?

Mr. Eggen: Yeah. Maybe not the explosive growth that we saw right now, but it'll continue to fill up. It'll be a steady growth over the next five to 10 years.

Mr. Clark: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Eggen: I know you're not in charge of schools as the boundary commission, but we need . . .

Mr. Clark: Do you want one?

Mr. Eggen: . . . all of that infrastructure there. We need the schools and hospitals and roads that come with that population.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you very much.

Mr. Eggen: Thanks a lot.

The Chair: It's always helpful to hear presentations from members that walk the sidewalks and drive the streets as the representative, so thank you so much.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: It's 2:40. We're going to break for 10 minutes. We'll be back at 2:50.

[The hearing adjourned from 2:38 p.m. to 2:50 p.m.]

The Chair: Okay. After the afternoon break, Aaron Paquette.

Mr. Paquette: Well, good afternoon, members of the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission. Thank you so much for the opportunity to provide input on the redrawing of Alberta's provincial electoral map. Kind of exciting. This work matters deeply, as you well know. It shapes the quality of our democracy and the ability of Albertans to see themselves reflected in their government.

I'm speaking today not only as a city councillor for the city of Edmonton but as someone who's been through a similar process. In Edmonton we undertook our own Ward Boundary Commission ahead of the 2021 election. We explored a variety of models, including some that might have looked efficient on paper, like splitting the city into pizza slices, which, thankfully, did not happen, but also blending multiple regions together, but in practice we recognized that cutting across too many communities undermined the very representation we were trying to improve. Ultimately, we made the decision to prioritize keeping communities, especially community leagues, together. When you divide up neighbourhoods that have shared interests, identities, and challenges, you start eroding the very foundation of effective representation. We found out first-hand. It's not just about drawing lines; it's about preserving places.

Now, this is also about respecting the role of municipalities in the democratic system. Cities and towns across Alberta are not just administrative units, as some would like to believe. They are governments. Municipal governments are the front line in delivering services, building communities, and responding to local realities. The boundaries drawn by this commission directly impact how effectively we can work with the province to deliver for our residents. When provincial boundaries ignore how municipalities are structured, cutting through established communities and merging areas with conflicting needs, collaboration begins to suffer. It makes joint planning more difficult, it creates confusion in representation, and it weakens trust between orders of government. At a time when municipalities are increasingly being asked to do more with less without always being treated as equal partners, fair, coherent boundaries that respect local governance matter more than ever. Effective provincial municipal relations depend on clarity, respect, and alignment, certainly not fragmentation.

Now, Edmonton is the fastest growing city in Canada and the most affordable major centre in Canada. These are not by mistake. These are intentional results from the past few city councils. In fast-growing areas like south Edmonton the risk of splitting natural communities of interest is especially high. These aren't just clusters of houses. They're families who share schools, transit routes, parks, and public services. If we slice them up and merge them with radically different areas, urban with rural or inner city with outer fringe, we don't get more representative ridings; we get confused

ones. Constituents end up underrepresented, and MLAs struggle to reconcile competing priorities within one boundary.

We've also seen through recent federal redistributions how certain redrawings can produce unintentional political homogenization. It can flatten diversity, not expand it. It might feel like you're creating a broader perspective, but the result is often a single dominant political voice that drowns out nuance and marginalizes differences. That's not democracy working better; that's democracy getting blurred. We can and must do better.

Let's also not ignore the sheer scale of Alberta's urban growth. The population increases in cities like Edmonton and Calgary are well documented and ongoing. If we want our electoral map to reflect where people actually live and how they're living, then new seat allocations should probably follow that reality. That means adding representation in places like south Edmonton or north Calgary, where the pressure on services and that diversity of need are the highest. Anything less would fail to represent the Alberta of today and the upcoming future.

We've already heard today about population versus representation disparity that already exists in the province. While we can see the various rationales for this, it is also very difficult to see it as anything but political the way we favour specific sets of viewpoints. Albertans, the majority of whom live in our municipalities, understand the difficult situation of equitable representation.

To segue a bit, we have a history in North America where some people's voices mattered more than others when it came to the vote, where some demographics, based on either the colour of their skin, their culture, or their gender, either had partial or no votes whatsoever. I look at this table right now and I think: well, what if Representative Samson, her vote, equalled the same as the rest of the people on the panel for their vote? Maybe great for Representative Samson; maybe not so great for everyone else.

That is the situation we sort of find ourselves in today that has a somewhat dark historical precedent. My kokum, my grandmother, couldn't even vote. That was not a right that she had, and then giving her a quarter vote, one that mattered one-quarter compared to someone else, maybe is not a healthy outcome. Ironically, in order to find better balances of representation, we have given many people outsized voices where their vote matters more than others, and there is a serious moral, ethical, and, ultimately, legal question about that approach.

I will close by saying this. Keep communities together. Respect municipal structures because that is where the service delivery actually happens. If the co-ordination is not there, we start to run into some serious issues. Just as an aside, we have obviously been bringing in evacuees for many years. Even in my own ward we had two instances of serious evacuations where I was able to co-ordinate with the MLAs because we knew our community. Ultimately, representation only works if people feel seen, and that starts with boundaries that respect who and where they are.

Thank you for your time and your service to Albertans. I know it's not an easy job, and you're going to have an interesting time presenting these results.

The Chair: Thank you very much, sir. Tell us what ward you represent.

Mr. Paquette: Yes. I represent ward Dene in northeast Edmonton. I'm in the boundaries of Edmonton-Manning.

And I heard the question about Edmonton-North West, and if you want to name it Edmonton-Paquette, that's fine. I'm just kidding.

The Chair: Okay. Let me put you on the spot. You're an elected politician; you're used to being put on the spot. How many new constituencies? How many electoral districts should Edmonton get?

Mr. Paquette: How many – sorry.

The Chair: How many new ridings should Edmonton get?

Mr. Paquette: Oh, how many new ridings? We got zero new ridings. We just changed the borders in order to ensure that we had an equitable distribution.

The Chair: No, no, no. Sorry. Not city-wide; provincially. Now you have 20 ridings. How many new ones should you get?

Mr. Paquette: Well, considering our population has grown by 125,000 people in the last three years – that's bigger than the entire city of Red Deer – and looking at the general size that we'd like to keep for population representation, probably two.

The Chair: Thank you.

Greg, starting on your end.

Mr. Clark: Thank you. I have two sort of questions that are similar and related. I'd like you to dig a little deeper into – you'd alluded to a federal redistribution where inadvertently we end up with a single group that has quite an outsized voice in a community. Maybe can you just expand a bit on that? I'm just curious a little bit on how that happened, what the specific implications are, and just what we should watch out for.

3:00

Mr. Paquette: Yeah. Again, going back to the numbers of how we do representation, that blend of rural, municipal: I understand the rationale for that, because you can balance your numbers quite easily, but what happens is that if that balance is more ideological rather than practical, you start getting ideological results, which is probably antithetical to wise governance. What we would really like to see on the federal level, but that's likely not going to change, is more akin to the municipal approach, where I represent urban and rural. But that's because we had a massive expropriation about 20 years ago or so.

Generally speaking, Edmonton tries to keep boundaries intact when it comes to the communities because otherwise you get a very interesting split where some voices are going to feel like their vote just literally does not matter because of where they live. If we could rightsize that, that would be great. In fact, back to the original point, I mean, your mandate is smaller than this, but the larger conversation probably should be – when it comes to the economic impact of municipalities, you know, just Calgary and Edmonton alone account for over 72 per cent of the economic activity in Alberta. Just on that basis alone and the population basis I think it's safe to say that we are still operating with the mindset that Alberta is primarily a rural province. Landwise that's true; populationwise, absolutely not true. Therefore, what you find is a lot of voices go unheard, ignored, and underrepresented in the Legislature.

Mr. Clark: If you don't mind, just a different question. I'm always interested in your opinion on names for constituencies in and around the Edmonton area. Just looking to represent both the specific communities, there have been some suggestions of their Indigenous names that we could use to represent and honour that history. If you have any specific examples now, we're interested, but even as we perhaps put some names together or even put some new boundaries together, it would be interesting to hear your perspective.

Mr. Paquette: If there's a will from the commission to do that, one thing I would recommend is maybe find words that can be pronounced easily. And the next is the way we did that. We actually had someone from community, Terri Cardinal, who worked at Grant MacEwan and still does. She's a vice-chair there, I believe. She has deep connection with community. She came with an elder and said, "We can do this for you," because it was a recommendation from the commission. "We can do this for you. Give us free reign in order to do it correctly." And they got a bunch of women elders and went around the entire city of Edmonton to different points of historical significance throughout the history of our province and our city and the history precolonization. They were able to gift us names that had meaning, that were prayerfully considered by this entire committee of Indigenous elders.

Doing it right, asking the people who understand the city or understand the province and the languages of the province and the history, I think, would be very, very important if that was to be a recommendation. It's a little bit different because we tend to honour people with names who have been political leaders in our history, but as we know, that can also be fraught with controversy as perspectives change over decades or centuries.

That would be my advice if that's something that you're looking to do, and if you want any further information, don't hesitate to reach out to the city of Edmonton. We've had a lot of feedback on that, and the biggest one is that the communication about it could have been even more robust so that people would understand the why and the result of a boundary commission and overlapping numbers and the confusion that could cause.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

The Chair: How many aldermen are in this city?

Mr. Paquette: We have 12 councillors and one mayor, so 13.

The Chair: All right.
Julian?

Dr. Martin: Thank you. I'm very glad you mentioned the fact that in its particular tract – well, your ward has a large tract of rural land. You know, some people often forget that you and the MLA for Edmonton-Manning, say, do have rural representation responsibilities even though the number of people may be sparse, that you are in fact alive and carry the burden for understanding some of the dynamics of that. So thank you for that, because some people think it's all of one or all of the other and blending would be bad, but we already experience a bit of that from time to time.

Mr. Paquette: Well, I will point out that if you look at the map and you see the Anthony Henday there, north and east of that is a massive amount of residential development occurring. On the west side of the Manning freeway, that is all designated industrial, and the parts that aren't yet developed now have maybe about 30 residents. It becomes pretty sparse. The issues they deal with, though, are very unlike the issues of the folks living in the city proper. I will say that I work very hard to be an extremely conscientious representative, and I go out and I talk with people, and one of the challenges is that for those 30 people, while their concerns are extremely important and valid, they take up definitely an outsized amount of time for the work that I have to accomplish for the rest of the 86 some-thousand people.

Dr. Martin: It's the 90-10 rule, perhaps.

Mr. Paquette: What's that?

Dr. Martin: The 90-10 rule. Ten per cent of it takes 90 per cent of your time.

Mr. Paquette: I don't even have 10 per cent. I've got maybe 2 per cent or one per cent or not even. It's beyond that. But luckily, I don't have another sort of township in those borders. Otherwise that would probably throw things way out of proportion as far as, you know, equal representation for everyone that is in my ward.

The Chair: Susan, any questions?

Mrs. Samson: Just one. Thank you for the most interesting presentation on the reflection between municipal governance and the work we're doing for the province and how that will play out. I like that link. Did you by any chance recognize the name Audrey Johnson-McGillis, who presented to us earlier today?

Mr. Paquette: I did not get a chance to hear the previous presentations.

Mrs. Samson: Oh. She was the one that was suggesting Indigenous names for some of the EDs. Did she do work for you in Edmonton? When you mentioned elders doing...

Mr. Paquette: What was her name?

Mrs. Samson: Audrey Johnson-McGillis.

Mr. Paquette: I really couldn't say. We tried to preserve the anonymity of the elders in order to protect them from any unfortunate, expectable problems.

Mrs. Samson: Not a problem. She offered to help us out, and I wondered if there was an overlap, but thank you. Excellent presentation.

Mr. Paquette: Well, thank you. I'm not sure, but maybe your vote, is it greater than the rest of the commission?

Mrs. Samson: No.

Mr. Paquette: Oh, okay.

Mr. Evans: Yeah, she's rural.

The Chair: Okay.
John, any questions?

Mr. Evans: No, I don't have any. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, sir. It's really helpful to have someone from another level of government presenting. I think you're the first. Yeah, you're the first presenter that has come on behalf of a municipal government, so thank you.

Mr. Paquette: Well, I appreciate the opportunity, and I deeply appreciate the work you're doing. I know how difficult it is and what a dedication it is to the people of Alberta, so thank you.

The Chair: As we're moving towards the end of the list, as a non-Edmontonian I have learned a lot yesterday and today about Edmonton. It's very much a positive, so thank you very much.

Mr. Paquette: I'm assuming you're a big fan of bike lanes now.

The Chair: Well, I haven't seen any bike lanes in Edmonton. I don't know it that well.

Mr. Paquette: Don't worry. I won't catch you on record on that.

Dr. Martin: He drives. He drives from place to place, so he wouldn't see a bike lane.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Paquette: Thank you.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

The Chair: That takes us to Nathan Poon.

Mr. Poon: Okay. Good afternoon.

The Chair: Good afternoon.

3:10

Mr. Poon: Before I begin, I just really wanted to thank the commission here today for listening to the diverse perspectives of many Albertans over the past few days and in the continuing days. Thank you so much.

My name is Nathan Poon, and I'm the president of the Students' Association of MacEwan University, located in downtown Edmonton. I was elected to my position, myself and a team of four vice-presidents, to represent the interests of over 19,000 MacEwan University students, advocating on their behalf on academic, nonacademic, and government issues. It is important also to highlight that SAMU is a nonpartisan organization. We do not align ourselves with any political parties, provincial or otherwise. Our members, who are students, live across and around the city of Edmonton. Student civic engagement is a key priority for SAMU, so we speak with you today through that lens.

Representation of postsecondary students in Alberta's electoral process is integral to ensure students' specific concerns, like housing and affordability, are effectively represented. As the electoral boundaries of Alberta are being redrawn, I encourage the commission to consider the distribution of students in cities like Edmonton and the communities they constitute.

Population growth in Alberta has been on a steady incline for a number of years, and it's encouraging to see a plan for additional representation for Albertans and keeping up with the increased number of voters. In the previous federal election we saw the addition of Edmonton Gateway, hoping to account for the boom in population in the south side of Edmonton in particular. Given that MacEwan University previously had a campus in Mill Woods, so in southeast Edmonton, which is sort of closer to, you know, the south Edmonton area, and given that transit data suggests a strong student population on the south end of the city, we would hope to see a similar approach for the provincial election, ensuring the people of south Edmonton are fairly and effectively represented.

Additionally, the allocation of an additional seat to the Edmonton area would greatly contribute to the voices of students in Alberta. As MacEwan, the University of Alberta, and several other institutions are situated across Edmonton, the city is home to a huge population of students. As the students study, research, and contribute to the culture and economy of the province, we also hope that there will be enough voices in the Legislature to advocate for their well-being. However, in acknowledging that students are spread out in the city, we also want to encourage the commission to be thoughtful when deciding which communities will be bundled together under a new riding.

Students are a perfect case study of neighbourhood composition. As a population who is far more likely to rent than own and one who does not have reliable access to private transportation options, students choose where they live with an eye to the communities they want to engage with while assessing proximity to key locations

like work or school. As a result, the communities we live in not only reflect the location of our homes but also priorities and expectations relative to our neighbourhood. For example, as local rezoning conversations have demonstrated, the expectations and experiences of a neighbourhood made up primarily of detached single-family homes will differ from a neighbourhood made up of high-rises. With this in mind, we are hoping the commission will focus on grouping similar communities together and avoid breaking up established connections and work within these communities, especially from a civic engagement lens.

To close, I want to reiterate the value we see as students in additional representations for Edmontonians and south Edmontonians in particular, with the hope that the decision made for the new boundaries will aim to minimize disruption to established networks within these communities.

As my colleague pointed out, the previous speaker, Mr. Paquette, Edmonton has seen a rise over the past three years – I believe it's 125,000 – and a large portion of that is students coming in from around Alberta. At MacEwan University we are projecting a substantial rapid growth of students by 2030 from 17,000 to 30,000, especially, for example, in our residences, so in our student housing. We, our student body, have been hearing that it has been incredibly difficult to find housing in the sort of downtown area, so most of them have sort of been situating themselves in areas such as south Edmonton.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Poon. How long have you been in this position?

Mr. Poon: About one month.

The Chair: Okay. And is it for the next year, the next two years?

Mr. Poon: Absolutely. For the next year, maybe two years if the students love me.

The Chair: Okay. What are you taking?

Mr. Poon: I'm in computer science.

The Chair: Okay. Mr. Evans, any questions?

Mr. Evans: No. Thank you.

Mrs. Samson: Did you do a written submission? I couldn't find my notes on that, but I thought I read something along the same lines.

Mr. Poon: No, I have not submitted a written submission.

Mrs. Samson: Okay.

The Chair: Julian?

Dr. Martin: Thank you. Thanks for coming. I have a personal request of you. The next week when you go to the board of governors meeting, send my regrets.

Mr. Poon: Okay.

Dr. Martin: Because I'll be with this crowd.

I echo your remarks about the significance of the activity of students in Edmonton and about the reliance on adequate transit areas and where the students find accommodation. You know, MacEwan has about 25 per cent of the daily commuter traffic in and out of the central part of Edmonton, so it's a very significant feature

of the central part of the city. So I certainly take your remarks to heart. And then, of course, the U of A: a similar story there as well.

Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. No further questions or comments from me aside from the note of: thanks for being here. Really appreciate it.

The Chair: There is one more question.

Mrs. Samson: I found what I was referring to. We had a written submission from an individual with the last name of Salazar, and he was the student union rep from Mount Royal. He mentioned the same types of concerns that you did. So know there are voices out there focusing on a similar problem.

Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you again very much, Mr. Poon.

Mr. Poon: Thank you so much.

The Chair: Our next presenter is Dave Hardman.

Mr. Hardman: Good afternoon.

The Chair: Good afternoon.

Mr. Hardman: Thank you for the opportunity to speak. I think this is critical, especially given some of the things happening in the province, that we get this right. You know my name is Dave Hardman. I want to speak to you about the sense of community, and it's been alluded to multiple times in the four presentations, I think, I've seen this afternoon, that community is critical, not only in the sense of getting people the representation, but I think it in part can allude to people becoming disengaged when they do not feel represented. This is where I see it as critical.

A bit of background on myself. I taught in this province for 39 years, mainly social studies, not surprisingly, and the vast majority of that was in smaller communities in the northern half of the province, all the way up to just about the Northwest Territories border, including time on three different First Nations reserves. To assume that you can lump people together without that sense of community is impossible. I know we'll never get it right, and you guys have been tasked with the job of getting it right, but I'll give you an out.

The Chair: We'll never get it perfect.

Mr. Hardman: I'll go with that as well.

I hear people talk in Alberta about this concept of the unique culture of Alberta. I take great umbrage with that because I've been all over this country multiple times and every area has got its own unique culture. I'll say that right down to the difference between two small towns I taught in up north that were 17 miles apart, and they were different. So when we start considering putting these groups together, that's a massive part of it.

3:20

We have an obvious split between rural and urban, and this is becoming more and more so as time goes on, even from the time I was a kid, which I know was a long time ago. Urban and rural were not split as much because half the people who lived in cities had lived on farms as younger people. We don't get that anymore. Most people don't know where their own food comes from, so to build community we have to somehow make sure that when you have a representative, you have one that can represent that constituency, and to represent a constituency, we have to have someone – and I'm

looking at it not from the representative's view but from the physical plant of that constituency – you have to have a group of people that can be represented.

If you look at the major problems that we constantly hear of around the province: medical care. Well, the town I lived in for 15 years, their emergency room is closing, and they're the nearest hospital for about an hour either way. So when we talk about not being able to get a doctor, well, we can get into a hospital but we have to wait, in the urban area. They're talking about: they have no doctors, no emergency either. It's special to me. I spent 13 years in a fire department doing fire rescue up north. You know all these people.

When you look at education, they're seeing their schools close. You close a school in a small community, you've killed the community. We can't get enough schools open in the cities. The problem is kind of the same about schools or about health care, but not really. You get a constituency that's – and I'll just throw out some numbers and don't quote them – 90 per cent urban, and 10 per cent even rural or definitely rural. At 10 per cent, he's looking at the representative going: well, he's going to have to represent mainly that 90 per cent. This is where the disengagement, I believe, comes in in that sort of a scenario. People are going: "Well, what's the point in getting involved? We're outvoted automatically."

When I talk culturally, I think I'm referring to three different areas of culture. You can start off with the economic: people who do different things have different views. You work in the oil patch, you're a farmer, you work in a big city, or you work in an industrial job; you get a different mindset, and I think it's a critically different mindset.

You look at it from a cultural point of view. Previous speakers, and Mr. Paquette was one of them, mentioned some of the cultural groups that are coming in. They need to be represented, and maybe the whole system is different.

And then you have the geography, and they're very generic terms. I think we have to be very, very careful. We have to understand that when the rural people complain about policing or lack of, it's serious. Like, you get in trouble and need the police, in many rural areas that I've worked in, especially up in the Peace River country, you might be an hour, an hour and a half from an emergency response from police. None of this: eight minutes and the ambulance is at the door, and the police are probably there beforehand, and the fire department is probably there before that.

We've got to put this together, and we've got to organize the system better so that you can have representatives that are dealing with those issues in that context.

As a social studies teacher, I know, I'm tending to be long-winded, so I'll wrap it up with that. Thank you for your patience, and I wish you all the best in this incredibly important job you're doing. I'll take your questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Hardman, and for a social studies teacher your math is perfect: seven minutes.

Mr. Hardman: Oh, I had a timer on, but it faded on me. My technological skills are not there.

The Chair: Greg?

Mr. Clark: Thank you so much. I appreciate that, sir. Can you tell me what constituency are you from? Where do you live currently?

Mr. Hardman: Where? Well, we moved around a bit; a lot of time in the Peace River country, Fairview particularly. Time up south of

Fort Vermilion on the Tallcree reserve. I was principal at a reserve outside of Lac La Biche at Heart Lake. I taught in the St. Paul area. Then in the last about 20 years I was out in both Seba Beach and in Spruce Grove.

The Chair: And do you live here now, in Edmonton?

Mr. Hardman: Oh, I didn't say. My own constituency is St. Albert. Sorry. I know you're constantly asking that.

The Chair: Okay. But you've lived rural, so your perspective is that you lived in both places and . . .

Mr. Hardman: Very much so. And my whole life has been that way. We grew up in Edmonton but spent all our time in the woods. I hunted, trapped, fished. So it's always been this kind of dichotomy.

The Chair: Okay. Julian?

Dr. Martin: I don't want to put words in your mouth, but I've been taking notes on your remarks. Am I right to extrapolate from what you're describing as saying that the rural areas, precisely because of the scarcity of services and infrastructure, need strong advocates?

Mr. Hardman: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. I'm not talking a radical political – I have my own politics. But they have to be represented, where people will actually pay attention to that, and it's not: oh, well, it's a rural area but, okay, the representative is more talking an oil company, or it's a rural area and it's right wing or left wing. No. I'm talking advocacy.

Dr. Martin: We've been hearing a lot from people who are addressing urban issues, rightly so, and they need a strong advocate, but more than that, what impresses me is the granularity of the examples that they provide. That adds persuasiveness you wouldn't have solely on an argument upon principles and values alone. That's a little abstract, but the granularity of understanding the issues is persuasive. And I think what you are pointing to is exactly the same sort of thing, so I very much thank you for that.

The Chair: Okay. Susan, do you have comments or questions?

Mrs. Samson: This may be more of a comment, Mr. Hardman. Thank you so much for coming out. I think one of the things that really hits home when I listen to you is that we've been focusing on urban issues mostly today. I live in a rural town of Sylvan Lake, but my experience and my lifestyle in Sylvan Lake is even more urbanish than the stuff you've described. I often have heard that regular people don't understand what it's like to live in a rural setting. The examples you gave, as my colleague alluded to, like an ER closing in a rural community is a lot different than me living in Sylvan Lake and my urgent care closing, because I can go to Red Deer in 20 kilometres. You know, I have options even though I'm rural, so there are different levels of rural. But the important thing is that I think we don't fully understand it unless we live it. It's those day-to-day examples that really hit home.

Mr. Hardman: If I can digress just very quickly on that point exactly. When I was on the fire department – now, that ended about 20 years ago when we left that area – we ran the only set of jaws, jaws of life, from the B.C. border – we're at Fort St. John – to the Peace River at Dunvegan to halfway to Peace River. We were the only crews. Now, this was a small fire department, totally volunteer at that time. Nobody made a cent off it. So you had a bunch of

people who would drop everything at a moment's notice; didn't matter whether it's a kid's birthday party or whatever. The frustrating part was that it's an hour and a half drive to the B.C. border, and there's a big, bloody hill there, and it was a dangerous spot. You're nodding your head like you've seen it.

3:30

Mr. Evans: I've been there.

Mr. Hardman: Yeah. We had our first share of accidents there.

Mr. Evans: Where did you live?

Mr. Hardman: Lived right in Fairview for most of it. Lived in Hines Creek for that first year.

Mr. Evans: That's a long drive.

Mr. Hardman: Yeah. That's a long ways up. Fire trucks: yeah, they got flashing lights and make a lot of noise, but they don't go very fast. Looks like it in the city, but they barely hold highway speeds. They're full of water or gear. So, your point is exactly right on. You knew everybody, you know. We'd run from our houses in cars with flashing lights. We didn't have overhead lights but flashing lights. Everybody knew there's something going on because there goes Hardman. There goes Bobby, you know.

That's the point I'm trying to get to. We see a proclivity of trying to attach rural areas to urban constituents. I think inherently it's wrong. Now, I know it's going to happen to some degree, but I think we need to keep this on as a broader philosophy to not do that.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. I really enjoyed – I almost want to say a talk, but I know it was a presentation. I really . . .

Mr. Hardman: Thank you.

Mrs. Samson: I appreciate your time.

Mr. Hardman: I've been out of the classroom awhile. I'm getting rusty.

Mr. Evans: One question. You started off with the importance of community.

Mr. Hardman: Yes.

Mr. Evans: In the legislation it talks about communities of interest. I would like to hear your perspective on how you would flesh out what communities of interest means. Just to give you some context, the way that it's put in the legislation – it's section 14 – communities of interest including municipalities, regional and rural communities, Indian reserves, and Métis settlements.

I think community and that aspect that you're talking about is incredibly important, but we have the responsibilities of trying to figure out what communities of interest mean. If you could help us out, that would be greatly appreciated.

Mr. Hardman: Oh. I'll take a stab at doing it from this direction. It's where you can connect – this almost sounds hypocritical before I say it – communities with different interests but similar or like interests, common goals. If you're going to hang a farming community on the edge of the city, hang it in – and I know some of you are not from Edmonton – the western section, northwest of Edmonton because that's rural. That's all acreage.

Mr. Evans: It's all – sorry?

Mr. Hardman: That's all acreage country.

Mr. Evans: Okay.

Mr. Hardman: By definition, that's what rural is; it's basically your acreages. So they're at least kind of up there. Don't hang them – I mean, I can't think of an example right now – with St. Albert. St. Albert has got nothing to do with agriculture. It's got little to do with industrial. It's basically a professional-based city. That sort of thing. If you're going to build a community of interest, highlight and go for those like interests. Just don't look at geography – like, we can carve a chunk of X-thousand people out of this rural area and attach it to this urban area – and go with it from that perspective. Again, if you look at – an obvious one would be, you know, Grande Prairie, Peace River. You could add a chunk of the oil patch area to it because half the guys who live there are working in the oil patch. That's kind of the thing I'm getting at, if I'm making sense.

Mr. Evans: Yeah. We're just looking for feedback and to help us flesh that out. So, thank you. Appreciate your presentation.

Mr. Hardman: Okay. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Mr. Hardman, you are probably exemplary of the type of presentation we've enjoyed the most, because it turned into a bit of a conversation. We've had over 40 presenters, I think, in the last two days, or close to that. We're happy to keep going, but we have some time limits. Thank you so much.

Mr. Hardman: Thank you very much for the opportunity, and best of luck.

The Chair: Thank you for your genuinely irenic approach. We appreciate it. Thank you.

Mr. Hardman: As a teacher I used to do my song and dance. I apparently still do it. Have a good day.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

The Chair: That then, I believe, takes us to our last presenter, Bobbi-Sue Menard. Good afternoon.

Mrs. Menard: Hello, everyone. My name is Bobbi Menard. I am here apparently for partisan reasons, but I'm going to try and make the case that that is not so. For my apparent sins in childhood, I sit on the provincial board of the United Conservative Party as an Edmonton regional director. As much as I would like to in seven minutes shove in every single argument 20 CA presidents have asked of me to defend their neighbourhoods at all costs, I'm not here to do that at all.

I'm actually here to make a case that I think is in service of Alberta and democracy as somebody who as a private citizen is gleefully and joyfully involved in the partisan process because I think that can take care of itself on the simple point that this legislation is written very famously for where the puck is going, not where it has been and that the case for this legislation and its interpretation is one of firm optimism on behalf of all Albertans.

In pursuit of that goal, I should like to say that the Edmonton region is an incredibly unique if not exemplary intersection and example of the legislation itself in sections (a) and (b) of 14, with sparsity, density, and a rate of growth of population and communities of interest, including municipalities, regional and rural communities, and Indian reserves. All we are missing are the Métis settlements, although we enjoy a tremendous and robust

population of folks with that background within our community as a whole.

Because Edmonton's primary available land for development and the endless preoccupation of our city council is how, when, and where we will grow, I would like to make the suggestion that optimism is the surest principle for ensuring a reasonable and robust representation of every single Edmontonian now and into the future.

I am well aware that we have constituencies with 40,000 people, and I live in a constituency, Edmonton-South West, that was in 2021 68,000 and growing, and I would imagine it's closer to 72,000 to 75,000 based on what I can see in my own neighbourhood.

The Chair: Sorry. What constituency?

Mrs. Menard: Edmonton-South West.

I would say that one of the most optimistic reasons to interpret the future state of this legislation is what one economist has called the forgotten person. In the last election the 68,000 people of Edmonton-South West experienced very close to the same ratio of disrepresentation as Albertans receive federally compared to the folks of P.E.I. when you look at the difference between Edmonton-South West and Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

On that principle alone I am genuinely advocating the idea that within the city of Edmonton and the rural-urban interface the population be reasonably as close to parity as possible regardless of community because it is within that parity of vote expression at the individual level that community is enabled downstream of the culture of the people and choices within that economy and community as they choose to build it.

I will say that I am very deeply aware that electoral fairness is not just about numbers, that community is a genuine expression and that even legislation such as this is downstream of the culture and expression of the people who create it and the economy which enables that. However, the major disparities in voter expression were predictable and wrongly decided in the last round. We should not have 30 per cent, 40 per cent differentials in population within a single electoral boundary cycle. I understand that we had massive if not exponential growth as a vote of confidence from people around the world immigrating to Alberta and that there are currently 1.6 million visibly racialized Albertans and another half million or so who are nonvisibly racialized but are nonetheless immigrants, compared to 650,000 rural Albertans.

3:40

I am advocating sincerely for the optimistic case that those who choose us as a life's passion and choice and leave behind that which they have known have equal right as Canadian citizens of choice to a full expression of their vote with parity regardless if they choose urban or if they choose rural Alberta.

I am also advocating for the idea that we have a rural-urban interface that has radically changed how people access services and how people enable the creation of capital, of wealth, of how they educate their children, how they access government provision, and how their tax dollars are exercised at all three levels of government on their behalf and that recognizing that is more enabling of community rather than a rural-urban dichotomy that is currently costing this province substantive reputational and cultural risks in terms of stability.

I often tell this. In my personal life I've worked in rural economic development for a long time. I work now with my family business, which is rural and high-tech agriculture just outside of Sylvan Lake. Rural Alberta, if you look at population as a heuristic, has stayed flat. Maybe up 1, maybe down 2, maybe down 3 per cent over the

last decade, where urban has gone up eight, nine, 10 points depending on which perfect plot of urban Alberta you pull on.

If you look at that as a heuristic of economic growth, we have a term for that delta or that difference between 10 per cent growth and staying flat. A 10 per cent drop in economic activity is called a great depression, and I grieve for my fellow rural Albertans, where I make a living. Their children are not coming home. Their land is not selling. Their corporate land is at a 40-cent-on-the-dollar discount, and nobody is buying it, and capital has flown to the cities. I don't doubt that these are major, major issues, yet the optimistic case for Alberta is one where there is the ability of every single Albertan to come together within community, within the rural-urban interfaces, the ability to drive your pickup truck or drive your Smart car down the geographic lines that we say are somehow creating a sense of place.

I believe quite firmly that the interpretation of this act is one of optimism, which enables people to cross over those lines and have those conversations that will yield the division we are currently experiencing more so than the expression of discrete community. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you. Probably some interest in starting a conversation by way of some questions. Great. Do you have any questions?

Mr. Clark: Yeah, I've got a few. I hope you have a little bit of time, because we've got a bit of time here, so I have a feeling this one may turn into a – we have some opportunity here, I think. It's interesting to explore some of this, and I have a few things.

First off, we'll just start. You quoted a few numbers on 1.6 million visually racialized Albertans, 500,000 or so sort of immigrants of other kinds. Then there was a number you quoted for rural Alberta. I didn't quite catch that. I was trying to write it all down.

Mrs. Menard: Six hundred and fifty thousand.

Mr. Clark: Okay. I did get it right.

Mrs. Menard: Yes.

Mr. Clark: I should have told you that. I got that right.

Mrs. Menard: That's okay. So that is a mix of my hot spot, and I'm not on Wi-Fi. I can't look up the name right now because I don't have the tab open on my phone, but it is from a government of Alberta report using 2021 numbers. I realize and I've been told that you'll be using 2024, but I can, if it's required, submit that. Those are taken from government sources.

Mr. Clark: It would be great. Yeah. If you wouldn't mind getting that to Aaron, we'd would love to see that. Just hand it into ...

Dr. Martin: Here's some wireless, by the way.

The Chair: Just give this to the ...

Mrs. Menard: Okay. Let's see if I can look it up in my favourites. Like, I have so many tabs I looked up.

Mr. Clark: It would be great. Yeah. Well, if it came from Alberta Treasury Board, and that's a lot of the data we're using as well, but if you could get that to us, I'd be very interested in those numbers.

Mrs. Menard: Yeah. Absolutely.

The Chair: So we'll just give you a minute to log in there.

Mrs. Menard: Okay. Let's see if I can do this.

Mr. Evans: No pressure.

Mrs. Menard: No pressure. Yeah. I'm going to, like, mistype this instantaneously, and then I'm going to struggle to find it, of course, right?

Dr. Martin: They insist that you use caps.

Mrs. Menard: Oh, it keeps trying to attach me to my phone. If you ask me a question while I grab my phone, I'll listen.

Mr. Clark: No problem. Yeah. We can get the actual data, but we'll take that as read.

Mrs. Menard: Okay. Absolutely. Go ahead.

Mr. Clark: That's great. I'd love to see the source, and we can update that as well.

Mrs. Menard: One hundred per cent.

Mr. Clark: That's more of an interesting data point.

I want to go down the road of this communities-of-interest idea and the rural-urban interface. Your perspective here is really valuable because it's a little different from what we've heard from others so far. One of the definitions that stuck with me of the community of interest is who goes to school together is sort of a real magnet, and I'm curious: do you find that people who go to school cross that boundary? It may seem in some ways like an invisible boundary, but, like, on the west edge of Edmonton do people who go to school inside Edmonton live in Edmonton, go to school in the rural area live in the rural area, Stony Plain with Stony Plain; how do you ...

Mrs. Menard: So I have ...

Mr. Clark: How does that actually hang together?

Mrs. Menard: I'm going to use a personal anecdote. I have five kids between the ages of 18 and 26. I am well aware. Some of my kids played high-performance sports, and some of them went to Harry Ainlay with children from Spruce Grove, who magically had an older sibling with an address at the University of Alberta. Strange but true.

As to the school issue, I think the case for optimism is the fact that, as a matter of policy, there's \$8 billion in new schools coming to Alberta, and that's radically going to change the experience of parents across the province. As a forward-looking statement of growth, when you look at school development and where people choose to live and home relative to school development, a couple of things happen when you're choosing schools for children. Edmonton is a city of school choice whereas rural is not.

When you look at these ideas of how people choose those things, typically if you own land in rural Alberta, your socioeconomic status relative to the capital required to take that land creates a level of homogeneity and community that is unknown within urban Alberta. I am not persuaded that we look at that level of integration and we look at that level of separation, that that school separation is in service and materially better for the electoral process, not because culture and school are not important but because we're not having that discussion meaningfully right now. It is not to our benefit on the whole, is my personal belief. You are not seeing children from rural schools integrate into higher education at the same rate. It's just a simple demographic fact. Kids in rural schools

don't get higher education at the same rate that kids in urban Alberta do.

I find that, if we are going to look at that, they do not have the same number of language options, they do not have the same number of training options, and there are many schools in rural Alberta that lack core technical support. The more that we are able to live as a society with the world that is coming towards us than the one we wish to preserve, which we cannot in a meaningful sense, the better off we will be. I wish that were not true, for the record. For the record, it is more and more difficult to raise children. I say this as the parent of a teacher.

The Chair: Julian?

Dr. Martin: Thank you very much. Our job is difficult . . .

Mrs. Menard: It is.

Dr. Martin: . . . but your remarks about the optimistic case for Alberta layer another level of civic burden on our shoulders. So thank you for that, because your. . .

Mrs. Menard: And yet I was attempting to set you free.

Dr. Martin: . . . view of this is fantastically different than we have heard before, and I very much appreciate it.

I want to press you a little further on what you called the rural-urban interface, a lovely phrase. You're saying we should focus on the interface rather than on dichotomies, and that's very interesting. So you're posing as a social fact that there is an interface because much of the discussion is it presumes the opposite. I think it's very important for us to hear examples of that because it is a very different way of approaching the matter at a kind of meta level.

Mrs. Menard: Sure.

Dr. Martin: That is, in fact, as you rightly point out, the expectation of the act.

3:50

Mrs. Menard: Absolutely. I guess the first, most practical example I would point to in our consumer culture is that I wish we could put up a map of the Costco locations in Edmonton in the metropolitan region. The Costco map is a reasonable expectation of how people travel and make life choices, as the expectation of consumer culture. Now, you can have all sorts of interesting side discussions of how consumer culture interacts with political expectation and prosperity and a matter of policy, but within Alberta the Costco map is a really excellent representation of how we have changed.

You can run against that the map of where my gas card is, working for a rural business – that's my UFA card – and how we access the stuff of life and how we function, which starts in Alberta both literally and metaphorically with petroleum and then our groceries and our agriculture. It demonstrates, I believe, a really clear example of how urban, exurban, and rural are interacting together, and that many of those ideas of community and culture are downstream from the reality of how we live our day-to-day lives, and that the optimistic case, which I'm trying to make, is that how we behave in setting up the core functions of our lives enables us to make better decisions in and around our communities and more robust decisions.

Dr. Martin: I think it's very instructive that very large retail corporations – Costco is an excellent example – plan these things very carefully, where they're going to invest capital and staff and

that they would choose to locate or maintain existing Costco warehouses is a good indicator of catchment areas, to be sure.

Mrs. Menard: I think that the second example I would point to is the changing demographics in the bedroom communities of Edmonton for immigration. There is a real shift in how immigrants are viewing the bedroom communities, or suburban communities of Edmonton, based on, one, can they get a mortgage; two, where can their kids go to school? Where can they also access work? And what we're seeing is in some ways absolutely exemplary Canadian Albertanness, as we watch our immigrant communities be able to access the level of capital required to move out into rural Alberta, and you're seeing them spread out on a consistent basis. I for one am absolutely delighted by that fact. I think that the Alberta promise is being made real in front of us, whatever side of the political spectrum that you are on. That understanding of community, that through osmosis moves out further and further, more of them take up agriculture, that trend and that forward-looking perspective is really, really important because that is as it is, not as we imagine it used to be.

Dr. Martin: If I may just conclude, at least now, osmosis is exactly the right image, and in fact you took the words almost right out of my mouth. But I would be very grateful if you could provide your notes to our clerk, Aaron, who's hiding somewhere.

Mrs. Menard: Absolutely.

Dr. Martin: He's always on the phone somewhere. But we'd love to have this because it's such good food for thought.

Mrs. Menard: Thank you.

Dr. Martin: And it would be particularly helpful if you could include all the examples you hadn't really got to.

Mrs. Menard: Yeah, I absolutely will. I'll have to, like, add a few things in because they're sort of sticky-noted across my screen. But I will get his e-mail, and I'll provide them within the next 24 hours, absolutely.

Dr. Martin: That's super.

The Chair: Susan, any questions, comments, dialogue?

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. Yes. Thank you for your presentation.

Mrs. Menard: Oh, you're welcome.

Mrs. Samson: It's very detailed and high level, so I'm going to ask you a question, to give me an example. We've often talked about the challenges of mixing rural and urban. My particular thought was: if you have one MLA and the region is split between rural and urban, how would that enhance the rural from your perspective? Why is that such a good thing? Like, you have said why you want it, but I've been told numerous times why it's a difficult thing. Why is it a good thing from your point of view?

Mrs. Menard: When you have a 50 per cent – let's not pick 50/50. Let's pick a 25 per cent rural, which is tacked on to a larger 75 per cent urban population. It actually serves as a moderating force on the 75 because it enables and requires that particular representative, regardless of their political stripe, to balance off needs. It serves as a moderating force.

The simple fact of the matter is that the population of rural Alberta is insufficient relative to urban Alberta with the growth in

population to maintain the level of influence that it has unless it acts as an integrated moderating force. Enabling rural to participate with urban within a body of MLAs changes the breadth of perspective of said MLAs because you will have pure urban, pure rural, as well as mixed. That level of diversity of perspectives is valuable inside the Legislature, from my point of view, regardless of political stripe, and it also enables the reasonable representation of people's life work as capital and investments, inside farmland, inside urban, to have a downstream effect on the culture and policy that we have as an economy.

Mrs. Samson: We get a lot of push-back from MLAs who have said that the workload on a straight rural constituency is immense. We've taken that into consideration in our deliberation. Then, in the same breath, different people have said the mix of priorities makes it difficult to have a clear voice when trying to advocate.

Mrs. Menard: Clarity of voice is not an alloyed good because it automatically means that you have FOMO, fear of missing out. While singularity is important, if we have a series of MLAs across 89 people who all have a level of singularity, they have no inherent impetus for compromise, nor does it increase the empathy required for good decision-making and consensus-based policy development.

Rural and urban, whether we like it or not from an economic point of view, are currently separating. Increasing the representation of rural, rather, over top of urban on a population basis diminishes the overall importance and efficacy of the vote as a matter of accessibility. People deserve to have an reasonable parity of the impact of their vote, and they also deserve to have a wide spread of perspectives and responsibilities within their MLAs.

Really briefly, for the rural MLAs I do believe that there are definitely regions within this province where that eight-hour drive is just an absolute job killer. I'm not saying that those folks should be in that 65,000 population at all. I think those exceptions are real and valid, and they should be there.

I do think, and I'm going to say this as respectfully as possible as somebody on the volunteer side who works with a lot of MLAs, that they have many, many options in the ways in which they can discharge their duties. As much as I have a huge degree of sympathy and empathy for the driving and the demands of the job as I perceive them to be, there is a level of cultural affinity within urban that very rarely sees an MLA in the same way that rural does. That cultural affinity is insufficient to the cause of voter agency throughout the province, whether they live in rural or whether they live in urban. It's not paramount to that.

I believe that the forgotten person in this equation is the person in urban, as urban experiences substantive growth, whose voter access is diminished over time if we do not set this up so that we can accommodate future growth. There's been no substantive evidence to say, while our current growth rates are bonkers – thank you to the federal government – that growth will dissipate or that rural has a clear pathway to catching up to the growth rates of urban.

4:00

Mrs. Samson: I agree. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Evans.

Mr. Evans: What are your thoughts on the idea of – let me structure it this way. Right now it seems like we tried to have our boundaries along the lines of the existing municipal boundaries. Is there an advantage in the way that you're thinking to having the inclusion or a situation where we would have two MLAs representing one

municipality, for example a rural municipality? Would that be an advantageous representation or disadvantageous?

Mrs. Menard: You mean like split a community of 10,000 or 20,000?

Mr. Evans: Not worrying about, you know, following – we would follow community interests, we would follow geographic boundaries. We would be less concerned about municipal boundaries. In those circumstances you could have a situation where you would have two representatives who are representing different parts of the same municipality, so you have, theoretically, two representing one.

Mrs. Menard: Fair. Completely fair. I'm just going to use a personal example or personal experience. I was the campaign manager for the UCP for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain in the last election. The two communities have – believe it or not, Stony Plain is massively more conservative than Spruce Grove, especially along what I would call the eastern wall, which is becoming a commuter and bedroom community of Edmonton. It is much more, like, as a partisan matter or a political persuasion matter, liberal than the rest of those communities. What was genuinely fascinating to me relative to your question inside this conversation is that there was an expectation that it was truly rural, yet neither case was that correct.

When we're seeking to balance these ideas and these expressions of community and how population changes our own personal issues and experience day to day – I say this to my colleague who lives in Lamont. I work in rural economic development as a consultant with her from time to time. We live 90 minutes apart and in two different economic worlds, just absolutely, phenomenally different experiences of economy. When we talk about smaller communities and how they experience economy and participation and the validation that comes in our consumer culture of the last 20 to 25 years of how prosperity is expressed and a representation of how we enjoy our community, which has become, to my way of thinking, a dominant mode of culture – and we can discuss whether that's healthy or not at another time. When we speak to this idea of, "Could you have two representatives of a smaller community?" I do believe that is true because we have set up the design of our communities in such a way that it is reasonable where you express economy and culture and prosperity to draw those lines.

For example, would it include industrial and, say, the heart of the community on one side of a line, on one side of the track, say, in Spruce Grove, and you could have the north side of the track completely be a different universe just in how there are folks who are in a trailer park and there are folks who own \$2 million mansions on, like, 40 acres of hobby farm, cheek by jowl, side by side? It's not always the size of the community. It is how we interpret community, and usually in our current culture that is downstream from our experience of economy, measured by personal prosperity.

I am making the case for optimism, not that that isn't important – and it is reality – but that when we distribute votes in the most equitable manner possible, we enable better discussions, better decisions, better compromises at all layers of government in and around those ideas of how we will be able to express ourselves more fully as human beings.

Mr. Evans: As an additional comment, what's interesting – you know, our perspective as commissioners, having travelled about as much as we have so far, and about to do more, the individual definition that everybody holds in terms of what they consider

rural and urban: there's a vast difference in understanding. It's probably most illustrative, for example, in Pincher Creek, which is a very small community. They have a definition of what they consider rural and urban, and those in Pincher Creek consider themselves urban, and those outside of Pincher Creek are designated as rural. Now, what they don't know is that in Edmonton and Calgary everybody is rural, so it's very unique to have these discussions about urban and rural, because it's all a matter of perspective.

Mrs. Menard: Oh, absolutely. Our family business – hopefully this is not recorded – is Smoky Trout Farm, so we are halfway between . . .

The Chair: Actually, it is recorded.

Mrs. Menard: Okay. Well, it is what it is. There you go. There are personal details. My spouse: his dad was at Halliburton for 50 years and moved back to Beaverlodge, so we still own in La Glace farmland, and my spouse will tell you that he grew up in a town. I am unable to find it on a map. Well, I can, obviously, and we go there. But I absolutely agree that there is a sense of perspective, and sometimes I try to make the argument to folks that the rate of change is less important than the frequency in which we experience that rate, which goes to the definition I think you're putting forward. The more often we experience a high speed of economic growth or a high speed of economic decline, the more often we change our definitions of how we understand our sense of place in the world.

The Chair: Mrs. Menard, you are obviously a big thinker. You blue-sky, and you've thought about a lot of things, and you've rattled our presentation just for today, but let me ask you. I want to set up what I understand you're saying and then quiz you a little bit. Okay?

Mrs. Menard: Okay. Here we go.

The Chair: So tell me this. How long have you lived in the southwest?

Mrs. Menard: I lived in Edmonton-Meadowlark for a long time, and it switched around halfway through, and now I live fully in Edmonton-South West. I've been where I live currently for four years, at the very tippy-top corner of Edmonton-South West, just outside of Costco and River Cree.

The Chair: Okay.

Mrs. Menard: There you go.

The Chair: Tell me this. Let's imagine you were born and raised and lived your entire life in Edmonton-Mill Woods, and you worked in Edmonton-Mill Woods, your kids all went to school in Edmonton-Mill Woods. Would you be thinking the same way now? I know it's a hypothetical.

Mrs. Menard: Absolutely.

I used to live, like, in Meadowlark, which has very little change, is much more senior and stuff like that. Would I feel the same way? I actually think I would feel – when you look at Mill Woods and how the population has developed there and the rate of change, Mill Woods I think is at about 37 to 42 per cent immigrant population in the last 30 years.

The Chair: Oh, yeah. At least that.

Mrs. Menard: When you look at those – so we have those 2021, where they put together for every single riding the population distribution for age, income, and all of those things. They hand them out for election years. One of the things that is really interesting if I lived in Edmonton-Mill Woods is that my experience and perception of the rate of change would be a different idea of my built environment than if it is in Edmonton-South West.

Your built environment. I used to be – oh, that's really nerdy. I used to be the managing editor or the editor-in-chief of *Okanagan Home* magazine, so I have very strong opinions about this. Your built environment experience inside of Edmonton-South West, so what you go out and you see as a human being within your brain every single day, is in a constant state of flux where I currently live for where people have put their money and time. In Edmonton-Mill Woods it's a different experience because it has changed based on the visual signals of socialization, which is visibly racialized Edmontonians. Would I feel the same? I think that Edmonton-Mill Woods should have a different shape, form, and be potentially smaller-esque. I can't remember where they sit. They're not as large inside population as . . .

4:10

The Chair: It's 58,700.

Mrs. Menard: Oh, 58,000, right? So they're 10,000 less than Edmonton-South West, and they're 7,000 less than Edmonton-Ellerslie.

The Chair: No. There are 20,000 less than Edmonton-South West.

Mrs. Menard: Yeah.

I think that despite the fact that their housing has not changed in a substantive way since the '80s, when it just boomed – right? Mill Woods boomed in the '80s. That sort of idea of how change happens: yes, it should be physically larger. Yes, it probably should go outside the Henday, or it can go up into Gold Bar. I'm not necessarily fussed in the directions which it goes. I am more interested in the idea that Edmonton-Mill Woods is reasonably comparable in voter access to representation as the regions around it because it is experiencing the same, or slightly greater amount but reasonably the same, as Edmonton-Ellerslie and Edmonton-South in change and the experience of it as a community.

The Chair: Okay. I was more interested in how you thought your thought process would develop.

Mrs. Menard: I would be sad in almost any circumstance to see my numbers go up if I was in a smaller number of people. I think that that is inevitable because you think: I have an advantage here. If I live in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood and I've got 41,000 people for my rep, of course I'm going to be sad. I could call up my MLA and have 27,000 less people to compete with to get an appointment. That may make me personally sad, but as a body politic, that's corrosive. It just is flatly corrosive. My sadness is not greater than the needs of every other Edmontonian to have a reasonably equitable access to an MLA, such as the quality that that MLA may be. With 89 of them coming up, I'm sure it's going to be ever more diverse in terms of quality. But my sadness, as an expression of my personal beliefs, is insufficient to overcome the imperative that everyone has equality on this.

The Chair: Okay. We bleed into the country and the electoral districts in the perimeter of the city of Edmonton and create a bunch of blended or hybrid ridings.

Mrs. Menard: I do believe that there is tremendous value in doing more like Edmonton-Ellerslie, Edmonton-South, and even into Edmonton-South West because it creates a third perspective within the Legislature. I believe that also in Calgary, because . . .

The Chair: Okay. Well, let's just stick with Edmonton.

Mrs. Menard: Okay. But I do believe it.

The Chair: The three bottom ridings of the city easily could be blended or hybrid.

Mrs. Menard: Yup. So could Edmonton-West Henday. Perhaps the limitations would be Edmonton-Gold Bar and Edmonton-Meadows because of Sherwood Park and Edmonton-North West because of St. Albert.

The Chair: Yeah. Okay.

Mrs. Menard: But otherwise, no. I do believe there is tremendous value because Edmonton is deeply diverse in its economic expression. The heartland is real. There's tremendous manufacturing in various places, and most folks who live within a 45-minute drive from downtown or even a 30-minute drive from Costco – the rural expression is of preference, not of reality.

The Chair: Okay. I want to limit . . .

Mrs. Menard: Sorry.

The Chair: I could keep dialing and clicking you.
Julian, you've got one more question.

Dr. Martin: Short and snappy. I could go on forever building a complete theory of representation on the basis of your assertions, and I would enjoy that.

To recap, if I might, you're asserting that an ecosystem, so to speak, of electoral district types is healthy for Alberta at the macro level and should be at minimum sustained as part of the array of electoral district types we offer.

Mrs. Menard: Yeah.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Mrs. Menard, for coming and sharing with us your perspective and, obviously, the results of a lot of thinking on your part, and for that, we are grateful.

Mrs. Menard: Thank you for having me.

The Chair: It doesn't mean you make our job any easier. Let me tell you that.

Mrs. Menard: I am sincerely – if I had a goal, and I wrote a goal down for this, it was to give you a reasonable set of rationales where you could find a way forward to be optimistic and confident to express on behalf of all Albertans equal access to the vote.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much.

We will adjourn until after dinner tonight at 6:30.

[The hearing adjourned at 4:15 p.m.]



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

Edmonton

Tuesday, June 3, 2025
6:30 p.m.

Transcript No. 8

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission

Justice Dallas K. Miller, Chair

Greg Clark

John D. Evans, KC

Julian Martin

Susan Samson

Support Staff

Shannon Dean, KC

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Aaron Roth

Rhonda Sorensen

Christina Steenberg

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Clerk

Clerk Assistant and Executive Director of
Parliamentary Services

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Managing Editor of *Alberta Hansard*

Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Edmonton

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Chantal McKenzie
Abel Savard
Susan Shaw
Heather Sweet, MLA, Edmonton-Manning
Lesley Thompson
Andrew Traynor
Carolyn Walker

6:30 p.m.**Tuesday, June 3, 2025**

[Justice Miller in the chair]

The Chair: Okay. Ladies and gentlemen, it's 6:30, the scheduled time to start. I could go on for 12 to 15 minutes to give my introductory comments, and I'm sure those gentlemen along the wall would love to hear it again.

Mr. Clark: I have a better idea. We could do it for you.

The Chair: Oh, yes.

Mrs. Samson: Just tell them the part about Susan Samson.

The Chair: Yeah. There's one person you have to make happy at this table.

We don't have any presenters except the young lady in front who, I believe, is Heather Sweet.

Ms Sweet: I'm early.

The Chair: Yeah. That's good. You're not scheduled to speak till 7:20. Do you want to speak to a full house, or do you want to speak now? Please come forward.

Mrs. Samson: You've got to come real forward.

The Chair: Come forward to this table. Now, unfortunately, you've not heard my 12-minute introduction.

Mrs. Samson: You could ask questions.

The Chair: Yeah.

Mr. Roth: Are you doing your introduction, Mr. Chair?

Mr. Evans: You've got to have *Hansard* complete.

The Chair: I don't have it. Oh, it is coming up.

Okay. We'll give you your money's worth, Ms Sweet.

We do have a chance to edit this in *Hansard*, don't we?

Before you is the independent body established by the Legislative Assembly, the Electoral Boundaries Commission. As you can see, there are five of us. If you want our full biographies, go to the website. I won't read them line by line.

To the far left, Mr. John Evans. He's a litigation lawyer from southern Alberta. He practises his law throughout the province. He's been recognized for his legal skills by way of being designated the KC, or King's Counsel. He also volunteers on the Alberta Justice advisory committee.

Next is Susan Samson from Sylvan Lake, the grand village of Sylvan Lake. She has a tremendous amount of experience in municipal politics and has been honoured for her volunteer work by way of receiving the citizen of the year award and the Queen Elizabeth II jubilee medal. She's been the mayor of Sylvan Lake, so she loves the interaction between provincial politicians and municipal politicians.

I'm the chairman of the commission. My name is Justice Dallas Miller. I also sit as a trial judge in southern Alberta.

Next, to my right is Dr. Julian Martin, who lives in Sherwood Park, volunteers in many capacities there, and also serves on some provincial tribunals, and he is a map geek. If you want the stuff shifted around, he knows how to do that.

Then to the far end of the table, Mr. Greg Clark. You probably know Mr. Clark. He has had the honour of serving Calgary-Elbow in the Legislature, and we're so happy to have someone with that

experience on the commission. It's illegal for a sitting MLA to sit on this commission, but retired ones we allow. That's a privilege and a benefit for us. That's the crew you've got before you.

Quickly, to go over the timeline for our commission, we were all appointed by the Speaker in late March. Once we're appointed, the clock starts ticking, and we have some big legislative timelines to meet. We met in April as a commission to discuss various matters. We started our commission public hearings last week, and we're going all the way through to June 23. This evening is the last session in Edmonton. We spent all day yesterday in the Ellerslie constituency in the Four Points by Sheraton. As non-Edmontonians we learnt a lot yesterday and today.

We conclude our hearings in June, and then by late August we are required to file an interim report with the Speaker of the Legislature. It'll become public. It will go into *Alberta Gazette*. You and all of your 86 colleagues – by then you'll have 86 colleagues – can chew on it and give us feedback, and we'll have another round of public hearings with a view to finally have our final report in late March filed by the Speaker. Then you and your colleagues in the Legislative Assembly do with our report what you will in terms of implementing legislation.

By the way, I've got a – no. I've got to finish my introduction. Sorry. But I do have a question even before you start presenting.

Ms Sweet: Already? Uh-oh.

The Chair: Of course, you know better than anyone that the voters elect their MLA in their constituency. In 2017 when the Bielby report came out, it relied on a population amount or figure of just over 4 million. The formula that they used was 4,062,609 divided by 87 constituencies. That gave us the average or the middle figure of 46,000. Effective representation gives us the range from low of minus 25 to plus 25. The range for 2017's report is before you.

Our population figures for this commission are 4,888,723. That population figure is basically the 2021 federal census, which is regularly updated and verified by both Statistics Canada on a regular basis and by Treasury Board Office of Statistics and Information. That figure is what we as a commission have decided to use. Okay? Then that gives us the average amount and the range of minus 25 to plus 25. So you have, then, some context of what we're working with.

The task of our commission is to hear from Albertans in this first round of hearings, take what we hear, take the population statistics, take the information we've heard about boundaries and come up with a report that provides for effective representation. When we do that, we will be focusing on several things, the relative sparsity and density of population throughout the province, common community interests and values and organizations. We've heard it loud and clear from Edmonton. We've learned a lot about the importance of community in Edmonton. More importantly, probably, in the rural areas are geographic features, although geographic features have a role to play in city ridings as well. Communication and transportation lines and how they affect the riding are taken into consideration. We're also obligated to make sure that we provide understandable and clear boundaries that people can recognize and recognize where the limits of each riding are. Then, finally, there's a catch-all phrase in the legislation – these terms are all in the legislation, as you're no doubt aware – of any other issues that we think are relevant to come up with our report and our recommendation.

Now we're at the stage where we want to hear from Albertans. That's the map that is in effect currently, and we're going to expand that by two and make some new lines.

Having heard that, are you still ready to present?

Ms Sweet: Sure.

The Chair: Okay. Great.

Ms Sweet: You said you had a question, though.

The Chair: Yeah. Let me wait till you're finished because it's feedback for our second round, actually. That's my question.

Ms Sweet: Okay. Ten minutes?

The Chair: Yeah. I'm not a strict policeman on the seven minutes.

Ms Sweet: Oh, okay. Seven.

A quick introduction just for *Hansard's* purposes. I'm Heather Sweet. I am the MLA for Edmonton-Manning, and I have been elected for three terms, so this is my second boundary commission redraw. The reason that that's important to me is that I want to give a little bit of context about sort of some of the troubles that we went through in the last boundary for my riding specifically.

6:40

Also, just to let you know, part of my job as well is not just being the MLA for Edmonton-Manning, but I also do rural economic development, agriculture, and forestry as the critic, so I spend a lot of time travelling around the province, speaking to many of our constituents across rural communities. Happy to chat a little bit about the conflict between urban development, density populationwise, and then the needs of representation for rural Albertans.

Specifically talking about Edmonton-Manning, when we did the boundary draw or evaluation with the last commission, there was a conversation about doing an indent off 66th Street into Edmonton-Manning, about 144th Ave and a little bit north, going up to 153rd. That community is called the McLeod community, and McLeod was not very happy about that idea.

The Chair: We're going to get that map up, and if you feel comfortable, come up and show us where in that riding you're referencing.

Ms Sweet: Sure.

I guess while we're doing that, I should back up. Right now if we look at the percentages in the northeast, Edmonton-Manning is plus 22 per cent on the equation.

The Chair: Okay. What number do you use?

Ms Sweet: Based on the commission's website, so I've used your data.

The Chair: So 66,994.

Ms Sweet: Yeah. I just looked at the plus 22 per cent and was like: oh, I'm up there.

I share boundaries with Castle Downs, which is only plus 3; Edmonton-Decore, which is a negative 1.9; and then Beverly-Clareview, which is negative 1.7. So if we look at the boundary of the northeast of Edmonton, I am significantly over in comparison to my colleagues surrounding me.

I can go look at the map. You can look even as you see the Manning freeway moving out, all of that is now going to be development. I was just at a neighbourhood open house for one of my newer communities where the home builders groups identified 70,000 new homes to be built in the next five to six years in my riding.

Mrs. Samson: How many?

Ms Sweet: Seventy thousand. I will be the new south.

The Chair: Sorry. Others have mentioned the Manning freeway. Not being an Edmontonian, can you tell me what it is?

Ms Sweet: This is Manning Drive, which goes through Edmonton, and then this goes out to the Manning freeway, and if you keep taking 15, eventually it will take you out to the Fort McMurray exit, highway 63.

The Chair: And that's known as the Manning freeway?

Ms Sweet: Yeah.

There's a big gurdwara on the north side of it where the 15 sign is, but this is a trailer park, and this is Quarry Ridge. All of this now is being cleared and developed, so there are houses coming in here already. This is now the city of Edmonton park that they've made, their newest addition to the river valley park system, so it will not be developed, but they're saying 70,000 in here.

The Chair: Homes or people?

Ms Sweet: Homes.

I will be the new south side. All of the dynamics that the south side are dealing with in Ellerslie, southeast, southwest will be in Manning. A consideration to think about is that I'm already over plus 22. By the next boundary redraw – I know I'm projecting out – it will be exceeding that 22 by significant numbers, and we will be facing similar to what we're facing on the south side, which is a huge population explosion and maybe only two seats to consider.

I do know that there are some people in the room that are not going to like what I'm about to say, but I do think we need to look at 144th Avenue on the map, which if we look at the east side of my riding is the boundary between Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview and Manning. Then it kind of juts down to 137th Avenue to 66th Street. It would be a clear defining line if we just did 144th Avenue across, and then the decision by the boundary commission would be: who takes those two communities? Those communities are York and Steele Heights. The reason that I've said the 144th divide is because there is a community league, and I'm sure you've heard about our community league systems that are identified within those neighbourhoods.

The 144th cut-off is the Steele Heights-York cut-off on their northern part of the riding, so it would be a natural division to move to a different riding, potentially Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, because that would make sense, without disrupting the McLeod community, which is the northern part of that piece. That was the community that they were going to split in half last commission, and the community was very upset, and once the boundary was drawn, everybody came out to look at the maps and was like: please don't do this. The 144th is much cleaner than doing some weird jut into Manning.

I can go back and maybe show you, if you want, but it doesn't . . .

The Chair: Yeah. I would appreciate that. Yeah, we would.

Ms Sweet: Okay. So, 144th Avenue: this is Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview now, and then this is me. If we just did this, which is the continuation of 144 across, it just naturally takes this bottom out. What they were going to do last commission for some reason was put a line in here, go down this road, and cut in here. It was going to cut this whole section in half, and that's actually a community that's attached to a community league. That was why it upset people. This community has been in existence, like, since 1950, and

they want to continue to be their collective whole, if that makes sense. That's the only clean line that I could recommend if we had to adjust my population.

The Chair: Any idea what that population would be? No? Okay. We'll figure it out.

Ms Sweet: I thought that on the drive here. I was like: I should know.

The Chair: Oh, it's better than I thought, then: 5,600.

Mr. Clark: Five thousand six hundred and seventeen.

Ms Sweet: No. It's not very many.

Mr. Clark: So it's something.

Ms Sweet: It helps.

Mr. Clark: What else can you do?

The Chair: It's a good start.

Ms Sweet: I really like my people in the northeast, so I feel like this is not politically the best conversation for me to have.

Mr. Clark: Sorry. *Hansard* is forever.

Ms Sweet: Yeah. I mean, what I would say is: please don't add any more. Even the conversation – like, Edmonton is Edmonton. There were conversations at some point about Redwater and Gibbons and, like that, Morinville, Sturgeon. It doesn't make sense to come into this riding. It is going to be urban sprawl and high density. You know, they say 70,000 in the next five to seven years. We'll see as the economy kind of figures itself out over the next little bit if it'll actually be that many.

The Chair: There's some possibility that the next commission can deal with the growth.

Ms Sweet: Yeah. I think so.

The Chair: It doesn't have to be that far projecting.

Ms Sweet: No. But just recognizing that there are definitely tons of new builds already existing that weren't counted in 2021. Even those northern communities that are just inside the Anthony Henday, there are way more houses and high density in there now than there was before.

The Chair: Okay. Anything else?

Ms Sweet: No. I think I ran out of time.

The Chair: Okay.
Susan.

Mrs. Samson: Just a quick question. When you're talking about taking the bottom off at 144, as we move to the east in that next – I guess it would be a pyramid shape. Would that be of any benefit? Or tell me why we wouldn't consider 153, cutting it off and taking that section so it's right across from 153. One side of it would be Manning Drive, 153, and the bottom of the boundary would be that 144th Avenue, and then it starts at the North Saskatchewan.

Ms Sweet: Yeah. Going to the Anthony Henday. My worry is that's what's going to happen.

Mrs. Samson: Oh, okay.

Ms Sweet: It's because all of the new development is going in that area. I'm just thinking as we're projecting forward: if, let's just say, the next boundary commission decides they're going to split this riding into two, the natural split would be the Manning freeway, right? So if we can try to keep that east side as cohesive as it is, knowing that there's so much development happening in there, I think it would make it cleaner so that we're not pushing things back into other ridings later.

6:50

Mrs. Samson: Right. Thank you. Good to know.

The Chair: John, any questions?

Mr. Evans: No. Thank you.

The Chair: Julian? Our resident capital city rep.

Dr. Martin: And fellow leftie.

Ms Sweet: Yes. I like lefties.

Dr. Martin: You know, we've been struggling with the size, like you have, of your riding, and we've always been puzzled – haven't we? – about: why is this big blank space still there? Now you're here to tell us that it won't be long before it actually gets roads and houses and things.

Now, my question is very specific to that because developers say a lot of things about their future plans, and there are so many contingencies about capital and God knows what. We've heard people talk to us about future growth, which of course we're very interested in hearing about, but we have to know about what I call imminent and tangible construction rather than speculate about the future. If we really could speculate about the future, we could just shut down commissions because we could solve it for 100 years and be all done. But we don't, like anybody. That's just absurd. So I don't want to lean too much on the prospect of 70,000 going in here.

I have a similar problem somewhere between Sherwood Park and Fort Saskatchewan at Bremner: ultimate build-out is 70. But what's going to happen in the next five years is the critical thing.

Ms Sweet: Yeah. Same developers, too.

Dr. Martin: Yeah. It doesn't surprise me because you need to be a fairly big player to contemplate such a thing.

Ms Sweet: Yeah. I think it would be safe to say there's at least 20 only because we do have four neighbourhoods that have the infrastructure, and everything's been laid, and there are houses popping up kind of lot-wise in those communities. We're also seeing the Ontario splurge, I guess. Like, I literally went to an open house, and people are buying them without even seeing them because to them, they're cheap. Right? They're not. They're, like, \$800,000 houses, but – you know. That works. There are houses in my area going within, like, a week on market.

Dr. Martin: I drove through this district two weeks ago, and I was stunned. I mean, we go down 153 Avenue to the Henday and all through there is chock a block. I think there's still, you know – there's, like, an old cemetery and a few bits of historical stuff, but it is becoming a very dense set of neighbourhoods. So, I'm not here to dispute your claim about the growth. It's just: how much are we going to see? How soon?

Ms Sweet: Right. I think, you know, in fairness, as a representative I'm happy to continue to do whatever comes in the next year and a half, maybe longer. We'll see. But there's been substantial growth since the whole time I've represented the area, and so you just adjust. There is a trend. If you lived in the south part of the northern ridings – like McLeod and Kilkenny and Fraser – you probably just bought a house a little bit north into the newer area. My whole street is everybody went to high school together. Like, we say north side, and we mean it. We all grew up together, we all went to school together, and we will continue to raise our kids together.

Dr. Martin: Right.

Mr. Evans: It's the hood.

Ms Sweet: It's the hood. It is totally the hood. Yeah. So different than the south side. They have no idea.

The only other thing – sorry. I know you want to move on, but another consideration is naming opportunities. It would be a sweet riding if you could change it. But Edmonton-Manning is . . .

The Chair: Oh. Sorry.

Ms Sweet: It took you a second.

Mr. Clark: It's been a long couple of days.

Ms Sweet: It took a minute. I know. I'm the longest-serving MLA for the riding.

But, no. Edmonton-Manning is the same name federally as it is provincially, and every time we have an election, it doesn't matter if it's a federal or provincial election, people call me, and they are like: why aren't you running? I'm like: because I'm not running federally.

Mr. Evans: What if we went: Manning-Edmonton? Would that change it up?

Ms Sweet: Yeah. Who knows? It is . . .

The Chair: Is that just recent? Or has that always been?

Ms Sweet: No. Since they created the federal riding. I think the feds took it.

Mr. Clark: Do you have a suggestion for what else we could call it?

Ms Sweet: No. I mean, I would have to think about a name option. Like, there is so much history in the northeast. It was the steel area during the rail – we have some really cool history. I don't know.

Mr. Evans: What about Edmonton-Sweet?

Ms Sweet: Yeah, right? I think it should be an Edmonton-Sweet. It would be a sweet riding, I'm telling you. One day it's gonna happen.

Dr. Martin: Horse Hill?

Ms Sweet: I mean, Horse Hill is that whole area. Edmonton-Horse Hill would make sense. To be honest, I didn't really think it through as to what the new name should be except that it would be really great if they weren't both the same. I mean, I can do more research on the history of the north.

The Chair: Why is it named Manning?

Ms Sweet: Ernest Manning.

The Chair: No, I realize that. Did he live up there, or does he have a connection to that area of the city?

Ms Sweet: No. I think it was a new riding, and they wanted to honour his commitment to the province.

Mr. Evans: What about Horse Hill?

Ms Sweet: Yeah. Well, now you've got two votes. It could be. I mean, it is the area for sure, and lots of things are named after Horse Hill in the community. We've got the pilot area, too. All of our new neighbourhoods are named after World War II pilots. Pilot Sound is also kind of a fun thing. I kind of like to stay away from names of people, to be honest; I like the names of the history of the area. Like, Beverly-Clareview has got a really great history about, you know, the old Beverly.

The Chair: You know, feel free to give us a written submission on naming once you've had more of a chance to think about it.

Mrs. Samson: That was my comment. That was exactly my comment.

Mr. Clark: Sorry. I just wanted to make sure that I'm clear on what I heard you say earlier. Manning freeway is a natural boundary. So we talked about taking perhaps that 144th piece of the south part that you noted, but if we were to follow the railway lines up the Henday, that corner bit there, there are quite a few people there. Victoria Trail, like, that whole area: how much growth are we going to see? That would get you down below towards 50,000 or 51,000. We'd need to find somewhere for those other ones to go.

I guess what I'm trying to think about is – I keep stealing from the famous Edmontonian: skate to where the puck is going to be. If Manning is going to have a bunch of growth – look at the growth you've had, absolutely. You were just a little above average in 2017, and now you're almost above 25 per cent over. So we have to take a big bite out of it. If we're going to do that, do we want a little like some of the south Edmonton considerations? Like, do we want to overshoot a little bit and kind of reduce it down so that growth picks it up so that you don't end up with 80,000 people at this time eight years from now?

Ms Sweet: My response to this is that I'm having an emotional reaction, which is quite funny for me. I love Fraser, which is that community, just because of the history of it. I think that you're going to have to make that decision because my heart is attached to many of my communities just because I've represented them for almost 10 years. Like, 144th cut-off with York and Steele was very clear to me in the sense of just – yeah, I spend a lot of time at Fraser. We built their playground. I'm not the one to ask this question to. Don't make me give away . . .

Mr. Clark: The bigger question is: is it a natural grouping that should be together somehow?

Ms Sweet: Yeah. I think that it would make sense. I mean, where that gap is above 153rd, though, is being developed as of right now, inside the Anthony Henday. It looks like there's nothing there, but there are houses now. It's Gorman. It's the new Gorman community.

Then on the other side of the Anthony Henday by the trailer park is also all new development, and there are a ton of subdivisions in there already. It's just that the problem is that at some point, I actually believe, where the Anthony Henday is, that whole E section

is going to be its own riding at some point, which is why I'm hesitant to pull stuff out. But it's also because I love Fraser, on the record.

Dr. Martin: There's lots of development just east of Kuhlmann's greenhouse, is that right?

Ms Sweet: Yeah.

Mr. Clark: That's a big development pot, because once people have committed to cutting up black earth to put in neighbourhoods, they're going to continue to do it.

7:00

Ms Sweet: Yeah, that's where the 70,000 are going to be. Yeah. And there's going to be conflict. I mean, the greenhouse, Kuhlmann's, is there. Like, Arrowhead is there. But, yeah, that's right by the trailer park.

Dr. Martin: Yeah.

Ms Sweet: And the people that are all sitting watching us are actually north-siders, too, so I'm sure this will all – don't hold it against me.

Dr. Martin: Thank you. That was really . . .

The Chair: Actually, my question was not in relation to anything here, but in the process as I was going through the timeline with you, you were following closely. If we issue our report in October, our interim report, how do you want – what would you say about us just simply having virtual hearings leading up to the final report?

Ms Sweet: On the map?

The Chair: Yeah.

Ms Sweet: I actually think your engagement is going to be higher. People can go online and look at the map. It gives them time to think about it, too. I'm a big fan of giving opportunities as many ways as we can.

The Chair: Yeah.

Ms Sweet: I also want to say thank you. Like, this is really hard, sitting on committees and doing it for three days straight without, really, a break. So I appreciate you for doing . . .

The Chair: Three days? A whole month.

Ms Sweet: Well, Edmonton. Yeah, I can't believe you're going till the end of June.

Mrs. Samson: We are.

Ms Sweet: I appreciate you doing all of this.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you very much. Thank you for your great conversation and presentation. As I've said to other MLAs, all presentations are equal, but it's especially gratifying to hear from people, elected representatives that walk those streets, drive that pavement, and know the riding inside out. So thank you so much.

Okay. Our next presenter is Susan Jubb.

Ms Jubb: Hello.

The Chair: Good evening.

Ms Jubb: My name is Susan Jubb. I think they have Judd.

The Chair: Oh, did I say Judd? Sorry.

Ms Jubb: Yeah.

The Chair: Jubb. Okay.

Ms Jubb: My riding is Edmonton-Manning.

The Chair: Oh, but you're not the MLA.

Ms Jubb: No, I'm not. I live in Edmonton-Manning. I've been there for about 17 years. What I've heard is that there was some talk about including rural voters into this riding and splitting it up so that rural voters would be included in this riding. I'm opposed to this. Like, we have different priorities between rural and urban. They're more concerned with agriculture, resource management. My concern as an urban voter is public transit, housing density, affordable housing. For example, I take the train to work twice a week. When I walk through Clareview station, I get on the train, I'm always assessing safety. Is this person safe to sit with? Is this person safe to stand with? I don't think that's an issue that a rural voter would have.

Also, I think it would be – because we have competing interests between rural and urban voters, I don't think my MLA would be able to adequately represent both voters. I think we also often have competing priorities. I feel that as an Edmonton-Manning constituent I would have less representation or would have unequal representation. I also think you would be doing the rural voters a disservice because they would be very underrepresented with all the urban people in that riding.

That's all I have to bring up.

The Chair: Okay. Questions, starting with Greg, then.

Mr. Clark: No, I just am always curious about, you know, as part of the conversation we were having before, any thoughts you may have on what parts of the community belong together although I do think MLA Sweet gave us a pretty good synopsis as to sort of what goes with what and what some of those options are. I know you've spoken a bit about the rural-urban mix. I mean, I do find that persuasive. I do see that there really does seem – and we've heard quite a bit of that. We've heard a couple of different perspectives, for sure. But I find it persuasive to say that there is an urban way in the things you deal with on an everyday basis.

Any other examples you can think of – or maybe I'll ask you a challenge question.

Ms Jubb: Okay.

Mr. Clark: What if I said that you're going to have to have a scenario where the MLA is straddling a boundary. What opportunities does that present? Do you feel you'd maybe find ways to work with your rural neighbours, or do you feel like that would just be sort of a hill that you couldn't climb?

Ms Jubb: I just think that my MLA would have to be, like, a specialist in rural priorities over in urban, and then I think that both of us would be disserved by that.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

The Chair: Julian.

Dr. Martin: Thanks. Thank you. You'll appreciate that this riding has been so popular that it's now got too many people in it, from our point of view.

Ms Jubb: I've been there for 17 years, so, yeah.

Dr. Martin: And that therein is our problem. I hadn't thought about connecting you to a rural constituency; you've got a big parcel of rural stuff already. Really, the practical question for us is that we've heard from – how to put this – your MLA about the imminent development of new neighbourhoods outside the Henday as well as inside the Henday, you know, 153 and the like. Do you anticipate outside the Henday on the west side of 15 – Manning freeway, that is – new neighbourhoods going in that area as well? The Manning freeway goes up here towards Fort Sask, so we're looking at down by Kuhlmann's there that are new developments and probably more. But are there any coming out here, do you suspect?

Ms Jubb: Not that I know of, but there's, like, a lot of development coming in, like, just north of Clareview station. They've got, like, three or four big condo complexes, just the framing set up, and they're huge. I'm not sure how many people that's going to be.

Dr. Martin: Okay. That's just on the west bank of Fort Road?

Ms Jubb: No. It would be on Manning, but it would be just north of Clareview station.

Dr. Martin: Okay.

Ms Jubb: Just, like, walking distance to Clareview station.

Dr. Martin: Thank you. I spotted it now.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. Do you have any other suggestions on a name for Edmonton-Manning?

Ms Jubb: We could go Edmonton-North East. It's boring, but it's not named after anybody.

Mrs. Samson: If you think of something, you can always submit it. I know that's sort of a pressure question.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Evans.

Mr. Evans: No. No questions. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you very much, Ms Jubb.

Ms Jubb: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you for coming.

Lesley Thompson is our next presenter. Introduce yourself, ma'am, and tell us which riding you're from.

Ms Thompson: My name is Lesley Thompson. I'm from Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, a lifelong north-sider. So, yes, from the hood. I'm here to talk about Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, and I'm here to speak in strong support of keeping Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview with the existing boundaries that we currently have. This is because it's more than just a map.

I have up there a small version of the Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview map. We're a community. We're all connected. We have a cohesive history, and we're a growing part of northeast Edmonton. We reflect how people live, work, move, and connect, and splitting it apart and changing the boundaries right now would fragment the community that's there. Like I said, all of our communities are connected. I got a photo of one of our community leagues as well, and they work hand in hand with the communities

in the area. We actually have a community league zone per se where everybody kind of works together and helps support each other.

7:10

You can move to the next slide. We have many communities in our area. We have Beverly and Belvedere, and that's in south and southwest parts of our riding. These are some of our older communities, and they have a history of working people. We have Beverly, that was originally a coal mining town, a Ukrainian settlement. It's working-class people, and it still is working-class people. Belvedere was key postwar growth and a hub. It was also known as the packing district for Edmonton. So Gainers, Packers, all of them: that's where it was. It's being redeveloped now. There's new housing that's going in, and we have all walks of life there. As well, the Belvedere LRT is an anchor for our area, where people from Beverly come in to use the train. It's a quick bus ride there, and it connects to the major transit. Now in Edmonton with our expanding LRT line, it takes people anywhere in town.

We have our strong intergenerational ties and our cultural identity. It's more than just Ukrainian people. We have Somali people. We have people from all over Europe, Africa, you name it. North Edmonton was a place and still is a place where newcomers come, and they make it their home.

Now to the Clareview part. We started in the '70s with newcomers as well. We have diverse, family-oriented, transit-connected neighbourhoods, transit-oriented neighbourhoods. We have the Clareview LRT station there, and within walking distance from the Clareview LRT station you have major grocery stores. You have Superstore, Clareview, can even walk to Costco and bring a buggy and take it downtown or whatever, but people are connected. People can get to where they need to get quickly on foot, on bicycle, or via vehicle.

Then our central hub in the community, whether it's in the southern part or the northern parts, is our rec centre. The Clareview rec centre within the last 10 years was renovated, and it now includes a pool, a skating rink. The library is there. There's a school for kids that are upgrading their high school that didn't graduate in the three years of high school. That whole area connects the vibrant community that we have.

As I was also saying earlier, our community leagues: we share resources. We volunteer ideas. We have community leagues that share different groups for events. We have a community league in the south, Beacon Heights, who does an annual music festival. We have Bannerman, who is now doing monthly music nights in the summer, and even though these people are about a 10-minute car ride away and you wouldn't think they're connected, they are because they work in the neighbourhood. They live, eat, sleep, play in Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. We're not a silo.

We also have a diverse community; 34.9 per cent of our community is a visible minority. It's not just Caucasian folks, White people; 10.8 per cent is Muslim, and we have 10 per cent Indigenous. So as you can see, it's a varied community, and it's different from our surrounding communities and bedroom communities like Sherwood Park and Fort Saskatchewan. Very, very different.

That also leads us in here to the socioeconomic difference. We have the homes in Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. It's one of the most affordable neighbourhoods or ridings in the province, in the city. I took Edmonton-Gold Bar here. It's a little bit higher. And then you have Sherwood Park, that's even higher. Edmonton-Gold Bar is to our south.

Our river to the south of us is a dividing line. We have Anthony Henday on the east, which is somewhat a dividing line as well for where the people live in our riding.

And that's it. Thank you. All of our photos are from the neighbourhood. This is from lovely Beverly, where the swing is.

The Chair: Okay. Mr. Evans, any questions?

Mr. Evans: It looks like Clareview is actually in Edmonton-Manning. Is that right?

Ms Thompson: No. Clareview is in Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Evans: I must have a broken map.

Ms Thompson: We are – 50th Street is a dividing line, so when you look at the Clareview LRT station, the east part of the Clareview station is Beverly-Clareview; the west entrance for the LRT station is Edmonton-Manning.

The Chair: Aaron, can you put up the riding map again?

Mr. Evans: The question I really wanted to ask was: how many community leagues do you have?

Ms Thompson: Hairsine, Bannerman, South Clareview, Beverly, Beacon Heights, and Homesteader. Six.

Mr. Evans: Wow. Okay. Thank you.

Ms Thompson: Six community leagues, but South Clareview actually houses many communities. South Clareview is the community, but it houses Sifton; it houses Belmont; it houses Kernohan; it houses Canyon Ridge.

Mr. Evans: What do you mean when you say it houses them?

Ms Thompson: If you take Bannerman, for example, it's an easy area. The community league is right in the centre of the neighbourhood, then everything around is Bannerman proper, whereas if you look at South Clareview, that's the community league. It has the neighbourhoods of Kernohan, Canyon Ridge, Belmont, Sifton. It has four.

Mr. Evans: As part of their community.

Ms Thompson: Yeah. So they bring all those into them.

You see that sometimes in newer communities, where they build one community league and then they absorb other neighbourhoods.

Mr. Evans: That's true.

The Chair: Susan, any questions?

Mrs. Samson: No. I'm good. Thank you.

The Chair: Julian?

Dr. Martin: No. Thank you. Oh, well, I have one. It's a constant puzzle to me how Beverly-Clareview in all these maps for donkey's years ends up with all the gravel pits on the other side of the river.

Ms Thompson: Yes. We have gravel pits and the garbage dump.

Dr. Martin: Yeah. That's true, too. At any rate, you know, the river is beautiful where you live, so that perhaps makes up for that.

Ms Thompson: Yeah.

Dr. Martin: You described the connectivity for your community leagues through public transit typically. Again, as I pointed out to someone this morning, I mean, once you have to cross the

Yellowhead, there are only two major ways to get across the Yellowhead to go south or to go north, as the case may be.

Ms Thompson: Yeah, 50th Street.

Dr. Martin: Yeah. There's 50th Street, and there's another road.

Ms Thompson: Victoria Trail.

Dr. Martin: Yeah.

Do you find that that's problematic? I mean, they're wide enough for pedestrians?

Ms Thompson: No. It is not problematic. Actually, something that he didn't mention: we have two parks, Hermitage and Rundle, and they connect through walking and bike paths. As well, it connects to the Kennedale ravine – that's kind of dead centre in the middle of the riding – and they all connect with a path. As well, the sidewalks and the roads are wide enough to get in with ease, and Victoria Trail and 50th Street: double lanes.

Dr. Martin: Perfect. Thank you.

Ms Thompson: You're welcome.

The Chair: Mr. Clark?

Mr. Clark: Just quickly, you saw MLA Sweet's sort of suggestion there. Any thoughts on that or any alternatives?

Ms Thompson: What was her suggestion?

Mr. Clark: Everything south of 144 and west of 15, which would be Manning freeway, move into Beverly-Clareview. Does that sort of fit with you guys, like, Manning Crossing, York park, that stuff?

Ms Thompson: Not necessarily because not all the areas connect as they currently do. Everything that's east of Manning Drive or Manning freeway doesn't have a natural connection to those areas. The Kirkness and Fraser area do have a connection to Beverly-Clareview, but . . .

Mr. Clark: But York.

Ms Thompson: There's not a tie-in between Beverly-Clareview and York as it currently stands.

Mr. Clark: All right. Thank you.

Ms Thompson: They fall in a different district and community.

Mr. Clark: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much, Ms Thompson. We appreciate your presentation.

Ms Thompson: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Brad Istace? Brad is not here? Okay.

Susan Shaw is not here? Okay.

Andrew Traynor.

7:20

Mr. Traynor: Good evening, commissioners. My name is Andrew Traynor. I'm a resident of the riding Edmonton-Rutherford, but I will actually be speaking today about the ridings I spent most of my life in and which I'm most familiar with, specifically St. Albert and Morinville-St. Albert. I'm currently a lawyer, but I've previously had the wonderful opportunity to work in provincial politics as well

as a campaigner and an organizer as well as a constituency assistant in St. Albert and the surrounding area for more than six years.

My starting thesis here is that I believe that the previous commission had to draw a fairly generally effective map and that there's a lot that this commission can preserve from that map to meet Alberta's present needs and ensure that our elections continue to be fair and representative with only minor changes. I'll first provide a brief overview of effective representation before elaborating on what I would argue is the most straightforward way for the commission to guarantee effective representation, specifically by pairing like communities with like communities.

Next I will share some thoughts on the two ridings that I know and love the best, St. Albert and Morinville-St. Albert. I'll also discuss some of the ways in which the boundary changes could affect our constituency offices and their ability to provide services to residents.

The purpose of Alberta's electoral boundaries is to guarantee effective representation, as required in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The other criteria that the commission may consider – for example, population growth, density, geography, communities of interest – must all be considered in light of that core policy purpose. Effective representation is defined by the Supreme Court of Canada under the preference for electoral boundaries of Saskatchewan as a balance of two goals that have a bit of a kind of countervailing aspect to them: ensuring relative parity of voting power by ensuring that as many votes as possible are effective – for example, that they're not diluted unreasonably compared to another group of citizens' votes – and, secondly, ensuring that that pursuit of parity does not eclipse the other goal of providing for a representative Legislature. The court notes that geography, community history, and minority representation are key factors, but it also suggests that shared cultural backgrounds, electoral competitiveness, and shared economic interests should also be factors worth considering.

Therefore, it would follow that dividing Alberta up into 89 equally populated chunks will not provide effective representation, as I'm sure the committee understands. Instead, we must ensure that the map continues to give due deference to the types of communities that Albertans choose to live in, recognizes the reasons why they choose to live in those communities, and allows them to elect MLAs who will effectively represent those shared interests. I believe that the commission can best fulfill this policy goal by ensuring that the boundaries, wherever possible, prioritize pairing like communities with like communities.

People choose to live in suburban, urban, or rural communities for their own reasons. It follows logically that they should be electing MLAs who understand their lifestyle, their values, their cultures and interests rather than having to compete within their own riding against residents who live in a different type of community in hopes that the MLA will prioritize their concerns instead.

Minimizing the number of ridings that meld community types within the same boundaries, while sometimes unavoidable, is the easiest way to prevent these sorts of representation problems and represents the simplest task for the commission to affect parity. Like communities can be paired with like communities, taking account for their cultural, historical, geographical, and economic boundaries until the population threshold is met. In urban centres like Edmonton and Calgary this could be as simple as redistributing the pie to allocate for new high-growth areas. By adding two new ridings to the Legislature, it'll allow for growth to occur in a planned-for manner in our cities, as some of the other presenters have noted with Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview and Edmonton-Manning, without off-loading those city voters into surrounding

rural and suburban ridings and swamping those other types of community voices while also ensuring that the number of rural ridings can remain consistent and not be excessive.

Small urban ridings, which are the ones that I'm most familiar with and most concerned with, have their own challenges, but they also provide an opportunity for the commission to address some of the concerns above. In the last boundary redistribution the commission at the time created what I would call a pretty close to perfect pair of ridings – a little bit biased – in St. Albert and Morinville-St. Albert, which I would submit should both be maintained basically unchanged and which can also provide an effective precedent that the commission can employ for other small urban and suburban ridings throughout the province.

In redrawing the boundaries of the St. Albert area, the last commission listened to community feedback and presented a wholly small urban St. Albert riding as well as a new rural-urban combination riding that reached northwards into Sturgeon county, including the town of Morinville, rather than reaching westwards and including the very separate and very distinct town of Spruce Grove. These two ridings have served very well in providing voters with effective representation and satisfying the factors set up by the Supreme Court and the Legislature. In two elections these ridings proved relatively competitive, with candidates needing to seek and win votes in all portions of each riding in order to have a shot at being elected.

Morinville-St. Albert largely escapes the concerns that I've noted for rural ridings, specifically that one group of voters will be able to dictate the election results to the other, by ensuring that it has a balanced proportion of urban voters in the St. Albert chunk; small-town commuter voters in Morinville, Bon Accord, and Gibbons; and truly rural voters in the smaller towns of Legal, Redwater, and the farming and acreage communities in between. This ensures that no candidate can convincingly win by running the table in one part of the constituency at the expense of the other. In 2023, a very tight, competitive, and healthy election, both of the two leading candidates were able to put together a multicommunity coalition to build a competitive campaign.

Additionally, the riding's design embraced that principle of like with like by pairing communities together to reach a full representative riding. St. Albert residents have enough in common with Morinville to warrant inclusion in the same constituency. They're both Edmonton area suburban commuter communities and have a strong francophone, Catholic, and Métis historical element. They're an economic through line in highway 2, and both see themselves as being distinct from Edmonton and rural Alberta on a lifestyle and cultural perspective enough to be a natural pairing with each other.

Likewise, Gibbons and Bon Accord would have greater similarities to Morinville as does the smaller town of Legal, again francophone, historical, that sort of cultural connection there. The only really ill-fitting addition, I would submit, would be Redwater, which is somewhat geographically isolated from the other communities in the riding. It's not connected to highway 2 in the same way and has a greater cultural, economic, and historical connection to northern communities like Westlock and Smoky Lake. Indeed, in a prior representation order I believe it was actually included with the formerly Athabasca-Morinville-Redwater riding.

Until St. Albert's population grows to an extent where it can support two stand-alone urban constituencies, like Lethbridge or Red Deer at present, the commission should follow the example set by past commissions and maintain a wholly urban St. Albert riding paired with a north region riding that includes St. Albert, Morinville, and other culturally and economically linked Sturgeon county communities.

Turning for a moment to the stand-alone St. Albert riding, I would also submit that these riding boundaries are largely perfect. There's not really much of a need to change. While recent changes to the act would permit ridings in suburban areas like St. Albert to reach into the larger cities of Edmonton and Calgary, I would submit that doing so in St. Albert, and indeed most of the communities surrounding Edmonton, would be a significant mistake and that it would compromise effective representation both for St. Albert voters as well as Edmonton residents and voters. Having grown up in St. Albert – I spent most of my life in the community – I can attest to the fiercely independent community, identity, and distinct history that sets it apart from Edmonton. It's always had a distinct political culture and has the distinction of being one of the only constituencies to have elected Liberal, Conservative, and New Democratic MLAs in the span of less than 10 years, and it remains a competitive and unique riding due to this political culture and tight community character.

For the same reasons that any move to incorporate portions of Edmonton into St. Albert should be opposed, any move to change or split the boundaries of the stand-alone St. Albert riding to bulk up underpopulated rural areas – for example, neighbouring Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland – would also be extremely poorly received by residents. It would dilute the community's character and the ability to elect a candidate who can effectively serve the community's interests in the Legislature, as has been the case for the several past decades that St. Albert has been a riding.

If there's any need to adjust the regional boundaries to accommodate population growth in this area, I would suggest the boundaries of Morinville-St. Albert could be extended slightly westward to encompass the growing Jensen Lakes and Elysian Fields neighbourhoods as well as Deer Ridge and North Ridge while shaving off Redwater to allow it to be added to the less populated Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock riding, with which it has a greater community connection. If the above changes were made to Morinville-St. Albert, the northeastern corner of the city could be added back into St. Albert proper to compensate. For example, this would generally be a return back to the 2012 implementation.

7:30

This combination of a wholly urban seat with a mixed rural-urban seat could also be considered for other regions like Fort McMurray and Medicine Hat. It allows one MLA to represent solely the city itself, giving recognition to the uniqueness of those communities and the reasons why voters choose to reside there instead of a bigger metropolitan centre or a rural area. At the same time it would allow a second MLA to represent the community as part of the larger region, championing its interests but also those of the smaller, more rural communities with which it has an economic connection, in the spirit of the like with like approach that I've harped on throughout the presentation.

In situations where these seats are competitive, residents may even benefit from having MLAs from both government, opposition, and potentially a third party in the Legislature, allowing them to advocate for community needs and those unique aspects of community differences on all sides of the Legislature.

I do have a couple of thoughts I would like to mention about my ...

The Chair: Mr. Traynor, I just saw the length of the page you just turned to. I haven't been strict on time, but it's been 10-plus minutes, and you're a lawyer, so ...

Mr. Traynor: I'm usually used to more aggressive timekeeping. I thought I was good. I do apologize.

I do have one closing thought I would like to make if possible, and then I'd be happy to take questions if there's time. My only concern, really, that I did want to mention from the constituency association, constituency assistant perspective: in a community like St. Albert, if you were to also have to represent and advocate for residents from Edmonton, it would largely double the workload without a requisite budget to match that. I know the budget is not something that's within your scope, but I would really caution against incorporating those city issues into the workload of regional and suburban constituency offices.

The Chair: That's a very good point. Okay. Thank you.

Greg, any questions?

Mr. Clark: No. Really, very thoughtful. We're going to have *Hansard*, but if you wouldn't mind, could you leave your notes with Aaron?

Mr. Traynor: Yeah. I'd be happy to. I submitted something similar to this as well.

Mr. Clark: Oh, you did as well. Okay. Perfect. I thought I recognized the name. That's good. I wanted to get something in writing because there's a lot there.

Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Julian?

Dr. Martin: Thank you. Thank you for coming and for your presentation. I noticed that one quite interesting feature of St. Albert is very thoughtfully planned empty land pods all around its northern and western flanks, so at some point you have within the city boundaries lots of space. That's clever. Some places haven't done that as well.

I wanted to ask you a few questions on that theme if I might. I'm very interested in the areas in any particular riding that we can claim have imminent and tangible construction. Of course, people will talk about growth in a rather abstract fashion – yeah, we've got a plan – but it's not the same thing as digging the sewer ditch. So for our purposes, that is my rule of thumb on whether we're going to see imminent growth of population or not. I noticed to the northeast of the town we have a large cluster of country acreages and the like in the countryside area. I would anticipate – you tell me if I'm wrong – that that will grow as a concept. Is that correct?

Mr. Traynor: Yes, that is correct. From what I understand – it's been a while since I've been in the constituency office, so forgive me if I'm a bit rusty on the terminology – there is a plan that the city has to expand servicing westward to allow for population growth in that area. We have seen some growth already occurring there. You see on the map there, in that sort of western boundary of the riding, there is population coming in there right now – oh, wonderful – including active construction. The Elysian Fields neighbourhood a bit further northwest of that also has a lot of growth. I did actually provide a bit more detail in my written submission to incorporate that, so I will defer to those, but you could scooch the boundaries a little bit to the west to incorporate areas that likely will be unlocked, especially with Ray Gibbon Drive being twinned and expanded, hopefully, into the new alignment with highway 2.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you. Any questions?

Mrs. Samson: Yes. Thank you for your presentation. I just wanted to share with you that our website shows that the population of St. Albert alone is 73,000. The suggestion that you offer that we would have one riding for the city as a whole, we can't do because the median is 55,000.

Mr. Traynor: I would just comment on that, Mrs. Samson, that what I'm supporting and what I'm proposing is keeping the boundaries as they are, where there's a riding that is carved out entirely of St. Albert, with the overflow being preserved in the Morinville-St. Albert riding.

Mrs. Samson: Okay. Thank you, because I misinterpreted that.

Mr. Traynor: I do apologize.

Mrs. Samson: And you know what? You are one of the few presenters to come to us that has a two-riding system where one is fully the city and one is a hybrid.

Mr. Traynor: It's a wonderful system.

Mrs. Samson: And it's good to know that that's very effective in this case, because there are a few more cities we're going to hear from that are using that, so thank you.

Mr. Traynor: You're welcome. Thank you very much, Mrs. Samson.

The Chair: John?

Mr. Evans: I'm interested to understand your perspective because you seem to wear two hats. You represent that the hybrid seems to be working and you're happy with St. Albert itself, but when you mentioned, in one of the scenarios, that if we had to put a portion of St. Albert into the city or a portion of Edmonton into St. Albert, that wouldn't work because there was such a difference between the suburban St. Albert and the urban Edmonton, but is there really that much of a difference?

Mr. Traynor: I would posit, yes, that there would be actually a fairly substantive difference.

Mr. Evans: But why doesn't it work? Why can't that work as a hybrid when the suburban-rural works as a hybrid?

Mr. Traynor: My overarching approach to this is basically that you should only consider those types of hybrid ridings as a last resort. The goal of effective representation would be ensuring that all voters are electing someone that has a similar experience, similar perspective to ensure that the MLA that they're electing can truly serve their needs and isn't beholden to multiple masters within the same riding.

Mr. Evans: That's happening in Morinville-St. Albert, right?

Mr. Traynor: I would not argue that it is. What I explained in my submission – and I directed the written one as well so there's a bit more detail there – is that in order to actually get elected in that riding, the winning candidate and the losing candidate who came as close as possible both had to compete effectively in all portions of the riding. It wasn't just a matter where you could run up the table in the 30 per cent of the riding that was roughly St. Albert . . .

Mr. Evans: But that's good.

Mr. Traynor: It is good.

Mr. Evans: Yeah.

Mr. Traynor: In certain scenarios.

Mr. Evans: It's good, effective representation.

Mr. Traynor: Exactly, when you can win like that. But it would be more ideal if St. Albert was large enough to have two St. Albert ridings. However, I wouldn't effectively, unfortunately, be able to add another 130,000 people to the city, as much as I think that would be wonderful.

Mr. Evans: That's theoretical. We're talking about what really happened.

Mr. Traynor: Exactly.

Mr. Evans: And that's illustrative about what can happen in other . . .

Mr. Traynor: A hundred per cent. And that means that when the Legislature cannot create those idealized, like-with-like boundaries, those rural-urban fused ridings can be a limited exception to allow for effective representation where the boundaries can be less cleanly drawn.

For example, in a city like Edmonton where, as the previous presenters commented, so much of it is based on community leagues, community relations, those sort of intricate kind of connections reaching across those boundaries into different communities, it would throw off those networks. We've also seen – I would actually direct to the most recent federal redistribution – where something was recognized similarly in the St. Albert and north Edmonton riding, where that Edmonton chunk was carved off, put back fully into the city, and then St. Albert was integrated in with Sturgeon county communities with which it has more of a direct connection.

I would also note that St. Albert is one of the oldest ridings in the province's electoral history. If we were to link it in with Edmonton, it would basically be overturning more than 80 years of provincial precedent.

7:40

The Chair: I'm going to have to stop this because we've got – sorry. Mr. Traynor, you've been a very entertaining presenter.

Mr. Traynor: Thank you.

The Chair: We went way over time. Way over time.

Mr. Traynor: I apologize.

The Chair: Cutting lawyers off is something I'm not unfamiliar with, so I'm sorry.

Mr. Traynor: Duly noted. Thank you for the opportunity.

The Chair: Make sure your written material stays with us.

Mr. Traynor: I will.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Our next presenter is Susan Shaw.

Mrs. Shaw: Good evening, commissioners.

The Chair: Good evening. Welcome.

Mrs. Shaw: I'm not sure – I sent my presentation to Aaron this afternoon, but I don't know if he got it. I have copies for you if you want them . . .

The Chair: Sure.

Mrs. Shaw: . . . or I can just provide them after.

I'm sorry. I am not accustomed to public speaking anymore, so I will not be nearly as entertaining as the gentleman who preceded me. I've been retired for some years, so this kind of thing is foreign to me now. However, having said that, I am very grateful for the opportunity to present you some information about the constituency of Edmonton-Rutherford in south Edmonton, where I've lived since 1990. I'm basically just going to follow my presentation, and I assume I might get ahead of you, but I might not.

I am a senior, as you can see. I am a wife, a mother, a grandma, and previously I was a social worker, predominantly in Edmonton but also in the Leduc area, for 37 years. I worked for the government, for nonprofits, and also for Edmonton public for significant lengths of time, and most of my work was with children and families, although I did some individual work as well. I've observed a great deal of change, as you can imagine, in Edmonton and the surrounding area during that time. My background is that I came from Regina, where I was born, to go to the U of A, and I just never left.

My understanding is that Edmonton may receive one additional seat for the next election, and as we have unequal populations in various areas of the city, some distribution would likely be required. So what I was hoping to do is give you a bit of my snapshot of Edmonton-Rutherford as it might be helpful from the perspective of someone who's lived there for quite a while. It's changed from being a fairly new suburb, when I moved there, to now an interior one with aging infrastructure and aging people, quite a few of us.

As I've noted in my presentation, 20 per cent of the population is under the age of 18, and about the same percentage is over the age of 65. That's quite a change. Even on my own block there is a significant change in the ages of people and people moving out, and I think that in Edmonton-Rutherford that is happening quite a bit. What it means is that, as transition neighbourhoods go, young people move in, some of them have kids – I see fewer of them having kids these days – so the neighbourhoods fill in. Fifty per cent of the residents in our constituency own their homes, but due to the growing number of seniors, younger individuals are moving in. There are some really large homes in Rutherford, and those homes seem to get snapped up just as fast as the smaller ones. It's amazing to me, considering what they must be worth.

The constituency has been a fairly stable collection of communities within the boundaries, even considering that the boundaries were changed last in 2019. I think that it's come together not too badly. As I noted in my submission, south of Blackmud Creek is a newer area, and – let me think. When my kids were – well, it's not that new anymore, I guess, in some ways, when I think about it. When my kids were younger, about, say, 11, 12, 13 – and my oldest is now 43 – that neighbourhood was just going up down there. Where I am, the house was built in 1980. I think that the homes down there, though, and the neighbourhoods are newer, and I've watched them kind of coalesce and develop community leagues and things like that. They have younger kids than in our neighbourhoods. They used to be just filled with younger kids. Now I think some of them have moved out, obviously.

But what we're seeing is a mix of cultures as well. If you look at your stats on Rutherford, the predominant cultural denomination is White, but it's been gradually changing, which is a good thing. I think that some of that's due to the two high schools because there's

quite a huge mix. It's just like the United Nations in there. It's good to have because it reflects, with the way the rest of the city is, what life in Canada is like these days. As we have immigration coming in, usually those folks are looking for homes, and it's a very good neighbourhood for them to move to.

What I noticed, what I wanted to talk to you about partly, was the difficulties we've been having in Rutherford, and part of it has to do with we have construction. We have a lot. I'm sure other people have come to you and said: oh, well, you know, we have construction. We have LRT going through the middle of our constituency, LRT expansion. There are three major routes that are affected by that: 111th Street, 23rd Avenue, and 119th Street. I think most people who go out in their cars on most days now experience stress from trying to drive around in Rutherford, trying to get through it. Even if you're just going, you know, a few blocks, you run into some kind of problem because of that.

We also have been affected by the construction going on in our next-door community to the west of Whitemud, where they have been having a major, major road construction smack down through the middle of it on Terwillegar. So people have decided that it's a very good idea to cut through our neighbourhood to get around it. That's great for them, but it's not so good for us. So those kinds of things are a concern.

The LRT itself has brought some issues that I think probably our city council could see were coming but, you know, we're not so sophisticated down there that we didn't necessarily see it, or we thought: oh, well, you know, those problems will stay downtown. We've got a few people that come down. Because we're at the end of the line at Century Park there, we have people coming down there who don't live down there, and they don't actually know what they're doing down there. They just come down there and they hang out. That's not necessarily a very good thing.

At the same time, at that very location, the city has decided to increase the density. There's been different kinds of housing going in in the Century Park collection of – I don't know what to call them. It's planned that there will be different kinds of housing going up right in that area, right next to the LRT. It all kind of is to the east of the LRT station, because west is all developed, so they left a piece open there that could be filled in. It used to be a mall. The mall was taken down, and now it's being filled in. That's going to make a considerable difference.

7:50

When you were talking before, Justice Miller, about your interest in building projects and that kind of thing, that is actually happening in that area in Rutherford right now. I'm so sorry; Dr. Martin, pardon me. I'm going by where the sign is. So it is actually happening, that kind of thing, for us right now.

We have LRT construction going every which way, and we have construction in the middle of Rutherford. It's not as bad right now as it is sometimes because they've completed a couple of things and they're just working on some other things in that particular area. They don't do them all at once, but they're planned. It's a lot of stress, I think, that wasn't there; even five years ago that stuff was not there. So the neighbourhood is in a lot more state of flux, I guess you'd say.

Having said all that, Rutherford is still a very desirable place to live. Except close to those major thoroughfares and the construction areas, it's pretty quiet. The crime rate is low. There are good schools at all levels. We're fortunate enough to have two high schools in our area. It's a well-served community, I would say.

Things did change after the 2019 boundaries were changed, I think, just because of the expansion. The services are more stretched now. Because we have more seniors and just a higher

population, as I've noted there, I think that there are just more issues. We have, of course, low vacancy rates, because we have that all over Edmonton, but there are more financial concerns. The last couple of years have really stressed people's finances, and we see more people with health issues. They can't get doctors. I have some acquaintance with the MLA of our area, and I know that they receive a crazy number of calls for help in that office, so they're really using the MLA and her resources to a very great degree.

As I have suggested to you at the end of my report to you, I believe that we haven't really finished adjusting to the last expansion. We went up in size by about a third. The area to the south that was added: the concerns are a little different than ours, and they are within the north part. I live on the north part there, and what I see is that on the northern side of Rutherford there are more issues than there are in the south. But altogether there's quite a lot.

I think that, perhaps, it's not the time, if the boundaries didn't have to be changed. If they do, they do. I mean, people adjust – right? – but it seems to me like we're still trying to adjust to the last time.

Yes, sir.

The Chair: I'm wondering if I can kind of maybe focus in and just confirm that you have the same numbers we do in terms of the population in Rutherford.

Mrs. Shaw: Okay.

The Chair: Back in 2017 they relied on figures that said your population was 47,353, and this time around we're relying on figures from 2024, which puts you at 52,757. Does that sound about right, a roughly 5,000 increase?

Mrs. Shaw: I'm not sure. I know that the city's intent is to increase our density, and that's what they're working on.

The Chair: Okay. So you do see some growth potential, then, based on the city housing zoning proposals?

Mrs. Shaw: Yes. Absolutely.

The Chair: Okay.

You've also referenced back to 2019 boundaries. Are you content with those for now? You see them remaining unchanged going forward out of our report?

Mrs. Shaw: Yeah, I think so.

The Chair: Okay.

Mrs. Shaw: I do think it's a bit of a stretch for the MLA because of the things I've referenced. It's tough. It's a lot of work.

The Chair: Yup.

Mrs. Shaw: You know, just looking at it from the point of view of services and that kind of thing, you can't ever go backwards. But if it stayed the same, I think then the community would continue to adjust to it.

The Chair: Okay.

Mrs. Shaw: I know that having looked at the boundaries, physically the boundaries seem to make sense. There doesn't seem to be anything too odd about it. I mean, you can't always set up boundaries to suit the physicality of an area either.

The Chair: Can I maybe move into some questions from the panelists?

Mrs. Shaw: Absolutely.

The Chair: Mr. Evans, do you have any questions at all?

Mr. Evans: I don't.

The Chair: Susan?

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for the presentation, but I have no questions. It's well done. Thank you for the copy of it.

The Chair: Yeah, thank you for providing it.

Mrs. Shaw: Oh, you're welcome.

The Chair: Julian?

Dr. Martin: I don't think so. I mean, I know the area reasonably well, and I agree with a lot of your characterization. All I can say about the public transit is that it will some day end.

The Chair: The construction.

Mrs. Shaw: I think you've been through there maybe.

Dr. Martin: Well, I've done 121st . . .

Mrs. Shaw: I don't recommend it.

Dr. Martin: No, no. I entirely hear you. Thank you.

The Chair: Greg?

Mr. Clark: No. Better than Calgary; we don't even bother building it in Calgary.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you. Thank you very much for the printed copy, Mrs. Shaw. I appreciate it.

Mrs. Shaw: You're welcome. Thank you so much for the opportunity.

The Chair: Okay. We're going to move on to the next presenters. It may be a pair or a duo. Paul Briones and Maria Briones. Yes, please come forward. Good evening. Just have a seat. Normally we've been under a time limit of about seven minutes per presenter. Are you okay with giving you 14 minutes together?

Mr. Briones: No. Seven minutes, actually. I wrote it down, so if it's faster for me to read it, and then you can . . .

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Briones: I'll say what I want and be direct to the point.

Hello. My name is Paul Briones, and this is my wife, Maria. We would like to begin by thanking the commission for giving us the opportunity to be here and speak about the electoral boundaries. I'm going to share my personal observation as a resident and community member. I have lived in Edmonton-South West along with my wife, Maria, for eight years. We live in the community of Uplands in Riverview and have family and friends in other surrounding communities in Edmonton-South West. We enjoy living in this area and appreciate the strong sense of belonging and community pride as well as the cultural and ethnic diversity in the area.

8:00

Our community has experienced significant growth and diversity since its development began. This has brought in a large mix of families from different ages, languages, and cultural backgrounds. The ethnic backgrounds of citizens in Edmonton-South West are very diverse, with visible minorities such as Chinese, South Asian, African Canadian, and Filipino Canadian, like my family. The diversity has led to richer community life, with various cultural festivals, shared community spaces, and opportunities to learn from one another. My family had the opportunity to participate in unique events such as a regular Filipino get-connected at church and also volunteering at AsiaFest in Windermere. We are grateful to live in a community where everyone's culture and heritage are valued and celebrated.

When taking into consideration the electoral boundaries, I would ask the commission to consider the diverse culture and heritage that distinguish Edmonton-South West from other communities. What brings us meaning is our culture. We don't want our riding and community groups to be separated and attached into a large rural community. We want to ensure that our community and culture groups remain intact in the new electoral ridings. It is important that our communities and our interests are well represented by our elected officials. I have been lucky to have Nathan Ip as my MLA. He represents the cultural diversity that I see in my community, and I appreciate his work in supporting the many communities that make up Edmonton-South West and advocating for us.

I thank you very much for your time and consideration.

The Chair: Thank you.

Anything you wish to add, ma'am?

Mrs. Briones: Oh, nothing. I just thank you for the opportunity to be able to present our side in the matter. Being immigrants, I am thankful for what Canada has provided for us, and I'm so thankful for the community that we are in right now. It's so welcoming and so diverse as far as race, religion, language, colour, and everything like that. We feel so much accepted in the community that we are in right now.

The Chair: You indicate you've been living in Edmonton-South West for eight years.

Mrs. Briones: Yes.

Mr. Briones: Yes, sir.

The Chair: Is that your first community you've moved to in Edmonton?

Mr. Briones: No. We've been coming from the south side, from Mill Woods.

The Chair: Oh, so you were in Mill Woods at one point.

Mr. Briones: Yeah, we're going back because of work, and we've had just, like, five moves since we were here in Edmonton.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Evans, any questions?

Mr. Evans: I wanted to know that, too. You've been in Edmonton. You're now in the southwest, but before that you were in Mill Woods.

Mr. Briones: Right. In Tamarack.

Mr. Evans: In Tamarack. I'm interested in the community connection that you're talking about. Tell me the difference between where you are now in that community sense that you're talking about and Mill Woods. What's the difference?

Mrs. Briones: Yeah. We noticed that in the community we're in right now, in the southwest, the community is more diverse. In the south side it's more like predominantly a different community. But now, you know, because it's a growing community the southwest is – Mill Woods is a more established community. There are already people settled there for quite some time. I noticed that immigrants have been coming not only from other countries, but also they're moving from other parts of Canada. They've also been moving into the southwest area.

So we've met a lot of people from different parts of Canada, from the east mostly. In fact, my daughter recently got married to someone who is coming from the east. It became diverse, right? My other daughter is married to a Chinese immigrant family. Then we have neighbours who are from different parts of Africa and even one from Ukraine, so you can imagine the diversity of the community. But it's very welcoming, and actually we like each other. We don't treat each other as, like, foreigners or something like that or someone different from us. We've learned their different cultures, different traditions, some which we share. Like, some are similar with our tradition. I noticed that it's more colourful. You know, it improves your understanding of human nature and how people interact with each other, coming from different areas or parts of the world, right? It's very, very interesting for us.

Mr. Evans: Do you have community leagues there, or do you have community association groups?

Mr. Briones: Right now we're a part of Edgemont because the Uplands is just, you know, growing and booming, and I've been trying to be involved with the officers. They said that if we want to consider doing our own, they will help us out. But we're still part of the Edgemont community, which is already established.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you very much.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. I just wanted to let you know that your MLA, Nathan Ip, was here earlier today expressing the same kind of sentiments about community that you did. I would like you to expand on this thought that I was presented with earlier. That is that your MLA and your community represent a visible minority, and that's what makes Edmonton-South West so unique, that there are many, many different nations and people that make that up. How important is that to you, that your MLA is also a visible minority?

Mrs. Briones: Yes. Because we feel that we're connected with him, and he understands the situation that we immigrants are in in this community, right? Being from an immigrant family, also, he knows the challenges that we face.

We even consulted with him one time. We were hoping that we could create a program, maybe, or a compilation of services that the community, or agencies, or organizations in the community can offer individuals like immigrants or maybe people from other parts of Canada. Because sometimes, like, even for us, when we were studying, we don't know: where should I go if I need to know something about this kind of service; what should I do; who should I talk to? I don't think that there's that compilation or a particular resource, let's say, that people can go to and access, that: "Oh. I need something like this." Then I can go to the business of the

person, or this is the number I call, or is this the website that I go to.

We consulted with Mr. Ip about that. If we could do something about it then. Also we said we can offer our help if we need some way that we call resources or organizations that know what they can offer our community. But it's in the works. We have not done anything yet. We just asked him if we could do that.

Mrs. Samson: Yes.

Mrs. Briones: He is very open to it, and he understands exactly that it's very important. He said that he's willing to work with us on that. He just doesn't know when. We haven't agreed on the time frame, when we're going to do that, but we agree that we need to do that for the community.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. Thank you for that input. I appreciate that.

Mrs. Briones: You're welcome.

The Chair: Thank you.

Dr. Martin: Thank you again. I'm looking at a Google map here, which is always fascinating because I was thinking: gosh; where is that? Now I know. But I see here that there's a lot of construction work going on in your neighbourhood.

Mrs. Briones: Yeah.

Mr. Briones: Yes, that's correct.

Dr. Martin: So it looks like you're in a very popular area because there's lots of scraped open ground immediately south of you as well. Obviously, neighbourhoods and shops are being put in.

Mr. Briones: Yeah. They're starting the commercial centre . . .

Mrs. Briones: Commercial area.

Mr. Briones: The commercial area by 23rd Avenue and 199th Street.

Dr. Martin: Right. Well, thank you for that, because I'm very keen to know if there are imminent and tangible construction activities. Very clearly there are.

Mrs. Briones: There's a lot.

Mr. Briones: I think there's planning for, and we need more schools and to put in an ETS terminal as well.

Dr. Martin: You have city councillors to ask about that.

Mr. Briones: Yeah. Right. I realize that. Just to mention it. Thank you, sir.

8:10

Mr. Clark: I don't have any questions. I just want to say: thank you very much for coming. It really does genuinely help us get a real flavour and a picture for Edmonton-South West and just the community as a whole.

Mr. Briones: Right. Yeah.

Mr. Clark: I just want to thank you very much for coming.

Mr. Briones: Thank you, sir.

Mrs. Briones: Thank you also.

The Chair: I have a question or a comment question. You realize that Edmonton-South West will very likely have to be divided because the population is way too high.

Mr. Briones: Right.

Mrs. Briones: Yes.

The Chair: There are 76,000 people, and we need to get that down, so we'll be drawing boundaries to take some of the population out of that riding.

Mr. Briones: So the border would be Anthony Henday north and south?

The Chair: We're not sure yet.

Mrs. Briones: Oh, okay.

Mr. Briones: Okay.

The Chair: But we're gaining information in these public hearings to help us make the decision.

Mr. Briones: Mr. Nathan can run in the south; I can run in the north.

Mrs. Samson: Absolutely.

The Chair: Okay. Solved.

Mrs. Briones: Well, don't tell Mr. Ip that.

Mr. Clark: We opened that door.

The Chair: Well, it looks like you may have some people working for you here in the back. They're smiling.

The question I was leading up to is not whether you're going to be a candidate but whether – what do you think of the name? If we change it, do you have any comments or thoughts about the name of the riding? That's part of our job, too, is to recommend names.

Mrs. Briones: Can we keep ours?

Mr. Briones: South West – could be North West, maybe, if they're going to divide it into two.

Mrs. Briones: Yeah.

Mrs. Samson: No, but the existing riding: would you like to change the name?

Mr. Briones: No, we're good for that.

The Chair: You like the name?

Mrs. Briones: We like it.

The Chair: Okay. Good. Well, thank you for this very lovely human exchange. We really appreciate you coming.

Thank you.

Mrs. Briones: Thank you very much.

The Chair: You're excused, but please remain in the gallery if you wish.

Mr. Briones: Okay.

Mrs. Briones: Thank you.

The Chair: Calan Hobbs is our next presenter.

Mr. Hobbs: All right. I've got it on my phone, so I'll just be a moment. And we can keep that map up for Edmonton-South West. Yes. Thank you for the opportunity to speak on the future of Alberta's electoral boundaries. Today I'm actually wearing two hats: one, as a citizen of Edmonton for the past 18 years, having lived and worked in many different parts of the city; and two, I am the constituency manager in the Edmonton-South West provincial constituency office with the great MLA Nathan Ip. So, yeah, I'm coming with both of those perspectives.

Firstly, I was motivated to speak today because of Bill 31, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2024, which removes the mandatory requirement that the commission consider municipal boundaries when considering a new provincial electoral boundaries. I know the Justice minister mentioned St. Albert and Edmonton as well as Chestermere and Calgary. Edmonton and Calgary, obviously, being the big cities, and St. Albert and Chestermere being the smaller kind of satellite cities and, as mentioned, communities of interest, as a kind of a replacement concept. I did want to touch on that because I do believe that the municipal boundaries act as some communities of interest in a way.

I'll first start about my personal experience, having lived in a district that encompassed both urban and rural municipalities. From 2007 to 2021 I did live in the federal riding of Edmonton-Sherwood Park, and I share this as relevant. A Member of Parliament at that time represented a mixed riding that included Fort Saskatchewan and Sherwood Park as well as a few neighbourhoods in northeast Edmonton.

One thing that I remember is that I rarely saw my Member of Parliament and it was difficult for me to contact them. I recall a time wanting an in-person meeting, and them saying that it would take several weeks but I could join or visit them at an event in Fort Saskatchewan, which was a 20-minute drive from my home, but I didn't have a vehicle at the time. I felt that one item was interesting.

I did receive many newsletters, e-mails about events in those other cities, Sherwood Park and Fort Saskatchewan, and I did have a few pertaining to Edmonton and, I know, a member thing, whatever the members in the constituency do, but at the time I was on my condominium board and a member of my community league board. We did have questions from neighbours asking who our member was: is it this person? At one point one of my colleagues on my condominium board invited a different MP to an event just because they didn't know and a lot of the information wasn't out there.

So there was that aspect or a view of a lack of access and understanding. I felt that a lot of my neighbours didn't feel as represented. On the flip side, our provincial boundaries and our municipal boundaries, obviously municipal is just within Edmonton, but the provincial was at the time Edmonton; we did see those representatives quite a bit, and it seemed like they were more connected with our community.

My point is that the riding was stretched too thin, trying to be everything to everyone but not necessarily serving everyone as well. That perspective is the federal versus the provincial at the time. I felt like the provincial representative was more representative and more available. I wanted to mention that and the confusion with a lot of my neighbours.

As the constituency manager in Edmonton-South West I know that the riding will be redrawn – you mentioned it earlier; it's grown

quite a bit – probably significantly. I understand that it's in the top five for highest population growth amongst ridings in Alberta. You had mentioned that the population was – did you say 76,000 at the moment?

Mrs. Samson: Yes.

Mr. Hobbs: Wow. It was about 66,000 in 2021, and that's not very long ago.

The Chair: It was 45,000 in the last EBC, in 2017.

Mr. Hobbs: There you go. Wow. So quite a bit different.

I know that the neighbouring riding, Edmonton-South, has seen similar growth. Yeah. I wanted to point out – and the last speaker did point it out as well – the diversity that is in the riding and bring it back to the urban and rural differences and the previous statement by the Justice minister, removing the municipal boundaries. We are quite diverse in Edmonton-South West. Half of the residents are of a visible minority. By the way, these are numbers that I pulled from the 2021 census. I'll just give percentages. I think that might be better, if that's okay: 11 per cent of the population originates from South Asia, 11.5 per cent is Chinese, and 10 per cent is Filipino, and then we have several different folks from different backgrounds.

The cultural makeup is what makes Edmonton-South West and its neighbourhoods not only unique but what it is. Most of the neighbourhoods are new, built within the past 10 or 20 years. All of these folks from different walks of life have been instrumental in building those neighbourhoods from scratch, being involved in community leagues, opening businesses, going to schools and churches, walking into a church regardless of the denomination. You see the diversity, like, right there. We do have a mosque as well.

8:20

Yeah. Those are some of the things that I'm hoping that the commission will take into consideration when the riding is divided up. Yeah. I want to advocate to ensure that these neighbourhoods are part of a riding that shares this diversity, this cultural connection. Also, the neighbourhoods being brand new, a lot of folks who come here come from different parts of Edmonton or Alberta but also different parts of the world, right? So a lot of folks share that newness, that building together. It's quite unique in some of the neighbourhoods, Edgemont and Hamptons there. It's quite exciting. It's something that I think is unique to different parts of Edmonton that are more established.

The Chair: Mr. Hobbs, can I maybe get right . . .

Mr. Hobbs: Right to the point. Absolutely.

The Chair: Because of your rich resource and background in that you run the constituency office, do you have a recommended, suggested boundary whereby we can make a division with Edmonton-South West? Have you given some thought to that?

Mr. Hobbs: Well, not necessarily like the boundaries themselves, but I do hope that they are within the Edmonton city limits. One recommendation that I would have is that the neighbourhood of Edgemont and then the smaller neighbourhoods, Stillwater, River's Edge: those neighbourhoods are bound for significant growth whereas . . .

The Chair: Are they below the river or above the river?

Mr. Hobbs: They are above the river though, I guess, between the river and then west of the Anthony Henday. I guess on the map you can see Lessard Road, so south of Lessard Road, west of the Anthony Henday, then north of the river. I don't have specific stats, but it's my understanding that the majority of that land is vacant; however, it has been sold to developers and is currently under development, or it's going to be under development in the next decade or so. So we're expecting significant growth in that portion of the riding as well but also south of Windermere as well, expecting growth, maybe not as fast. I know a lot of that land is not necessarily sold off to developers, but I do think that portion of Edgemont, when included and within boundaries, takes into account that we could see similar growth to that we saw in the past 10 years.

The Chair: Can I open it up for questions?

Mr. Hobbs: Yeah. Absolutely.

The Chair: Any questions?

Mr. Clark: No, I don't think so. I mean, I think the people of Edmonton-South West have represented very well here, so I think we've got a pretty good handle. I mean, it's a challenging area – right? – of growth, but understanding that, again, it does help very much to have your perspective. So thank you.

The Chair: A lot of diplomats live in Edmonton-South West. They're very positive ambassadors for that region.

Mr. Hobbs: There you go.

The Chair: Julian?

Dr. Martin: No. I think, between you and your MLA earlier today and the previous speakers, we've got a really good sense of the character of the current riding and some of the exciting growth that has been undertaken very recently. As you will have heard, I'm very interested in knowing about imminent and tangible construction. It's very clear that a lot of that is going on.

Mr. Hobbs: Yeah. Absolutely. I'd say that Edgemont, which I mentioned, also Windermere south of Ellerslie Road: a lot of construction in that area, and we know that the city is going to expand further south past 41st Avenue S.W., so expecting that. Yeah.

The Chair: Susan?

Mrs. Samson: I'm good, but thank you for your presentation.

Mr. Hobbs: Yes. My pleasure.

Mr. Evans: Thank you. No questions.

Mr. Hobbs: Okay. Perfect. Well, thank you for having me, and thank you for having folks come up and do this. I will say that we have had a lot of folks reach out to the office, interested in the commission. I don't know if that's unique to us, but we do have a lot of folks that recognize we're growing a lot.

The Chair: So our advertisement is working, then?

Mr. Hobbs: The advertisement's working, there you go.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Hobbs.

Mr. Hobbs: Yeah. My pleasure. Thank you.

The Chair: Next is Mr. Abdul Abbasi. No? Pedro Almeida. No? Oh, I was rushing here because I thought I had six more. Okay. Abel Savard.

Dr. Martin: Going once, going twice . . .

The Chair: Mr. Hobbs, I apologize for rushing you because I thought I had six more people. That's why I was kind of pushing you a little bit.

Mr. Hobbs: Can I come up again? No. I'm kidding. I got my points by.

The Chair: Carolyn Walker. Good evening.

Mrs. Walker: Well, I have my presentation written, and I hope you don't mind if I read to you. I'll try to be entertaining.

The Chair: No, no problem. Go ahead.

Mrs. Walker: Good evening. My name is Carolyn Walker. I'm a semiretired teacher who subs. When I prepare to persuade, it is in my nature to look at all the angles that I can. This comes from my background as a debater in school, then as my work as a teacher and a school administrator. I therefore am aware of some of the legislative parameters, administrative considerations, and democratic principles of electoral boundary design. My presentation will work to convince you to keep Spruce Grove and Stony Plain together in one electoral division district.

My motivation for this action comes from being fairly newly retired and having a desire to become involved in my new community. My specific interests for this commission are to impress upon you the economic growth, cultural unity, community voice, and identity that would be negatively affected by the separation of Spruce Grove and Stony Plain in the electoral process and riding representation.

As someone who has lived in many ridings across the province, I have an understanding of the difference between rural, urban, and semi-urban ridings. Rural ridings have many unique concerns; for example, in accessing services, in balancing protected land and growing needs for agricultural production. The semi-urban are concerned, for example, with transportation within the community and maintaining their cultural identity. Urban centres have to focus on things like infrastructure, densification, and, as we heard earlier, the LRT.

The unique relationship between our communities makes them seem like one place with a short country drive in between. The speed is slow. There's even a walking and biking path right down the side of the road in between the two communities. It is often in use by bikers and walkers alike. When we sold our acreage to come to town, we were eager to look at bungalows in either community as it just seemed like moving to town to us. The low inventory at the time made it necessary to make a quick decision. We made a quick but good decision and now call Spruce Grove home, but I still think about what it would be like to live in historic Stony Plain. I can't imagine breaking up this electoral riding for any reason than to dilute our voice and damage engagement.

Growth in our two communities has been rapid. Spruce Grove had a population of 42,513 in 2024, the 12th-highest growth in the province of smaller cities. The population of Spruce Grove has increased 3.75 per cent year over year and increased 11.6 per cent in the last five years.

I should have brought my water with me.

Since 2017 Spruce Grove and Stony Plain have grown 11.6 and 5.37 per cent respectively. There have been several – oh, thank you.

Oh, my goodness; from all sides. Thank you. There have been several developments in this riding that point to collaboration between all levels from transportation to cultural and recreational facilities.

8:30

Spruce Grove numbers for building in the last year: I printed from the *Stony Plain Reporter* the number of some permits that were granted in 2024. For example, there were 173 residential permits granted in 2024, with the average being 126 in the past between '19 and '23. I didn't give anybody my notes, but if you want this little table, I can certainly leave it with you. And then there's commercial. The numbers are about the same. Industrial increased. Alterations and additions went up by a few percentages as well.

What makes our riding special is the seamless integration of opportunities between two communities. Cultural opportunities are scheduled for both communities in a co-ordinated manner. Spruce Grove's transportation plan includes planning with Stony Plain. People live in one community and work in the other. We shop in one, have a gym membership in the other. My friends live in both communities. We also share economic interests, for example, in transportation and logistics. People have family in both communities, and Catholics meet in between the two at the Holy Trinity church.

I feel that splitting our riding and attaching either community to a more rural or more urban setting would water down the voices from both significant and growing communities. It might even put us at odds in competing for scarce resources rather than having the co-operative relationship we do now. I can see it as a source of division for a new neighbouring riding and within the new configuration as our needs would be dissimilar from other members of this so-called new riding. It could even also contribute to a source of confusion and potentially keep people from voting since our federal government has put us in the same riding, too. In my opinion, splitting our riding and separating our two communities would be a disservice to democratic principles that we as Canadians have come to expect in our electoral process.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you, and I hope you have no questions.

The Chair: I'm not sure I can fulfill that hope, ma'am.

Mrs. Shaw: Sorry. I'll do my best.

The Chair: Greg, any questions?

Mr. Clark: This is just really interesting. I've got a little bit of data magic here that I'm just sort of drawing from. So Spruce Grove is bigger than Stony Plain populationwise, but it's newer, you said. Stony Plain is sort of the more historic . . .

Mrs. Shaw: Yeah. Stony Plain is older. Yeah.

Mr. Clark: What's the natural kind of flow? I think you talked a bit about that, right? It's a little tough when I look at it on a map compared to, you know, you who kind of live that every day. How much interaction do you have, like, going into Edmonton? Is it sort of that you go to Edmonton, you maybe go to school there or shopping? Is it all pretty self-contained, or how do you . . .

Mrs. Shaw: It's pretty self-contained. Of course, people shop in Edmonton. I'd be lying if I said they didn't. But I do believe we're getting a Costco, and that'll be the end of that. You'll never see us again. Educationwise no; only postsecondary. The high schools are all there. As I said, I have the same number of friends in both communities. It becomes somewhat of a retirement community for

professionals in the outskirts and, I'm sure, others, but a lot of my teacher friends live either in Stony or in Spruce.

Mr. Clark: That's helpful. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Julian?

Dr. Martin: No, I don't have anything. I'm just captivated by maps. I do notice that they have maintained – it's a very interesting feature – the industrial and commercial aspects of the two municipal – one's a town and one's a city. But in the case of Spruce Grove all the industrial is to the south of 16A, and the obverse is true with Stony, where, you know, the old town is south and the commercial and industrial is all north. So you guys have been kind of eyeing each other up, circling around each other for a long time, I guess, because we've also got all these quarter sections of farming and Parkland that divide the two.

You heard me go on and on about tangible and imminent construction. Have you seen any indication at this time that those Parkland and green quarter sections and sections are going to get developed?

Mrs. Walker: I don't. I don't know. I lived in Parkland county. I moved from that acreage, and I worked really hard because I'm a teacher, and I didn't look at that very much. Sorry. I don't really know.

Dr. Martin: Okay. Thank you.

Mrs. Walker: I'm sorry. I don't know.

The Chair: Refresh my memory. Which side do you live on?

Mrs. Walker: Of Spruce?

The Chair: Yeah.

Mrs. Walker: I live in Spruce.

The Chair: Oh, okay. And how long have you been there?

Mrs. Walker: A year.

The Chair: Okay. You obviously love this community.

Mrs. Walker: I do. I love Spruce Grove. As I said, I really kind of had my wagon hitched to old-town Stony, but, you know, whatever. We were happy to be in either community because they're so fluid and so connected.

The Chair: Okay. Susan, any questions?

Mrs. Samson: No, I don't. Thank you for your presentation.

The Chair: John?

Mr. Evans: I'm just mesmerized by the unrequited love you have for Stony.

The Chair: It is a unique riding. Thank you for highlighting it for us.

Mrs. Walker: Yes. And the numbers: you know, with 42,500 in one and almost 20,000 in the other, it's smack dab in the lovely number zone.

The Chair: If you can leave a copy with Aaron, please do.

Mrs. Walker: Sure. You can have it.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mrs. Walker: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Jarrad Marthaller.

Mr. Marthaller: I need someone to bring me water this time. Thank you for making the time today. I didn't bring a slide show, so only my words to listen to, unfortunately. I'm speaking, again, to Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

The Chair: Sorry. Could you identify yourself?

Mr. Marthaller: Oh, yeah. My name is Jarrad Marthaller. I'm making a similar point about the cohesiveness of these two communities. I'll introduce myself. I have deep roots in Spruce Grove, and my family has proudly called this community home for three generations. My personal history is deeply intertwined with both Spruce Grove and Stony Plain, from attending Millgrove elementary school to taking Ukrainian dance lessons at the Stony Plain Community Centre. My formative years included countless interactions like sports events where Spruce Grove composite high school students competed both alongside and against our peers from the Stony Plain Memorial high school. I share this not merely as personal reminiscence but to establish the profound and long-standing cultural, social, and practical links that inextricably bind these two municipalities.

For residents the lines between Spruce Grove and Stony Plain are often blurred. We live, work, access services, and participate in community life interchangeably across them. This creates a powerful shared community of interest that is vital to electoral representation. This deep integration is not just anecdotal; it is formally recognized and actively fostered through numerous shared services and collaborative initiatives such as our integrated public transit systems. Our communities benefit from a connected public transit system, which encompasses on-demand local transit, commuter services, and vital accessible transportation for our elderly populations and our people with disabilities.

Now, there's collaborative infrastructure development occurring all the time. Spruce Grove and Stony Plain consistently collaborate on significant capital-funded projects and shared facilities. Our respective municipal capital budgets reflect strategic allocations for infrastructure designed to support our collective regional growth and are often included in capital region plans together.

We have shared housing solutions for the ongoing housing deficits these communities face. We address these challenges through unified effort. The Meridian Housing Foundation, as one example, provides essential, affordable, and supportive housing supports for seniors across Spruce Grove, Stony Plain, and the surrounding Parkland county. Furthermore, our collaborative regional housing guide offers comprehensive resources for residents across both municipalities. Lastly, just as one small example, a part of our shared identity and a real cornerstone in the community is the TransAlta Tri Leisure Centre, which services sports and recreation across the entire region.

8:40

Beyond these operational economic interdependencies, there are significant political commonalities and a shared trajectory. The prospect of future amalgamation of these two municipalities is a recurring discussion, as evidenced by this geographic circle that you mentioned earlier, and reflects the ever-closing geographical and functional boundaries between our municipalities. Importantly, the two already exist harmoniously within the same federal electoral district of Parkland, as represented by Member of

Parliament Dane Lloyd, and demonstrates the precedent for recognizing our unified nature.

The evidence clearly demonstrates that our municipalities function as a singular cohesive community. The myriad connections, from daily commutes and shared recreational spaces to joint infrastructure planning and social support systems, all serve to form the bedrock of a distinct and indivisible local identity.

We understand that Elections Alberta faces the complex task of redrawing boundaries to reflect population shifts all across the province. Many ridings, as we've discussed even today, require significant adjustments. However, the electoral district of Spruce Grove-Stony Plain, which is also a very convenient naming convention for our residents, does not require the same changes and already achieves an effective balance of representation. It respects the deeply embedded community of interest, facilitates effective representation by grouping residents with common concerns and services, and reflects the lived reality of those who call this region home. To arbitrarily divide or significantly alter the boundaries of this riding would be to fragment a community that is in practice and spirit already whole.

Therefore, we respectfully and strongly encourage the commission to recognize the unique and integrated nature of Spruce Grove and Stony Plain, and we ask that you prioritize the preservation of our current electoral boundaries as much as possible, keeping it similar to its present form, thereby ensuring that the intrinsic ties that bind our communities continue to be reflected within our democratic representation.

Thank you. I do not mind questions.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Evans?

Mr. Evans: No, I don't have any questions. Thank you.

The Chair: Susan?

Mrs. Samson: None. Thank you.

Mr. Clark: The decided disadvantage of being late in the day and the second on Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

The Chair: The second speaker on an almost-perfect riding.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. On the one that fits so nicely right in the green zone there for numbers. We do appreciate it. It is actually very, very helpful for someone who doesn't really know the communities all that well to just get a real flavour of it.

Thank you.

Mr. Marthaller: Perfect. Well, I will answer one question that nobody asked, and that's that land development between the two cities of Spruce Grove going west and Stony Plain going east continues. There has been some land development right on the easternmost boundary of the riding but largely, like, pushing west rather than east at present. There was a recent annexation of land in that way. There has not been much to the south of Spruce Grove, and I can't speak as much about the northern Stony Plain boundary of land annexation, but they increasingly encroach together closer and closer, and year after year amalgamation is simmering for discussion.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much. Thank you to both presenters on this.

Okay. Who am I missing? Oh, Mr. Abdul Abbasi.

Mr. Abbasi: Good evening.

The Chair: Good evening.

Mr. Abbasi: Thank you so much for having me here. First of all, my name is Abdul Abbasi. I'm the vice-president external for the University of Alberta Students' Union, and I'm here today representing the voices of 37,000 undergrad students to speak about the critical importance of ensuring fair and equitable electoral boundaries that accurately represent our rapidly shifting population, especially concerning our student demographic.

We have observed rapid and dynamic shifts in where people live within Edmonton, and this directly impacts the student population. A significant trend we have noted is that students are increasingly moving outward from campus, often driven by the pressing issues of housing affordability. Looking at some specifics, between 2019 and 2023 several areas in north and central Edmonton have seen substantial increases in our student population. The number of University of Alberta undergrad students living in major postal code blocks within ridings such as Edmonton-West Henday, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, and Edmonton-Meadows has increased by 30 to 50 per cent. To give you a sense of scale, around 2,000 University of Alberta students currently reside in these specific ridings.

The changes in south Edmonton have been even more dramatic during the same period. Major postal code blocks in Edmonton-South West, Edmonton-South, and Edmonton-Ellerslie have seen their student population increase by 44 to 55 per cent. What is particularly concerning about, again, the south riding is that they're all currently more than 25 per cent above the average size. We estimate that around 4,000 U of A students live within these three ridings alone.

The issue of oversized ridings is not, again, merely an academic one; it has tangible impact on our democracy. Oversized ridings can unfortunately devalue an individual Albertan's vote and their representation, and it is imperative that students deserve to have their voices and votes count as much as their neighbours.

Furthermore, the demographic trends are not expected to slow down. In fact, they're projected to grow. Alberta's current student population is growing rapidly, with an estimated increase of 40 per cent between 2021 and 2025. Therefore, it is absolutely essential that any new seats that are created reflect the reality of this significant population growth, especially when it comes to students.

Again, thank you for your time and consideration.

The Chair: Thank you for a concise presentation.

Greg?

Mr. Abbasi: Have you got any questions?

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Just your opening statement on students sort of going further and further out. Maybe you can just speak a bit to that and maybe sort of some of the root causes of that and if that reflects sort of a broader – is it a development issue? Is it sort of like things that we may need to consider in terms of that population? Is that population hollowing out, or are students being priced out? Just maybe help me understand that a little better.

Mr. Abbasi: Thank you so much. I think it's a bit of both. When we're looking at the Garneau area, where the University of Alberta main campus is mainly located, that has a one-person vacancy rate, and it's becoming really hard for students to afford housing. That has been something that has been – again, we have seen students especially living more near a transit area, so it's easier for them to

travel. We have seen students, again, moving away from downtown and moving away from near the university.

Secondly speaking, as well, the University of Alberta plans to increase their population by 16,000 over the next seven years. It is important – again, the housing is not building up to that pace and making sure that we have that housing. I would say that those are the big reasons, affordability and increase in population.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

The Chair: Julian?

Dr. Martin: Thank you very much for bringing our attention to the issues of students and the growth in the students as a significant part of not only the population but the economics of Edmonton as well. We had a colleague of yours earlier, the president of the students' union at MacEwan University, and he was talking about students as well. I would encourage you two to put your heads together on these sorts of things.

It's implied, I think, in your remarks about how students have to go away from the core, as it were, to find adequate housing opportunities, that that's simultaneously a matter of where public transit goes, correct?

Mr. Abbasi: Yes. Something that we have with the universities and postsecondaries across Edmonton is a mandatory U-Pass. Students pay \$180 for U-Pass a semester, and they get unlimited rides, whether it's with the LRT or with transit in buses. Again, even if students are living further away, it's costing the same, but the time and everything – like, students have early morning classes. It's really hard for them to come, especially when we're looking at vulnerable populations, if they're living further away. Transit is not always so safe, especially when we're looking at women and/or minority communities.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mrs. Samson: I was just going to add to Dr. Martin's comments. We also had a written submission from MacEwan University outlining the same kinds of problems. For us it's an alert or a red flag of where the population is coming from and the kind of numbers you're projecting with the U of A, so thank you for bringing that to our attention.

8:50

Mr. Abbasi: Of course. And if it's helpful to the commission, we do have data from 2013 till 2023 in three-year intervals of where students have moved. If that may be of importance to the commission, happy to, again, share that.

The Chair: Anything you have, you could leave it with Aaron.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: John, any questions or comments?

Mr. Evans: No. Thank you for the presentation.

The Chair: Mr. Abbasi, I have some – maybe it's the lateness of the hour. I'm not sure I understood you on a couple of points. Just towards the end of your presentation, I thought I understood you to say that the University of Alberta is planning to increase the student population by 15,000.

Mr. Abbasi: Yeah, 15,000, 16,000.

The Chair: That's going to be the increase?

Mr. Abbasi: Yeah. So right now . . .

The Chair: When I started university, the university was large; at that time it was 13,000.

Mr. Abbasi: Right now, if we include grads and undergrads, it's around 45,000 students at the U of A, and across Edmonton I believe it's 110,000, 115,000 postsecondary students.

The Chair: Okay. So it's going to be an increase of 15,000. Over what period of time?

Mr. Abbasi: Oh. By 2033, only at the U of A. It also includes . . .

The Chair: Okay. So eight years from now.

Mr. Abbasi: Yeah. The government of Alberta has estimated that between 2021 and 2033 there will be a 40 per cent increase in the student-age population as we have been seeing with them putting money into middle school and high schools. Once these students come to postsecondary, we'll see that increase.

The Chair: I thought you said at the beginning of your presentation that the overflow of students is spilling into three different ridings. Did you not say that?

Mr. Abbasi: Yes.

The Chair: Could you tell me which those are again?

Mr. Abbasi: I did mention a few ridings. When we are looking at, like, Edmonton-West Henday, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, and Edmonton-Meadows, those have seen an increase of 30 to 50 per cent between 2019 and 2023. But south Edmonton, whether it's Edmonton-South West, Edmonton-South, and Edmonton-Ellerslie, have seen student population increase by 44 to 55 per cent. It's anywhere between 30 and 55 per cent.

The Chair: Okay. So you can track that data very easily?

Mr. Abbasi: Yeah. We do have some information from the registrar's office to see where students have moved in those years, and, again, I would be happy to share that.

The Chair: Good. Well, that's interesting.

Well, thank you very much for your very clear – and I apologize for not hearing, not processing . . .

Mr. Abbasi: Oh, no. No worries at all. It's late in the day.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Abbasi: Thank you so much.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: I believe there is an Abel Savard.

Mr. Savard: Just go whenever?

Members of the redistricting committee, my name is Abel Savard, and I've lived and worked in Spruce Grove-Stony Plain for most of my adult life. It's given me great pride to see these two communities grow and develop over time. I have fond memories of Main Street as a boy, going to my grandfather's mechanic shop that was on Main Street for many years until he died in 1995. I remember the murals and stuff around Main Street that have sort of this connection to the history and identity of the community.

Also, one of the things that I've loved over the years is seeing Stony Plain and Spruce Grove grow. Seeing this vibrancy means that these towns are going to have a future going forward. You know, I've got great memories of, like, going to the old theatre in Spruce Grove but also going to the new one there, that opened a decade ago. I also, like, remember going to the community pool in Spruce Grove and then later to the Tri Leisure Centre. So as we see this growth and development, we also see this improvement. It was in Spruce Grove that I got my first job working at a Safeway.

I'm speaking to you today to keep these two towns in the same electoral riding because these two towns have basically become a single entity over time. You know, the police station was somewhat recently combined and moved over to the western side of Spruce Grove to better serve both communities. I think if these two towns are divided up into two different provincial ridings, this would be to deny the self-determination of these two towns to freely associate together and to form and shape their own unique community. Furthermore, when it would be divided up, they would be forced to combine with other different areas – I believe, like, Spruce Grove was once part of St. Albert – which necessarily means that one single representative is going to be representing a very different sort of set of interests and constituencies. Inevitably, they will have to choose which one to represent. And it'll probably be the one that they receive the most support for, leaving the other to languish, as it were.

Now, there could be a truly exceptional person that could represent such a diverse and geographically disparate riding effectively, but I don't think that's really a possibility. Representative democracy has shown time and time again that the best form of representation is that of self-representation, a person of the community for the community. I think that's the best way to go about doing it.

Especially, like, I've become concerned about political parties gerrymandering the district. You know, making sure that they're excluding voters that are – excluding neighbourhoods that oppose them, including the neighbourhoods that support them. I feel like this is kind of dangerous for democracy because it leads to these ridings where the politicians can't really be unelected over any sort of normal election. This would lead to, you know, stagnation, corruption becoming entrenched within our political system. In our current day and age of populism and some other less savoury political movements, I think having responsive public officials is the most important thing right now.

I want to thank the committee for hearing my submission, and thank you for your time.

The Chair: Thank you.

Any questions on this side?

Mr. Evans: No. Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Just one really quick question. I just realized that a few Spruce Grovers – there have been, I think, eight quarter sections of land that have been just newly annexed south of town. You know, I'm totally putting you on the spot here with a potentially very technical question. I'm just reflecting on the mayor's submission requesting that we make sure we include those. It's not a massive change. It looks like there's no population at the moment.

Mr. Savard: Yeah. I know those areas are kind of empty down there. I can't really say about, like, any housing down there.

Mr. Clark: Okay. No. That's fine. I just wanted to – I saw this, so I thought I might ask.

Mr. Savard: Yeah. It does feel like it's been expanding southward for a while now.

The Chair: Somewhat of a trivia question. Both the previous two presenters talked about discussions about amalgamation. Is that real? Is that imminent? Is that something that you know much about?

Mr. Savard: I've watched the towns come closer together over the years. Like, the police station is located just smack dab in the middle, between those two towns right there. It wouldn't surprise me if other things like hospital services – well, I suppose the hospitals not necessarily because they want it to be close to everybody, but seeing more services move towards that middle area. You know, there's a reason why they built the Tri Leisure Centre there. Like, it's exactly between the two towns. Yeah. I didn't want to say too much else.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Savard, for speaking. We've got a very good idea of Spruce Grove now.

I believe that's everyone on the scheduled list. There is one add-on though.

Chantal McKenzie. You did not have a reservation, but we found a table for you.

Ms McKenzie: I thank you so much. I want to say thank you for allowing me. A few of the people in the back of the room have already spoken. Just based on your questions and that I originally wasn't able to attend tonight, that's why I had not registered.

Just to give you a little bit of my background, I was born and raised in Spruce Grove. I have lived there my whole life, and that's over 50 years. So that's, you know – my parents actually still live in the same house that they bought in 1969, and they're in their 80s now, and they're still there. So I do come with a lot of passion. Back in 2019 when the change went, where Spruce Grove used to be part of some of St. Albert and some of Parkland and Stony Plain, it made a lot of sense that they put the two together, so I really would want to encourage that.

9:00

Also, to give you my background, I was a city of Spruce Grove councillor from 2017 until 2021. I ran for mayor in 2021, and I have announced that I am seeking mayorship again in the coming election this October. Just to give you a little bit of my insight on that, as a councillor working with Stony Plain council, there is a lot of work together. The two communities have been amazing over the years, you know, whether it be transit, whether it be having the hospital in one area, again, as some of my colleagues spoke to, the Tri Leisure Centre, where we work, as well as Parkland county. The reality is that these three communities really work well together.

But Spruce Grove and Stony Plain – I made jokes when I was in junior high. We used to call it Stony Grove and Spruce Plain. There's a lot of, you know, that bickering back and forth. It's a bit like an Edmonton and Calgary thing. But the reality is that we have transit that works in between both communities, all of that sort of thing. So there are a lot of similarities, whether we're looking provincially, federally, or at the municipal level, and where the residents have the same issues. I just wanted to get up and speak to that.

Yes, the current map does show the annexed lands, I believe. What was annexed – and that's when I was on council – is part of the land along – actually, I apologize. No. The Century Road is where it is. I would just show you . . .

Mr. Clark: We'll give you a microphone so we can record this properly.

Ms McKenzie: Oh, sorry. I'll show you that page. Okay. This then comes across and goes up to Pioneer Road. So these are the lands that were annexed. In the current annexation discussion of it, that is 25 years out, really, for development.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms McKenzie: Then there is – even within Stony Plain we know a lot of it is 30-plus years. I know myself, too, as my background, I am also a civil engineer so I understand development and all that sort of land use. The reality is that the numbers fall within. It made sense in 2019 to amalgamate them together as one riding, and I really want to encourage the commission that you guys keep it that way.

Thank you for your time and for allowing me to come up and speak.

The Chair: Just for clarification, the 2017 Electoral Boundaries Commission created this.

Ms McKenzie: Yes.

The Chair: And it sounds like it's universally loved.

Ms McKenzie: I really do believe so.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms McKenzie: Yeah. It made a lot of sense. I know that even me, growing up, how was I part of St. Albert? You know, to me St. Albert was a long way away. We have Spruce Grove hockey, it used to be, but now we do have Spruce Grove and Stony hockey. But even our ringette, we have Spruce Grove ringette, which actually encompasses Stony Plain and Spruce Grove. There's all of that amalgamation. It made sense in 2017, so it would be highly encouraged from a lot of us.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.
Any comments, questions?

Mr. Clark: No.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Clark: I appreciate the context on the annexation and all of that.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms McKenzie: Thank you.

The Chair: And thanks for clustering the presenters in such a way because it makes . . .

Mrs. Samson: Yeah.

The Chair: You know, after two solid days our minds need help in focusing. So thank you.

Ms McKenzie: Yeah. Well, in Spruce Grove-Stony Plain we also have a great constituency association. That's where they – we've got some really good team members.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms McKenzie: I was going to let them talk, but based on some of the questions and because I was able to make it, I just thought I could provide some clarity.

The Chair: Yeah.

Ms McKenzie: Thank you for your time and working on this.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. I think that's the entire presentation list. We will adjourn. We will reconvene in Westlock tomorrow afternoon.

[The hearing adjourned at 9:04 p.m.]



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

St. Paul

Thursday, June 5, 2025
9:06 a.m.

Transcript No. 10

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission

Justice Dallas K. Miller, Chair

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Managing Editor of *Alberta Hansard*

Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – St. Paul

Public Participants

Josh Crick, Councillor, Municipal District of Bonnyville
Scott Cyr, MLA, Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul

9:06 a.m.

Thursday, June 5, 2025

[Justice Miller in the chair]

The Chair: Good morning, everyone. Welcome to our morning public hearing here in St. Paul on Thursday. We've seen a few hotels and hearings already this week. We're here in St. Paul.

I've been here, to St. Paul, about 15 years ago. I'm Justice Dallas Miller. I'm a trial judge in Medicine Hat. St. Paul is really easy to get to. We just drive to Taber and turn left for six hours on highway 36. It's really easy to get to for us in Lethbridge.

Welcome. I do have a presentation or a summary introduction, and I typically go through all the *Reader's Digest* version of all the commissioners' files. However, there was some disconcerting news this morning, as has already been alluded to. Rather than say anything negative about my colleague and fellow commissioner at the end of the table, I'll just let you go to the website and look at everybody's biographical details.

But, seriously, John Evans is from Lethbridge. He's a very experienced trial lawyer, and he does trials throughout the province but works out of his Lethbridge office. John has been recognized for his legal ability and given a King's Counsel award, and he also volunteers on the Alberta Judicial Nominating Committee.

Mr. Evans: And an Oilers fan.

The Chair: And an Oilers fan.

Mr. Evans: Just saying.

The Chair: To my immediate right is Susan Samson from Sylvan Lake. Those of us from Lethbridge consider Sylvan Lake very central Alberta. She has a tremendous amount of experience as a municipal politician, having served as councillor and mayor. Her volunteer efforts advocating for health care have been recognized by the award of the Queen Elizabeth II diamond jubilee medal.

To my immediate right is Dr. Julian Martin, retired historian. Do historians retire? Okay. He used to work at the University of Alberta. He's still a historian. He volunteers on many committees in the Sherwood Park area, where he lives, and serves on provincial tribunals such as the Surface Rights Board.

At the very end was our dear friend Greg Clark till we knew about his hockey proclivities. Greg is from Calgary, and he has the distinction of being the only former elected MLA on our commission, which is very valuable. He served a term representing Calgary-Elbow, and now he is the chairman of the Balancing Pool of Alberta and consults widely with various organizations in terms of board governance. He has an MBA and an Institute of Corporate Directors designation. We are your Electoral Boundaries Commission. We are tasked with coming up with a report – I'll talk to you about timelines here shortly – to deal with the redrawing of the electoral boundaries. One of the first tasks that we have, and it's a legislated task under our act, the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act, is that we're moving from 87 electoral districts to 89. Just in terms of our timeline as a commission we were all appointed by the Speaker of the Legislature in late March. We met a couple of times in April as a commission, and then in May we started our public hearings, and we are going until June 23 across the province hearing submissions from various locations.

Once we complete our public hearings and based on the population data, the boundaries, the written submissions we've received on the website, public hearings, we will work on a report, and we are mandated to have what's known as an interim report filed with the Speaker of the Legislature by October 28. Now, that has come to be known as an interim report. Then it'll become

public. MLAs, members of the public will then have an opportunity to respond to our interim report. We will have further public hearings, and then by late March 2026 we submit a final report to the Speaker of the Legislature, and the Legislature then deals with it as it will.

Of course, you're aware that in Alberta there is one MLA per constituency, and voters in each constituency elect MLAs. I've shown you a graph, and I will talk about population a little bit more, but for historic purposes I want to reference the 2017 Electoral Boundaries Commission report. That commission based its report on a population of just over 4 million people. That was in 2017. This year we're basing this commission's report on a population of 4.88 million. How that works out in real life you can see here.

The 2017 Electoral Boundaries Commission had 87 ridings to redraw. They took the population of 4,062,609, came up with a mean average of 46,697 people per riding. That's not the target. The target is the range 25 below and 25 above, so you see that range from just approximately 35,000 to just over 58,000. That was 2017.

Our commission is using the figure 4,888,723 over 89 electoral districts. The mean average is 54,929, and the target range is therefore just over 41,000 to just under 69,000. That gives us flexibility but not as much flexibility as you would think. Of course, the growth and population growth in Alberta hasn't been spread evenly across the province, and it has concentrated largely in Calgary and Edmonton. Our task as a commission is to come up with a recommended list of 89 electoral districts that provide for effective representation. That is the term used in Canadian and Albertan electoral law to ensure that everyone is properly represented.

To do that, we will consider several factors, and these are factors right out of the legislation: the relative sparsity and density of population across the province, common community interests and organizations. We were really impressed with the submissions in Edmonton that focused to a great degree on community leagues, community associations within each riding within the city of Edmonton. We'll also be dealing with geographic factors in largely urban contexts. Geography helps us draw boundaries, but it does in the cities as well. Communication and transportation routes and lines across the province will also be used as factors in selecting boundaries. Our task as a commission is to come up with understandable and clear boundaries, and we're interested in hearing from people today as to how that might work in this area. And there is a final catch-all provision that we are allowed to take any other factors into consideration that we deem appropriate in designing the electoral district.

This is our public hearing in St. Paul. We want to hear from you. That's the existing map of Alberta showing 87 electoral divisions. In March of next year we'll have a brand new map that Albertans can look at and refer to.

For our presentations we have lots of time this morning. I'm going to call on Mr. Josh Crick to come forward and present first. Please identify yourself.

9:15

Mr. Crick: Hello.

The Chair: Good morning.

Mr. Crick: Good morning. Are you ready for me to go here?

The Chair: Yeah. Take your time.

Mr. Crick: Thank you for having me. They said that I had seven minutes, and then when I got here they said 90 minutes. I don't think I need anywhere near that much time.

The Chair: You'd be surprised how time goes and how we keep you busy.

Mr. Crick: Yeah. First of all, I appreciate the job you guys are doing. It sounds like a lot of work. My concerns are, I guess, some of the size of the boundaries of the constituencies. I live between Bonnyville and Cold Lake, so I'm in the Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul constituency. It's quite a large geographical area with a lot of different councils. In our riding we have the city of Cold Lake. We have the town of Bonnyville, the village of Glendon, the county of St. Paul, the town of St. Paul, the MD of Bonnyville. There's also, I think, the Fishing Lake settlement, a Métis settlement, and Cold Lake First Nations, Kehewin, Frog Lake, and Saddle Lake. That's a lot of councils and chiefs and councillors for the MLA to interact with.

The MD of Bonnyville alone is 13,000 square kilometres. I did a little bit of research last night on the computer. The city of Edmonton is just under 9,500 square kilometres, and there are about 20 MLAs in the city of Edmonton alone. You know, those MLAs have one council and mayor to work with. Often those MLAs in the city would have – there could even be two MLAs for one councillor in certain areas whereas I just outlined how many councils and mayors and reeves and bands and stuff that our MLAs have to work with rurally.

Then even just the driving requirements of the MLA. You talked about effective representation in your talk there. I can't imagine being an MLA trying to effectively represent this constituency just with the amount of counties and school boards, hospital boards, and combine that with the geographical area and the driving time to get from one side to the other. For me to come to St. Paul, you know, in my riding today was an hour and five minutes. I don't live on the far edge – and St. Paul is not on the far other edge of the riding – so it might be two hours across whereas, like, in the city you can probably ride a bicycle in less than half an hour across a riding, right?

I just think we really need to take it into account. I hope that you guys would. I know you're all listening carefully to everything that's being said. I really hope that you take into account, you know, the effective representation and how the size and the number of different counties and councils in this geographical area play into effective representation.

I think that's about all I really had to say. I told you it wasn't going to be long.

The Chair: Okay. Where do you reside, sir?

Mr. Crick: I'm three miles east of Ardmore, which is right in the middle between Bonnyville and Cold Lake.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Crick: Yes. I'm in the MD of Bonnyville, and I'm on council with the MD of Bonnyville.

The Chair: Can I ask where your trade route is? Where do you shop and that kind of stuff? Where do you go regularly?

Mr. Crick: To both Bonnyville and Cold Lake. I'm in Bonnyville every day, primarily because the MD has our administration office there. That's where I work. We go to church in Bonnyville. Cold Lake is 15 minutes one way. Bonnyville is 15 minutes the other way. You know, wherever; we go to either place.

The Chair: And St. Paul is an hour-plus.

Mr. Crick: Yes. St. Paul is only if I have to come.

The Chair: Okay. You see the boundaries. Are you suggesting we change or amend these boundaries, and if so, how?

Mr. Crick: I guess I'm not sure exactly how. I'd leave that up to the experts. You know, I'm aware that you're allowed the 25 per cent variance, right?

The Chair: Yeah.

Mr. Crick: I would encourage you guys to use that to try and shrink the geographical size a bit. I'm not sure how that would play out.

The only other thing I would mention, which is kind of contrary to everything else I've just said, is that there's a little area where St. Vincent comes in. It's part of the county of St. Paul. You know, I've just been talking to people that live in the area. I've heard that it's kind of really weird that people that live 10 minutes out of St. Paul here are in a different riding. I'm not sure where a guy would take to adjust the size, but looking at the map, there's Saddle Lake and then there's also Frog Lake and Fishing Lake, the settlements. Those could be possible ways to readjust the size and population a bit.

The Chair: Okay. Any other comments? Greg, questions?

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Thank you for coming. You know, one of the real privileges of being part of this commission is the opportunity to travel the province, drive and get a sense of just what it's like.

Mr. Crick: Well, you're in one of the best areas.

Mr. Clark: I mean, you know, as you might have heard, I'm a tiny bit biased about my hometown. I do love it. Like, I do love this part of the province. It's just different.

Mr. Crick: Yeah.

Mr. Clark: We were down in Pincher Creek and Lethbridge last week: dry, flat, just its own kind of natural beauty in its own way. It's just different here, right? You kind of come up, and then it's lakes, rivers, trees. We're just so lucky to live in Alberta. It is really a privilege to be able to see it all. It also helps us get a sense of what it must be like for your MLA, for MLAs to travel these great distances to represent, so very empathetic and understanding of that.

You know, your point on sort of the square kilometres of the constituency compared to something like Edmonton or Calgary or any urban centre. I think the question is – and this is something we really grapple with. We've got a few kind of issues to balance, and one of them is that Alberta, unsurprisingly, has attracted a whole bunch of new people from outside the province. A lot of people come from Ontario and B.C. and all over the place, choosing to live in Alberta. Those people generally will arrive in Edmonton or Calgary. As a result, those cities are really significantly growing in terms of their overall population. We've got at least seven constituencies that are more than 25 per cent above, so we by law have to deal with that.

I guess that's the question I would ask you, any thoughts you have on how we kind of balance out. You know, those urban MLAs we heard last week have other issues to deal with. You've got constituencies with people who speak five or six or seven languages. You've got social serving needs. Your MLA will tell you that there are some issues that urban MLAs tend to have to deal with that you don't in rural and vice versa. Lots of issues in rural that you don't have to deal with in urban. Kind of a long question. I guess I'm curious just how you feel we should think about that, balancing those two challenges.

Mr. Crick: So you're referring to balancing the different challenges that the urban MLAs would face in the multiple languages?

Mr. Clark: It's really more just the population. The simple fact is that we've got a whole bunch of people who've moved to Edmonton and a whole bunch of people who've moved to Calgary, so the population – some of those are like 80,000 or 90,000 people in the current constituency. As you saw from the averages, we've got to get that down at least to under, like, mid-60s, right? There's a need to add some constituencies there, a little bit to work with, but I guess the question kind of generally to you is: what would you say to the urban person who says, "Well, wait a minute, we're underrepresented ourselves because we just have so many people"?

Mr. Crick: That's a good question. Yeah. I'll acknowledge that I live rurally, so I tend to think more rural. I would just think that those urban centres can have a slightly higher population per riding or constituency – I get the two terms mixed up – based on that they're geographically quite close together, right? Like, they're a lot smaller geographically whereas we are quite large geographically. I'm very well aware that the Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul constituency is not the largest rural constituency. There are some that are quite a bit larger, actually. That would be my answer, I think, just that they're like that.

Another bit of information, I guess, that just kind of popped into my mind was that 30 per cent of the province's oil royalties come out of the MD of Bonnyville, so economic impact can be something else to consider. You know, from my own perspective, I see a lot of the funds for the province coming out of this riding and, I would say, out of the one that Fort McMurray is in as well, and a lot of that money is going to the cities where, like you said, immigrants are coming in, people are continuing to be populating there. As a result, the money comes from here and goes there. Like, we don't have a single overpass in this riding, yet 30 per cent of our royalties come out of this riding. The money is going from here and being transferred and building overpasses. I realize that's maybe not necessarily an electoral boundary issue, but it's something to consider as well, where the economic impact is coming from in the province, too.

9:25

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

The Chair: Julian? Any questions?

Dr. Martin: Yeah. Well, thank you very much. I'm really quite taken by your remark about the oil and gas revenue. I didn't realize that it was such a significant part of the province's take. As a councillor on the MD you must be affected by the leases as well, so you get a portion of revenues coming to you from the oil and gas operators in the region?

Mr. Crick: Yes. The MD has a higher tax base than some counties, but it's definitely not enough for us to build overpasses without the provincial government.

Dr. Martin: No. I didn't realize you needed overpasses.

Mr. Crick: Well, you know, for example, highway 28: I don't know if you've travelled it.

Dr. Martin: Yeah.

Mr. Crick: If you have time this afternoon, I would encourage you to go for a ride to Cold Lake and just – you know, if you see

somebody driving straight on the highway, they might be drunk, though, because they're not swerving around all the holes. That's not a jab at our MLA. I know he's working on it.

Dr. Martin: Highway 28 produces the same effect near Redwater, too.

Seriously, my question was: how extensive a footprint do you reckon the oil and gas patch is here? Does it extend as far south as the river, the Saskatchewan?

Mr. Crick: I think it's spread out all over the whole constituency to a certain extent. The northern part up where the Cold Lake air weapons range is . . .

Dr. Martin: Yeah.

Mr. Crick: That would be where the majority of it is, but it comes, like, even where I live. I'm right between Bonnyville and Cold Lake, and those big black tanks that are out in the fields: you have to drive by 90 of them just to get to the highway from my place.

Mr. Evans: Did you say 90?

Mr. Crick: Ninety. Yeah.

Mr. Evans: That's incredible.

Mr. Crick: And I'm a mile and a quarter off the highway.

Mr. Evans: I love Alberta.

Mr. Crick: Yeah. But it's in the area, right? That being said, the question was asked to me: does the county get revenue from that? We do, but our roads also, you know . . .

Mr. Evans: Are beat up.

Mr. Crick: Beat up, right? We have road use agreements with industry, but there's still just all the extra traffic, and even the smaller industry rates, we have to use a lot of that money to maintain the road system.

Dr. Martin: Well, my sort of adjacent question is about new oil and gas related employment. Do you see a growth of that plus families? I mean, it's one thing to have guys come in to do construction like the case was 20-odd years ago, but are you now in a mode where it's just management and operations, or are you still growing the number of people working in oil and gas?

Mr. Crick: Yeah. When the oil price crashed in 2015, it kind of did go back. There was a bit of a recession in here, and it went back to more of a management thing, but lately, the last three years or so, it's been expanding quite a bit. They've been drilling new wells. Like, the 90 tanks that I referenced that I drive by, those are all new in the last three or four years.

Dr. Martin: Wow. Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Crick: And there is a certain element of people coming in to work, absolutely, but somebody only comes so much to work before they bring their family, right? So we're seeing lots of people moving into the area, especially in the Cold Lake area.

The Chair: Susan, question?

Mrs. Samson: No. Good presentation, and I have to echo my colleague. I understand what you're saying when you talk about access to your MLA and access to the region and how difficult it is

because it's so large. How often would you as a councillor see your MLA?

Mr. Clark: Not counting today.

Mr. Crick: Not counting today.

I don't know the answer to that. I was going to use the term "poor representation," but I think our MLA does a fantastic job. I don't know how he even has enough time in a day to do all the work that he does.

Mrs. Samson: Right.

Mr. Crick: Yeah. He works hard. He gets around. But like I said, I don't know how he can do it. I have four kids at home, and I feel like my family would be aliens if I had that job. I don't know how he does it.

Sorry. That's not really an answer to your question as to how often I see him. Yeah. I think it'd be different for me as a county councillor seeing him because I'm going to different things like this or different events or functions.

Mrs. Samson: Right. You bang into him more than he's actually, you know, on official business coming to your county council or you're booking an appointment with his office.

Mr. Crick: Yeah. I think he showed up to two of our council meetings since he's been elected, and it may be more. He can correct me. He might keep track. Just showing up, that's good for him, right? He's got a lot of councils to go to plus the work of being an MLA.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

Mr. Evans: You can see on the map the reddish coloured areas. Those would be Métis settlements or Indian reservations. Can you tell me: what's your sense of the connection, you know, of those within this electoral district and amongst themselves; for example, Saddle Lake and Fishing Lake and Elizabeth and Kehewin?

Mr. Crick: Yeah. I'm not super familiar with Saddle Lake. The odd time I come to St. Paul for something if I have to, and I've never had to go to Saddle Lake for anything. I did work a little bit on the Frog Lake reserve, teaching a shop class out there until COVID happened. I don't think they all have convenience stores on-reserve. I think that they don't have the grocery stores and a lot of the amenities that we have in town, so the residents of the reserves and settlements do come into town all the time for everything. You see that here in St. Paul or Cold Lake, Bonnyville.

I'm not sure if that's answering your question.

Mr. Evans: I just want to know, like, you know, if you're aware how integrated they are with each other.

Mr. Crick: Yeah. I can't say that I'm really overly aware of that. No.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you. Appreciate your presentation and the information you provided.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: Josh, you took up 15 minutes. I told you that the time goes fast.

Mr. Crick: My presentation was only one minute. It was questions for 14.

The Chair: Just a couple of clarifications. Are you employed by the county, or are you a county councillor?

Mr. Crick: County councillor.

The Chair: Okay. And you farm?

Mr. Crick: Well, I'm a carpenter by trade. I don't have a lot of time for doing construction work at the moment. My wife is a speech therapist, and she actually works on some of the reserves. She works at Frog Lake and Beaver Lake. She drives up to Lac La Biche every week, and she drives to Frog Lake every week.

The Chair: Okay. Have there been times for your county's duties or events or meetings where you reached out to your MLA to come and he couldn't come? Have you had situations like that because of his schedule conflict?

Mr. Crick: Events, yes. Like I said, he does a great job and he works hard. If we need something done, you know, then we can wait a couple weeks or wait until he's in the area.

The Chair: So if you're flexible, you can get him to events.

Mr. Crick: Yeah. But, you know, there are definitely lots of events I go to where the MLA is not there because he can't be in two places at one time, right? Canada Day, for example. He can't be in St. Paul and Bonnyville and Cold Lake, all three at the same time. He might make it to two or three in the same day if there are different times, but he can't be everywhere.

The Chair: Okay.

I just want to comment. I could be corrected by my historian here. The terminology the legislation uses is "electoral division." In popular parlance we talk about constituencies or ridings or electoral districts. My understanding is that the way we arrived at the word "riding" was that in Britain when Parliament was going, it took a day to ride a horse across a district, and that just became a riding. That's the terminology. Does that sound right?

9:35

Dr. Martin: That's true. It's Anglo-Saxon, actually, so the term has stuck around an awful long time.

Mr. Clark: How long would it take you to ride a horse across your riding?

Mr. Crick: Three days.

The Chair: We're going to ask the MLA that.

Okay. Well, thank you very much, Josh, and then if you can stay, please stay, because after the next presentation we may want to continue the conversation.

Mr. Crick: Okay. I will stay. Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you.

Okay. Mr. Cyr.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Justice Miller. I appreciate you taking the time and the entire commission. I'd like to read something into the record if that's fine.

The Chair: Sure.

Mr. Cyr: And then we can go into your questions. It won't be long. It's not a half-an-hour diatribe, here.

Good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I want to begin with expressing my sincere appreciation for the hard work you're doing to ensure fair and effective representation to all Albertans. Your task is not easy. I commend the care and professionalism with which you are approaching it.

On May 22 I submitted a formal proposal outlining recommended changes to the Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul constituency. I submitted this through both your website and e-mail to ensure that you received it in full, and I'd like to briefly speak to the reasoning behind it here today. Our constituency is significantly overpopulated. Based on the 2021 census data and excluding the on-reserve First Nations people, we're already exceeding the 25 per cent upper limit permitted under the Election Boundaries Commission Act. Factoring in the more recent growth of the incoming families related to the F-35 program and 4 Wing Cold Lake and the Cold Lake oil sands, the real-world serviced populations could be reaching up to 75,000 by the end of the decade. This effectively creates a serious challenge to representing this population effectively.

We're also the home of a large number of rotational oil and gas workers who use local infrastructure but aren't counted in the federal numbers. They are known as the shadow population. Municipal Affairs allows for shadow populations to be counted in local censuses, yet in reality it is invisible in the electoral redistributions. Nevertheless, it impacts schools, hospitals, roads, and my office daily.

To help restore balance, I'm proposing that the western boundary of Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul be realigned to follow the full legal boundaries of the MD of Bonnyville, the county of St. Paul, including ID 349. This proposal would transfer Saddle Lake Cree Nation into Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock and reintegrate the northwest corner of the county of St. Paul, resolving confusion that arose among voters during the last election.

I take no pleasure in recommending the removal of any part of my constituency – it is tough to come up with some balance here – particularly Saddle Lake, whose residents I deeply value. However, every Albertan deserves fair and effective representation. This adjustment would reduce the constituency's total population, based on the 2021 figures, to approximately 55,700. This would also bring it within the legal threshold for the time being and strengthen representation for all communities, including Saddle Lake.

We are a rural constituency. We are growing. Our economic future is strong, and our population is expanding. What we need now is an electoral boundary that reflects the growth and ensures every voice is fairly represented.

Thank you again for this opportunity to present before you today and for your continued service to the people of Alberta.

The Chair: Thank you. There are going to be some questions.

Aaron, can you just read the population figures? I can't read them.

Mr. Roth: Sure. For 2016 it's 53,809 and 2024, 53,763.

The Chair: Okay. Okay. So that's the figure. Your presentation had some different figures.

Mr. Cyr: Agreed.

The Chair: I think we should have a conversation about those figures.

Let me start on the far end. Mr. Evans, are you ready for questions?

At some point we've got to have a conversation about the population.

Mr. Cyr: Agreed. Which is where I had broken that down, Justice.

The Chair: Yeah.

Mr. Cyr: Where those numbers came from: on the third page of my presentation. Now, again, I accept that when it comes to these numbers, if the commission has got better numbers than I have got, then I will readjust my presentation, but this is based on the research my office has done.

The Chair: Okay. Well, on behalf of the commission I'm not saying that our numbers are better. I'm saying that we're relying on the 2021 census, which the act requires us to do. But the act also has some supplementary sections that say, roughly translated: update it as best as Alberta can. It does make reference to a province-wide census or municipal censuses. We haven't had that, as I understand it, but the Alberta Treasury Board, through its Office of Statistics and Information, does a tremendous amount of work of continually verifying numbers as they get them from the feds. To say that the feds do a census in '21 and don't do anything until '26 is not accurate. They do constant number crunching and verification.

In a very clumsy way I'm trying to explain how we get at our numbers, and I think that's something we need to have a more fulsome discussion on because yours are higher than ours.

Mr. Clark: I do have a question.

The Chair: Yeah. Go ahead.

Mr. Clark: I wonder, Mr. Cyr – and again, good to see you, and thank you for coming – if we look at this map, if the entirety of each of the listed jurisdictions is within Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul. Specifically, does all the county of St. Paul and all of the MD of Bonnyville fall in your constituency, or does that constituency boundary slice some of that off?

Mr. Cyr: If you refer to the map. Again, going back to my presentation here. It's, like, page – I don't know.

Mrs. Samson: Three?

Mr. Clark: The coloured areas?

Mr. Cyr: Well, the better one is the third-last page. We can go to it.

Mrs. Samson: Okay.

Mr. Cyr: You can see where it's confusing for people. That green part is the only part for the county of St. Paul that's not within my constituency. What I will say is that people that are in the county of St. Paul assume that because the name of my constituency is Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul, suddenly they fit within my constituency. I'm expected to go to a lot of these municipalities like the Ashmonts, the Mallaigs, all that. They're asking: why is their MLA not present at their functions? Haying in the 30s would be one of the big ones. Again, I try to make it out to them to try to help out my neighbouring MLA as much as I possibly can, but there's confusion because of that.

It didn't add a lot of population to my constituency by adding this. I think it's 1,500. No. It's even less than that. When we're looking at this, it just makes sense that we would add the entirety of the county of St. Paul. The problem is that I'm already right at the top of the population maximum even with the way you guys are calculating. It sounds like 53,000.

Mr. Clark: The current average is 55,000.

Mr. Cyr: Yeah. We're already almost right at the top there.

Now, one of the things that I think needs to be recognized in all of this is that when we were – this is my second boundary commission that I've sat before. The first one was a difficult one. The reason was that with the collapse of the price of oil I had almost every one of my communities – at that time it was only Bonnyville-Cold Lake. In my two communities within the Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul – or Bonnyville-Cold Lake. Confusing. It was the Bonnyville-Cold Lake constituency before they added Elk Point, St. Paul, and Saddle Lake to my constituency after the redistribution.

9:45

Now, what happened was that we saw a collapse of my entire region for the oil and gas sector, which meant I had almost every third or fourth house up for sale in my constituency, which was unusual. What we had before in 2014: we were renting out couches for \$1,000 a month. The shadow population was obscene back then, which is why we were given – we went from one of the smallest constituencies, the minus 25, to the plus 25 when they did the redistribution with that.

Now we're not looking at a collapse in oil anymore. I will say that for my oil and gas industry, when it comes down to it, I think government policy has held us back, whether it's our current administration down in the United States that's causing some turmoil right now. Our federal government was also bringing in emission caps and different ways of curtailing our oil and gas production. What happens here is it looks like our Prime Minister has more of an appetite to work with us. Should that happen with Prime Minister Carney and should the President of the United States suddenly decide that he wants to see our oil – and he's been very supportive of the Keystone pipeline – then we're going to see a boom happen again up in my area like you haven't seen before. We're going to see a massive shadow population suddenly materialize, like we had in 2014. We have challenges that are unique to our area.

Now, when you add the F-35s, we're looking at more than a billion dollars, \$1.5 billion, into Cold Lake.

The Chair: Okay. Talk to us about that. I've heard reference to it, but we're curious to know a little bit more about the industry and how that impacts your riding.

Mr. Cyr: We're going to see at its height about a thousand construction workers coming in to work on that. They're looking at 2030 as when we're likely going to have a lot of construction done. They're ramping up this July, so it's starting. We just went out to the two big prime contractors, Bird and EllisDon. Those thousand workers are likely going to be brought in from eastern Canada for the large part because we don't have the capability to be able to build something this – we don't have the subtrades to be able to keep up with that work.

The Chair: What kinds of skills do these workers have? Engineers? The trades?

Mr. Cyr: Some of it is engineers, but a lot of it is cement, builders, you name it. All of the subtrades are going to be needed. What we're doing here with the F-35s is just remarkable. It's supposed to be seven to 10 years that they're working on the F-35s and getting that one up and going.

You put that as well as the growth in the oil sands. Prime Minister Carney is also looking at the pathways project. That's the carbon

capture. The carbon capture up in our area: we have a unique geology right under our seats here in St. Paul where they're going to be injecting the CO₂ should this move forward. We're actually the destination of where they're going to be potentially putting all the CO₂. That is about a \$16 billion to \$18 billion project from Fort McMurray all the way down to here.

You put that all together, and it's going to have rapid growth. I've been working with our ministers – health, education, postsecondary – saying: how can we get in front of this? It's coming. We know it's coming.

The Chair: As an old colleague used to say to me, there are two kinds of problems, good problems and bad problems. Looks like you've got some good problems coming.

Mr. Cyr: We have remarkable talent here and opportunity. The fact is that we're likely going to be one of the foremost air force bases in the world after the F-35 program gets to Cold Lake. We're one of two locations for the F-35s, and we're going to have the larger number of planes up in our constituency. The aerospace program actually is going to be taking off out of Cold Lake. We've got permission to start that program as well just because of the fact that we have so many trained military and former military to be able to bring in the drone technologies. We're looking at training pilots – you name it – up here.

We have so much to offer Alberta from our area. The problem is that I'm only one man, and trying to get to everywhere where I need to to advocate effectively is going to be difficult with everything that's happening.

Mr. Evans: Who's the MP?

Mr. Cyr: Sorry?

Mr. Evans: Who's the MP?

Mr. Cyr: I have two MPs. I have MP Stubbs and MP Goodridge, both good MPs.

The boundary is highway 55, north and south. That's pretty much where that is. I work closely with both of my MPs trying to deal with this, but recognizing that their electoral districts are significantly larger, I recognize that that's got to be a challenge for them as well. But, again, municipalities really are under the province's domain, if you will, so when there's a need for something specific – health care, education, supports for our justice system – that comes through the MLA really advocating on their behalf.

Mrs. Samson: I have a couple of questions. Yesterday when we were in Westlock and we were discussing with the MLA there some changes – I just want to clarify in my own mind. The electoral district of 49 is underpopulated. It's sitting at 46,782. If you remember, we're kind of working around 55,000 plus or minus 25 per cent. Would it be reasonable to suggest that the county of St. Paul, that's divided, move into Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock? Or because of the naming of the county, that it is the county of St. Paul, is it better off in your riding? Also, are the trade routes more aligned in your riding than they are, being in Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock? Did I explain that well enough?

Mr. Cyr: You did a very good job.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

Mr. Cyr: I have already sat with MLA van Dijken to discuss this. Recognizing that there's not a lot of population in the green section

that you saw there but there is more – here I am explaining about getting to everywhere.

Mrs. Samson: Yes.

Mr. Cyr: I'm not saying: please add more to my constituency. The problem that I've got is that in the end there's confusion that comes along with that. Now, again, when it comes to Saddle Lake, that's about 6,000 people. It's the second largest First Nation reserve in Alberta. That will, I guess, for maybe one of the concerns you're bringing forward, bring some population to MLA van Dijken's constituency and can help balance that out a little bit more. But, again, when you're looking at Saddle Lake, they do rely on a lot of their services from the town of St. Paul. There's no disputing that. The problem is that if we start using that criteria, then you should be including Lac La Biche, Two Hills to my constituency. Suddenly you're at 100,000 people. So where do you draw that line? I don't have a good answer there.

I will say, though, that when it comes to the former boundaries commission, they were only focused on population.

Mrs. Samson: That's correct.

Mr. Cyr: I sat with them in both meetings, before and after, and I was saying that you were making Bonnyville-Cold Lake something that was an anomaly when you're looking at rural because we have such a high-concentrated population when it comes to my constituency. At that time they had only added Elk Point and St. Paul. They had left the Saddle Lake reserve off the first initial drawing, so I went and sat with them and said: look, you've added 50 per cent more land to Bonnyville-Cold Lake – which is, again, my former constituency – and I would say that you've added another 50 per cent or 60 per cent more population to the constituency. Then what happened is that after their redistribution they added Saddle Lake, so that threw it right over the top.

9:55

Again, I love all of my constituency. I'm not suggesting that I would want to lose any of them because I've become attached to every community. But, again, we need to be looking at: is this adequate? Is an MLA able to adequately represent this? I definitely get to everywhere. One of the first things I had done was open offices inside of – like, we only had one office. It was in Bonnyville. I opened up a Cold Lake office, an Elk Point office, and a St. Paul office. I travel to where the people are; they're not travelling to where I am. But you can see that means that I'm in my car a lot, and that's fine. I signed up for the job, and I accept that mileage is part of my mandate.

Mrs. Samson: I just want to explore the Saddle Lake question a bit more. When I look at the neighbouring riding of 49 again, because it was just yesterday – again, that's the Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock. I was thinking of Saddle Lake, and we've been talking prior to this consultation about communities of interest that come together, like communities. I use the reference of transportation, and I agree with you. You know, that in itself is not enough. It's the whole package we're looking at.

You have significant other Indigenous, Métis areas in your riding. Is that of concern that we would pull Saddle Lake out? Like, this part I don't know. I don't have experience. Are there cultural functions? Is there that kind of thing? I'm stumbling around here.

The Chair: What does the leadership of Saddle Lake say?

Mrs. Samson: Yeah.

Mr. Cyr: Well, again, when it comes to the leadership of Saddle Lake, I think that for the most part they consider them to be federal.

Mrs. Samson: Federal. Thank you.

Mr. Cyr: When it comes to Saddle Lake, they're more concerned with the MPs than they are with the MLAs.

Mrs. Samson: Good to know.

Mr. Cyr: That doesn't mean that when the council does a request – and, again, I send out regular requests to sit with the council. But what they're really after is ensuring that they have opportunities to be able to get into postsecondary. We have Blue Quills, and I'm very thankful for that. That one there is a remarkable source for them, and that's just outside of St. Paul. They've got a lot of their own schools right on the First Nation there as well. There are some schools that they bus out to in St. Paul as well.

But when it comes down to it, I would say that our First Nations, again, when it comes to how connected our region – I guess we'll step back. One of the things I had the blessing of was having the Premier come up to my constituency. She's got a vision for rural of a hub-and-spoke model where you've got your hubs and you kind of feed in for services into the different major centres, if you will. We don't have a hub in our area; we've got a cluster, if you will. It's all clustered throughout, so a hub-and-spoke model isn't going to work very well unless you make St. Paul the hub, which means that you cut most of my constituency out of that.

I would say that when you look at our region, we're a lakeland region, and we're integrated in all of the northeast out of necessity. We have people going down to Two Hills for health care. We've got Lac La Biche, where we do dialysis – like, you name it. When you move that entire region, we're well over 100,000 people, and I don't know how you – it's like having a city that's spread out. Usually you would break that into two and have two MLAs to be able to service that. The question is: where do you draw that line? It's going to affect each side of, say, Red Deer. If we look at Red Deer – we'll use them as a good example – you're going to have some in Red Deer-North and Red Deer-South using each other's health care or justice or education.

That's the same thing here. We're integrated. Our AHS works remarkably well. I've got five school divisions in my constituency. Like, you name it. We've got lots happening here, and they all work well together. They have to. We have no choice.

Mrs. Samson: Just one small point. Thank you for those explanations. I understand that in your submission to us you're asking for the weapons area to be included in the boundary, and I'm just not clear on that. I think it already is in the boundary.

Mr. Cyr: It is.

Mrs. Samson: Okay.

Mr. Cyr: I just want to highlight that, I mean, the only real access to the air weapons range is through the south side of the air weapons range. This was controversial before because they want to keep lumping the air weapons range with other areas.

Mrs. Samson: Oh. I get it. Yeah.

Mr. Cyr: I haven't heard any of the other proposals. But if there are other proposals suggesting that the air weapons range should be moved away from Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul, that would be probably very impactful for our area.

Mrs. Samson: Good. I'm glad you clarified that because it's a natural fit. I support that opinion of yours.

Mr. Cyr: Right. It was the right decision the boundaries commission made in the first – 10 years ago. I wholeheartedly agreed with that decision. Again, there are some things that I disagreed with the prior commission on, but in this case they got it right.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for answering and for the clarification.

The Chair: Before I move to Dr. Martin, where do you live in the riding, sir?

Mr. Cyr: I live in Cold Lake.

The Chair: Julian.

Dr. Martin: Thank you, especially for your submission, which I read with great interest. It was good to have another copy that is clean. The other one is all marked up now. What I marked up were several things that we've already touched on today, really. One is about the shadow population and its, as you might put it, impact without taxation. They use services but aren't really connected to the payment of them, which is a burden. Secondly, you rightly have expectations of economic growth and consequent population from oil and gas revival, new techniques associated with it, especially, as you say, with the carbon capture initiative.

Then, of course, the air base. I think the F-35s will succeed, finally. You've already been doing a fair bit of preplanning around that, I take it. But they are going to come.

I'm interested in these sort of growth stories because anyone could talk about how things might kind of grow in the future, but it's most persuasive for us if it's imminent and tangible. I think you persuaded me that that is the case with the projects you've spoken of vis-à-vis population. You're growing in two directions. That is to say that you're growing with people who will come and pay taxes and live in houses and use the shops, and you are growing yet again with a shadow population, which is awkward.

I wanted to touch as well on where the oil and gas zone is. Mr. Crick suggested that it is in the centre of the north part of the current riding. Is that correct?

Mr. Cyr: It depends on what type of oil you're talking about. We've got your heavy oil, which is in the north, which is where you need to use . . .

Dr. Martin: SAGD.

Mr. Cyr: SAGD is typically steam agitated. It's usually the route to go there. But we also have the cold flow as you move south, where they just pump it slowly out of the ground because it's able to flow. Then you've got conventional further down by the St. Paul and Elk Point areas. So the further you get from the north, the lighter the crude gets, if you will. A lot of the conventional stuff has probably been tapped into.

10:05

Dr. Martin: It's mature.

Mr. Cyr: Mature. Thank you. That's a very good way of putting it.

Whereas our heavy oil: we've got 50 or 100 years of oil ready to be taken out of there, so there's a lot of opportunity for still getting some real heavy oil out of the ground. As we continue to look at our technology, we're finding better and better ways of getting that oil out of the ground and environmentally sensitive. Some of our pads

– we've got Imperial that has a pad that's got a 70 per cent reduction in emissions. They're doing everything they can to bring their emissions down, and they're doing a very good job of it.

Dr. Martin: I don't want to – well, yes, I do want to interrupt. You're explaining what we both agreed is the case, and your submission does a good job of that. As I say, I'm persuaded that you have growth, and for any number of reasons that is sustainable.

I want to ask a rather different question, and that is with respect to the Métis settlements. Now, you suggested that Saddle Lake, for example, orientates itself mostly towards its federal relationships. What about the Métis settlements?

Mr. Cyr: Well, we've got Elizabeth settlement and Fishing Lake settlement in my constituency. I will say that when it comes to them trying to find that balance, because it is under provincial jurisdiction, it's an awkward one that our settlements have got. They own the structure on the property, but they don't actually own the land that the property is on.

The Chair: It's Crown land?

Mr. Cyr: Well, I think it's . . .

Mr. Evans: Métis settlement land is a creature of its own. A creature of its own. Individuals can't own it.

Mr. Cyr: A lot of it comes down to that they just want services. One of the opportunities that we saw was the opening of the scope with our nurse practitioners. That was quite remarkable for our First Nations and Métis settlements. It is difficult to get doctors up north. That is just a fact. They all seem to want to congregate in the larger metropolitan centres, Edmonton and Calgary, and I get it. I welcome any doctor no matter where they're at. We have a shortage of them.

But the nurse practitioners I think are the best way of delivering care for the northeast. In this case they're asking for nurse practitioners to be put in, like in the clinic spaces inside my settlements, and that's a good ask. Why wouldn't we want to explore that? Now, don't get me wrong. If I've got a doctor that is willing to go into my settlements, that would be ideal as well, but in the end that's one thing that we need to be very on top of. I am working closely with Health to see where we can get this happening. That's a blossoming new field, these clinics for nurse practitioners, trying to get them to grow up here.

I will say that when it comes down to it, they're just asking for a level of service on settlements. Having us look at their schools – we'll use Fishing Lake and Elizabeth settlement – a lot of them bus their children to Cold Lake just because they're trying to get into that school system. Now, the Northland school division is doing a fabulous job, but they're limited in resources, and I've been advocating on their behalf just to try to make sure that Northland is heard, because really the Northland school division – you think I'm big? My God, the amount of area the Northland school division covers is something that's mind blowing.

So the answer is: different challenges. But you're not wrong. My settlements do need more of my time. They all need my time, but we have more influence over our settlements than we would over our First Nations.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

Mr. Cyr: Hopefully that answers your questions.

Dr. Martin: It's very helpful.

The Chair: Greg?

Mr. Clark: Evans.

The Chair: Oh, go ahead.

Mr. Evans: You skipped me.

The Chair: Oh, sorry.

Mr. Evans: I got usurped by a Flames fan, but that's okay.

Mr. Clark: It happens.

Mrs. Samson: Here we go.

Mr. Evans: I want to know your opinion on the connectivity between St. Paul and Two Hills, comparing that to St. Paul and Bonnyville, and then comparing that moving west from St. Paul.

Mr. Cyr: Again, I would say that our entire northeast region is connected. St. Paul: something that I didn't know from my first – just to give you a little bit of history about myself because it's relevant here, I was elected from 2015 to 2019, and then I decided to step back from politics in 2019, threw my hat back into the ring way back in 2023 and was successful there. So I've got a gap here, if you will, of a term. Now, my first term was in Bonnyville-Cold Lake. We didn't have St. Paul in it. Since I've started my second term, what I didn't realize is that St. Paul is the centre of almost all the northeast services for everything. Your RCMP. You name it. It's centred out of St. Paul.

Mr. Evans: It's the judicial centre for King's Bench.

Mr. Cyr: The whole works. Everything.

And that has opened up a remarkable access to services that I didn't have before. Again, it's not that I couldn't have phoned them up, but you're very cautious on dealing another MLA's constituency. Once I found out how connected St. Paul was – I didn't think that there were any real connections between Bonnyville, Cold Lake, and St. Paul, but when you turn St. Paul into the hub for the northeast, suddenly it's all interconnected in ways that you couldn't have anticipated, which is what's happened here. That's why . . .

Mr. Evans: That's governmental connections and services, but I want to – and I agree with that. It puzzles me because I don't know that there's the community connection in the same way. Would you agree with that?

Mr. Cyr: I would say that is an argument that I had made to the first boundaries commission, that I didn't see those connections as strong as what they were making that out to be.

Mrs. Samson: Can you expand on that?

Mr. Evans: The community interest aspect that the legislation now allows us to look at: that's what I'm really interested in. That's what I'd like to drill down.

Mr. Cyr: At that time they were only about population.

Mr. Evans: Right.

Mr. Cyr: There was no other consideration. When I had talked about the connectivity and all this stuff, they weren't interested in any of this discussion, and when I brought it up, one of the commission members said: do you know what Skype is? That's a

strange thing, what I was saying, that it'd be difficult to get through to all of my areas.

What I will say, though, is that when it comes to our areas with St. Paul, I say that you've got a cluster here of Two Hills, St. Paul, Saddle Lake, Kehewin, likely even Elk Point. It would be one cluster. Then you've got the Bonnyville, Cold Lake, and maybe Lac La Biche cluster, if you will, but Lac La Biche goes either way to Bonnyville, Cold Lake, or to St. Paul. Again, trying to treat them as if they're independent of each other would be a mistake because we're all interconnected, everything.

Like, mental health is driven – and government services matter. Like, we can't discount. Just because you don't drive to Walmart in Cold Lake from St. Paul, you're still driving to Cold Lake for, say, the doctor that you're trying to see, or vice versa. It could be the Cold Lake residents that are driving to St. Paul for specialists here. We do have the mental health that is being driven out of St. Paul, so there are certain areas that are centres of excellence, if you will, and that's something that I take pride in.

It's good to see that my region is working so well together. Is it perfect? The answer is no. I'm working on that, and I continue to work on that, but in the end, the government services, I think, are integral to show how important it is that we're tied together, and separating that is problematic.

10:15

Mr. Evans: Let me ask you one more question about your projected growth. Regardless of whether you say our numbers are right or your numbers are right, it doesn't – like, what I'm more interested in is the trend. I think we can agree that it certainly looks like it's going to trend up. What I want to know is, in your opinion, because you're boots on the ground, how quickly is it going to trend up, and what kind of increase are we going to be looking at over that time? Why that's important is because another commission is not going to be looking at this electoral boundary for another 8 to 9 years. So between now and then, if I knew that your population was going to double, my suggestion as one of the commissioners would be that we would do something drastically different than what we're talking about right now with this particular electoral district. Does that make sense? I'm not saying that's the case, but it's illustrative of the principles.

Mr. Cyr: What I saw from the first boundary commission – and I'm not here to take right hooks at another boundary commission, but they wanted to get rid of a constituency in rural so they could add it to one of the metropolitan areas. At that time we had Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, an awkward . . .

Mr. Evans: That's a weird one.

Mr. Cyr: It was. They just completely annihilated that constituency and then stuck all of the neighbouring areas into the surrounding constituencies. They got rid of their constituency.

If you're asking, "should there be another constituency in the northeast?" I would say likely this is something that may be needed to be explored. But I can tell you that as the MLA for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul I take pride in all of my communities, and I will fight for every one of them, and I will continue to do that. It is difficult for me to say that I would like to – maybe we need to start making some decisions, because right now, with shadow populations, I'm anticipating that we could end up with my constituency being up close to 100,000. By 2030, by the projections that we're able to see, we're probably going to be anywhere from 72,000 to 77,000 in actual population.

Mr. Evans: My thinking is more in line with, rather than – you don't have to make another constituency. You could make this constituency a constituency of 15,000, too, right? So a very small constituency in numbers, knowing that it's going to increase in size based on population growth, so that whether it's in five years or nine years, when you come to review again, you're spot on with that thinking that it should be exactly on parity with other constituencies in the population. Does that make sense?

Mr. Cyr: We were. Bonnyville-Cold Lake, my former constituency, was one of the four small ones because everybody understood that we were the ones that were growing.

Now, when the first boundary commission went through this, we had a collapse of my entire region just because of the oil and gas, right? At that time we had seen almost all military funding collapse underneath the federal Liberal government. You put the two together, and I had a real hardship. I had people crying in my office weekly about losing their homes. It was awful, what was going on for our area. Having said that, we've moved past that, and we're seeing some real light and we're seeing a lot of the same things we were seeing in 2014 before the collapse. If the collapse hadn't happened in 2015, I have no doubt that I could have justified to the prior boundary commission that making changes the way they had was going to oversize this constituency, but the first boundary commission was saying that I was going to shrink. That was their projection based on it. We were going to see . . .

The Chair: When you say the first boundary commission, you mean the first report of the '16-17?

Mr. Cyr: Yes.

The Chair: Yeah. Okay.

Mr. Cyr: They actually had us as a declining constituency, which, based on the information at that second, was correct. But they weren't looking at – they were more or less thinking that oil would be stuck in the ground, the military base would never see any growth ever again. I had a hard time jumping to that conclusion. Again, history has shown that they've been wrong, but, again, we don't know how this is going to work out perfectly. I've got estimate projections, but whether they work out or not is a different story.

Mr. Evans: One last question, I promise. Tell me about your thinking in terms of the spillover of this population growth that we're talking about here in this electoral division. How much is going to spill over into Lac La Biche?

Mr. Cyr: The way this works is that Cold Lake clearly is going to be the epicenter of growth in my constituency just because it's the bedroom community where everybody wants to live. Every part of my constituency is beautiful in its own way, but I will say that Cold Lake is focused on the recreation, if you will, of residents, so people are attracted to there.

Now, we're already seeing Cold Lake pull the alarm bells saying that they have to start subsidizing building right now – that's how worried they are – because we're going to start seeing our rents go to the point where there's no affordable housing left in Cold Lake. What happens is that it's already starting to fill up in Cold Lake. It spills out to Bonnyville. Once Bonnyville is full, then it spills out to St. Paul, Elk Point, Glendon, and then back to Lac La Biche. Right now we haven't seen Bonnyville starting to fill up yet, but I can tell you that I'm already hearing that – what used to be in 2014,

to give an example, people were buying houses sight unseen in Cold Lake. Like it was so crazy back then.

Mr. Evans: What about Bonnyville? Same thing?

Mr. Cyr: Bonnyville was in the same boat, and we were starting to see subdivisions.

Mr. Evans: What about Lac La Biche?

Mr. Cyr: Lac La Biche, again, I'm not as familiar because it wasn't my constituency, but I do know that there are some impacts.

One of the things that I think that should be mentioned here that we haven't touched on yet is that we have some sizeable camps up here.

Mr. Evans: Shadow populations.

Mr. Cyr: Well, those camps that feed into the oil and gas industry, right?

Mr. Evans: Are they on the base?

Mr. Cyr: Well, there's going to be a camp on the base, for sure, but for the most part people, when they're here for anywhere from 7 to 10 years, are going to want to move their family here, so it'll be a temporary thing. We're talking Cenovus – like, the oil and gas industry have camps. Now, I know that right now there's a press to find out what the balance for these camps are. If they're emptying our municipalities out, that is not helpful for Albertans. Plus, they're living in jurisdictions outside of Alberta for the most part, which means they're not taxpaying Albertans. So they're using our services while they're here, but they're not paying any taxes. That is problematic. Then again, I'm not here to take shots at the rest of Canada. I want them to succeed, but I also need to make sure our municipalities are able to grow at a reasonable path as well.

One of the things that I know that Minister Jean, the minister of energy, is saying is that we need to revisit how we're bringing these camps in. These camps were brought in in 2014 out of necessity. Okay. Let's find balance. Let's give our municipalities the ability to grow responsibly, and, still, if the oil companies need camp workers, then we can work through that as well, but there's a real balancing act that I'm hoping that we can do better than we did in 2014 coming up here.

The Chair: Julian, did you have anything to ask?

Dr. Martin: I'm fine. I mean, I'm glad you brought up the shadow population issue yet again. I won't belabour it, but it's obviously a significant feature in any discussion about planning in your zone.

Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Just really quickly, and again, Mr. Cyr, there's just tremendous value in having you here, and your local knowledge and context are incredibly helpful.

I did just want to ask you: you had mentioned that you had a number of constituency offices. One of the things that's come up in past conversations and pretty much every past boundaries commission report I could find: hey, perhaps we should have some more budget for rural MLAs, not as an "or," not as the only way to deal with it, but as another layer, you know, acknowledging the scale. The simple reality of geography in Alberta is that you're going to have large rural constituencies, no matter what. Is there a need – would it be helpful to have more budget so that you could open more satellite offices, hire more staff, and perhaps better serve your constituents?

10:25

Mr. Cyr: I will say that I'm stretched right to the max of my budget every year. We're negotiating some large increases to the staff at our constituency offices because, again, it's outside of my ability to be able to budget their increases. They deserve it. They're hard working.

But the answer here is that you can't hand us 50,000 or 60,000 people to manage in such a large geographic area and not give us the ability to be able to address that. If they can't see me personally – and that's the one thing that I guess the first boundary commission didn't recognize. They thought rural was the same thing as big metropolitan Edmonton and Calgary. In metropolitan Calgary and Edmonton it's likely that a phone call or a Skype, if you will, is probably what they're looking for, but in rural it's not the case. A farmer literally wants me to come and see the culvert on his property that's not draining right.

That's not a real problem that our – and I'm not suggesting they don't have their own challenges; not at all. The one thing you brought up that hadn't occurred to me was the many languages that they're dealing with, the language barriers that come with our big metropolitans. I'm saying different challenges.

But for ours we've got – I don't know – 30 or 35 different councils that I'm dealing with. Like, that's your summer villages, your Métis settlements, your First Nations, and my municipalities, plus you've got the five school boards, you've got hospitals, each one of my constituents in every one of my major centres. I've got Portage College. Like, when you put all of that, our brothers and sisters that are MLAs in Edmonton and Calgary probably have a fraction of that that they're trying to deal with. I'm, again, not saying that they don't have challenges, but when it comes to rural I would suggest that it's a different dynamic that needs to be recognized.

So to answer you, I think that we need to revisit how we fund it. That was a recommendation that came out of the first boundary commission. If we're going to be giving them larger constituencies to deal with, larger populations, then we should be reviewing what the rural constituencies are getting. That never happened, and that's not within your mandate. You can recommend it, but in the end if this is something that you see, it would sure be nice to see what it is that the commission would see as fair.

I would say that when it comes down to it, I have two staff. They're going nonstop getting to events everywhere, and people seem to be feeling as if they're represented, like what Councillor Crick was saying. Again, for me, I try to get to all of my councils semi-annually, so twice a year, which is kind of lining up with what Josh was saying. Same thing with my school boards; same thing with my hospital administrators; my RCMP officers. I think you forget about them too. I go and sit with my staff sergeants at the offices, hearing what their concerns are. I sit with the prosecutor's office to see what resources that I can help advocate for on their behalf. Not influencing casework; that is not what I am suggesting. What I'm saying is that there are unique challenges to our area.

When you put all that into perspective, money definitely would help, but I'm sure that's an ask for every MLA, whether they're in Edmonton or Calgary or rural.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Cyr. I've got a couple of questions and maybe an assignment.

Mr. Cyr: Sure.

The Chair: Just out of curiosity, the carbon capture project for St. Paul: is that similar to what Saskatchewan has been doing for some time in the Estevan area?

Mr. Cyr: Yeah, we've got carbon capture in Alberta. What that is is a saline solution. They put the carbon dioxide into it, they push it down a pipeline, and then inject it into the ground. Very safe; I know that some people are concerned. There are some fallacies out there that if there's a breach in the pipeline, it's going to kill everybody in a 100-kilometre radius. That is not the case with this. Don't get me wrong. I wouldn't want to put my face over a pipeline break, but I am saying that it's very safe and effective.

The Chair: But that's not started yet?

Mr. Cyr: So Minister Jean has been very clear that we're ready with our TIER program. We've been waiting for our federal partners to get in line, which is why I'm saying that with former Prime Minister Trudeau it didn't seem like he had an interest in carbon capture, but our current Prime Minister is showing interest. So suddenly this went from a back burner to probably one of the forefront.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Cyr: Again, our government is trying to work with Prime Minister Carney in every way possible.

The Chair: Well, let me maybe just describe – of course, you're a rural riding with some very unique "challenges" which lead to growth – okay? – which many other ridings don't have. I would ask you to come up with a bit more information because what you told us – it came out a little bit in your written presentation, but I think we're just somewhat taken aback by all the growth industries and the projects and things like that. If you could come up with something to send us in terms of the economic potential of the growth patterns in a little bit more concrete way, that would be helpful for us to chew on. That's the one thing.

Secondly, you've done great work in your presentation, but I'd just like to get the numbers explained a little bit. Compare to the numbers you have, and look at the numbers that we're using, and maybe have your people take a second look at it. I'm not saying yours are wrong and ours are right. I'm just saying, you know, every census is wrong the minute it's published, so we just need to kind of square that circle a bit. Obviously, your staff has already worked on it.

Mr. Cyr: I don't know what your breakdown is.

The Chair: Well, the numbers, the breakdown I can't give you here.

Mr. Cyr: Because if I can compare . . .

The Chair: Apples to apples.

Mr. Cyr: Right now, we actually went municipality by municipality. Right now you're giving me a month and saying mine is not right. You can see where that's awkward.

The Chair: We can get granular on our number, right? Yeah. So we can get that. Just because it's somewhat of a significant difference, we need to make sure we're talking the same language.

Mrs. Samson: I just want to add to your comments, if you don't mind, that we are bound by these numbers. It is because the census is right across Canada, and we're not going to mix up different numbers, so unless something was glaringly incorrect, that is the number for this riding.

Mr. Cyr: Again, if there is something that we've double-counted inside my numbers, like, you've got to remember I've got an MD and a county that's huge. Maybe some of the St. Paul got in there. If I could take a look at where you're at and look at ours, and then what happens is if there's an error on my side, I could send a correction in, for sure.

The Chair: We'll delegate to Aaron the work from Elections Alberta staff, but keep in mind Elections Alberta is very busy right now. I think we just need to have a little exchange of information. So, yeah, we'll do what we can to get something to you, and then you can respond.

Dr. Martin: Can I add to that? The census that we're relying on: our date is July 1, 2024, because the act allows us to supplement the federal census numbers by any other reliable form of census that can be distributed across all the electoral districts. So we've done that, and we've come up with a stable and reliable figure, and so we've chosen July 2024. Now, obviously population has grown since then, but is it stable and reliable as a figure? Because people come and go, people are born and die. A census is never empirical. It's always an estimate, so what we're talking about here is about a significant variation across the numbers.

Now, you will be able to find in Elections Alberta online and other sources from our provincial government the municipal census for each year. I don't know for the life of me what day in that year they choose, but you can see ways to approximate the figures to the ones that you yourself have collected, and they would be on that basis. I'd say that was your preliminary research when you're trying to look at your population base.

10:35

Mr. Cyr: Thank you. Again, once I get your figures and how you calculated them, I could compare it to ours to see if, let's say, for instance, a First Nation was counted twice or overlooked.

Dr. Martin: Or not.

Mr. Cyr: Yeah.

Then what happens is that we can send it in along with the request of the economic potential for our area.

Dr. Martin: Yeah.

Mr. Cyr: Then, again, if there's an error on my side, I apologize to the commission.

The Chair: No, I don't mean to say that you're wrong.

Mr. Cyr: No, and I'm not suggesting that you are. I'm just saying that if there is an inconsistency, you have my apologies. I'm not here to misinform; I'm just trying to make sure that I'm communicating it correctly, and if it's not correct, I just want it correct for the record.

Dr. Martin: You know, don't apologize. If you and your staff chose to include figures from July 1, 2024, until today, that would be perfectly reasonable, but we're not allowed to listen.

Mr. Cyr: Well, my understanding is that when we did the calculation, it was on the 2021 census as well.

The Chair: That's totally fine.

Mr. Cyr: So if anything, your numbers should be higher than my numbers, not lower.

The Chair: Yeah, we'll look into it. That's an interesting question.

Mr. Cyr: I will dig into where the inconsistency is, and, again, I have faith in the good men and women that are building your numbers.

The Chair: I'm going to allow you to sign off here. We've billed you enough. If we accepted your suggestion in terms of cutting off the southwest corner of your district, the name would still be satisfactory. One of our jobs – we always forget – is that we have to name the electoral districts. Please say that the name is fine.

Mr. Cyr: The name will be fine. Actually, the first boundary commission hadn't asked that question, and I actually had to move an amendment.

The Chair: Oh, you were one of the five or six ridings that had to be moved.

Mr. Cyr: Well, it was just to rename. Yeah. Because Bonnyville – Cold Lake-St. Paul was the original. This is a self-inflicted wound, the name. It's a really long name, Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul, but what I will say is that the name is sufficient.

The Chair: Well, we appreciate all presenters, but we are particularly gratified to have members of the Legislature come and talk to us and give us their thoughts and recommendations because you travel this electoral district. You know and you beat the pavement, so we are very grateful. Thank you for your presentation and your written material. As a result, the good student gets more work.

Mr. Cyr: Is there somewhere specific that I would send the response to?

The Chair: Aaron will take your card.

Mr. Cyr: I've already got Aaron's . . .

The Chair: Yeah, he works 36 hours a day, so don't worry.

Mr. Cyr: I know. He was actually. When we were in session there, he was one of our table officers. God bless him. While we were sitting there while the opposition was filibustering, he got to hear it all.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you.

The Chair: By the way, yesterday we were in Westlock, and it was kind of gratifying when your colleague presented, and then had, you know, a few other presenters. But former minister Hoffman came and sat in to the hearing, so it was kind of nice to see them talk in a very collegial way and have a little bit of dialogue after, and I was thinking after that we maybe should compel some urban MLAs to come in the country to present and compel rural MLAs to go to the city to present. They have a little bit of crosspollination.

Mr. Cyr: I'll present at all of them if they wanted. Again, what I will say – and this is where our sympathies are with our big urban, if you will – is that I can't fully understand what the challenges in Edmonton are because I don't live in Edmonton, and the same thing with Calgary and even Medicine Hat. I can't understand the challenges over in Lethbridge, but I can maybe give a perspective of the northeast.

The Chair: Yeah. You've done a very good job of that. Thank you.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

The Chair: We're not leaving right away, either, if anybody wants to talk.

[The commission deliberated]

[The hearing adjourned at 11:18 a.m.]



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

Wainwright

Thursday, June 5, 2025
6:37 p.m.

Transcript No. 11

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission

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Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Wainwright

Public Participants

Linda Jacejko, President, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright Constituency Association
Michael Jacejko

6:37 p.m.

Thursday, June 5, 2025

[Justice Miller in the chair]

The Chair: Good evening, everyone, and welcome to our evening public hearing of the Electoral Boundaries Commission here in Wainwright.

Just to give you some background, first of all, we are an independent commission established by the Legislature of Alberta to follow the legislation, which requires every second election, approximately, or every eight to 10 years, to take a look at the boundaries of Alberta's constituencies and to determine whether they should be varied or changed. Our task for this commission is – one of the first things we have to deal with is the fact that the Legislature has decided to expand the seat numbers from 87 to 89. The map before you – well, not really. But the map of Alberta is divided into 87 constituencies currently. For the next provincial election there will be 89, so we have to decide where those two new constituencies go and where the boundaries are to be drawn for the others.

Before you is the commission. To my far right is – no; it's my far left. Sorry. Mr. John Evans is at the end of the table here. He is a lawyer from southern Alberta. He works with a province-wide firm known as Stringam and does trials throughout the province but mainly focused, you know, in Lethbridge. He's been recognized, in terms of his legal ability, by way of receiving the King's Counsel designation, and he also volunteers by serving on the Alberta Judicial Nominating Committee.

To my immediate left is Susan Samson. She hails from Sylvan Lake, Alberta. For those of us who live in the south, Sylvan Lake is central Alberta. She has been recognized for her volunteer activities, especially in the area of health care, and she has served several terms as a municipal councillor and as mayor of Sylvan Lake.

I'm Justice Dallas Miller. I'm a judge from the Court of King's Bench in southern Alberta, and I'm honoured to serve as chairman of this commission.

To my immediate right is Dr. Julian Martin, who is a historian, a retired university professor from the University of Alberta. He lives in Sherwood Park and volunteers with respect to several projects and committees in that community and also serves on the Surface Rights Board and the Land Compensation Board.

At the far end of the table is Mr. Greg Clark. Greg comes from Calgary, and he has been a member of the Legislature of Alberta and served one term representing Calgary-Elbow. Greg is in the information and knowledge industry and consults widely with corporations and gives advice on corporate governance.

We are your Electoral Boundaries Commission. To give you some sense of what we're going to do, it's helpful to look at a timeline. This commission was established by the Speaker of the Legislature in late March of this year. From the time of appointment the clock starts ticking, and we have to have a report at certain stages. We're appointed in late March. We met a couple of times in April as a commission to discuss the population, to discuss various approaches to how we're going to take on this task, and to lay out the public hearing schedule. We started the public hearings last week. We spent all of this week in Edmonton and Westlock, St. Paul, and now tonight Wainwright. We will conduct public hearings until the last week in June.

After we've completed our public hearings, we will work on a report, and the report will be completed by late October. That interim report will be submitted to the Speaker of the Legislature, and it'll become public. The public will have a chance for response, comments, and feedback to that report. We will then provide an

opportunity for further public hearings, starting possibly in November and December and up to February. Then, based on those public hearings on the interim report, the comments we receive from them, we will finalize the report and submit it to the Speaker of the Legislature in late March. Typically the Speaker receives that report, and the Legislature is then obligated to enact legislation with respect to electoral divisions based on that report. They're not bound by the terms of our recommendations, but they take our recommendations and fashion the statutory provisions from that point on.

As you know, each constituency has one member of the Legislature of Alberta – as I said, we're moving from 87 to 89 – and voters in that constituency elect that member of the Legislature.

To provide some context and background, I think it's helpful to look at previous commissions. The previous commission issued its final report in 2017. I indicated that we're moving from 87 to 89 seats. Well, the main reason we're doing that is because of the high population increase in the province of Alberta. In 2017 – it might be a little hard to see in that graph – the population that the commission based its recommendations upon was slightly over 4 million people. Now, for our report purposes, we are well over 4 million, in fact 4.88 million. The significance of that population change can be seen in these two charts. The last commission in 2017 took a population of 4,062,609 Albertans divided by 87. That gave us the mean amount of 46,697 per constituency.

In Alberta we are based on the principle of effective representation, and effective representation is met if your target population is anywhere below that mean by 25 per cent or above by 25 per cent. The target range is a population of 35,000, approximately, and just over 58,000. That was the 2017 report. By contrast, now the population of Alberta has increased well over 700,000 to 4,888,723. That's the population that this commission is relying on for the purposes of providing our report for electoral boundaries. That changes the mean average up to 54,929, or roughly 55,000, and that target range then varies from 41,000 to almost 69,000. That's the formula that we'll be relying upon for our report.

6:45

How do we come up with the boundaries? Well, we've got certain suggestions and guidelines in the legislation. Unfortunately, the population growth has not been evenly scattered across the province and is focused mainly on the larger cities. Nevertheless, we have certain legislative guides to help us come up with our report.

Our goal is to provide a report that Alberta constituencies all benefit from, for what we call effective representation, not necessarily one person, one vote but effective representation. In completing our task, we have to look at these various factors, the sparsity and the relative density of the population throughout the province, factors such as common community interests and organizations within each electoral division. Geographic features are important for helping us determine boundaries for constituencies, particularly in the outlying areas outside of urban situations. As well, we look at communication and transportation lines across the province. Our task is to produce very clear and understandable boundaries so that the public knows what electoral division they're in and where the borders are.

In addition, the legislation allows us to take into consideration other factors that may assist us in coming to our conclusions in our report. That's where public hearings come in. We're in the midst of the public hearings. We want to hear from you as Albertans as it relates to your thoughts in terms of your own local boundaries, but you're not restricted to your own electoral division in these presentations.

What you have before you is the current map of Alberta laying out the 87 constituencies. At the end of this process, by March of 2026, we will have another map of Alberta, giving the boundaries for 89 constituencies.

In light of that presentation, we have blocked off this evening. We have probably advised you that you're time limited for your presentation, but we've got lots of time this evening.

I'm going to call on Colleen Henning to give a presentation.

The Chair: Oh, I'm sorry. Are you Mrs. Linda Jacejko?

Mr. Jacejko: Nicely done.

The Chair: Pardon?

Mr. Jacejko: Nicely done. Jacejko.

Mr. Clark: Linda is a tough name to pronounce.

The Chair: Did you want to make a presentation today?

Mrs. Jacejko: Yes.

The Chair: Oh, well, please come forward. We have a little bit of a mix-up on our communication. You're going to fly the flag by yourself?

Mrs. Jacejko: I am. Surprise.

The Chair: Okay. Good. It makes us happy when you bring your own map. We know you're serious. Take some time to introduce yourself and tell us, you know, what you want us to know. We're a very inquisitive group. We like to ask questions, so we'll have a dialogue. You can stand or sit, whatever is comfortable.

Mrs. Jacejko: Sure. I am from Vermilion, within this constituency, and I am currently a president of a constituency association. We've only been in existence for about three or four years as a CA, so we've had a lot of building to do. We have about 12 core members, and about eight of them are extremely involved. That's kind of what we do.

Yeah. We had a couple of meetings on the boundaries, just trying to see if there was something that we could add to this discussion. Actually, we looked at population, but we did it in terms of people that could vote, not actual population. The figures I found were from March 2024, so that's kind of what I based what we were going to talk about on.

The Chair: Well, tell me. What's the source of those figures?

Mrs. Jacejko: Where did I find them? They give a really nice long list. I know I had to go back and find them again, and I had a little difficulty finding them again, but it looked to be like a fairly responsible type page . . .

The Chair: Source.

Mrs. Jacejko: Source. Yeah.

Except it was very tiny, so I had to write it all in big letters.

From this, we kind of looked at the numbers of voters. They say that it's about 2,966,192, and if you divide that by 87, you get 34,094.

Dr. Martin: That's the Elections Alberta data set.

The Chair: Oh, okay. Yeah. For voters. Right.

Mrs. Jacejko: Okay. Thank you. Yeah. That makes sense.

We come in at kind of in the middle, but we would have room for a couple of thousand, from those numbers.

The Chair: What is your number?

Mrs. Jacejko: Our number – we're the number second from the bottom – is 32,357, based on that chart. At the moment I think we have room for about a couple thousand based just on that alone, which could be different by now, too.

The Chair: Well, let me just tell you the figures that we'll be relying on. The last commission had a population base of 46,042 for this electoral district, okay? This year we're relying on the 2021 census, which I didn't explain properly earlier, which is updated continuously by both the federal government and the province. It's the figures from July 2024 that we're relying on overall for the province. That's a long explanation to get to the figures that we're relying on. Your riding has a population of 48,061.

Mrs. Jacejko: Okay. It just depends which . . .

The Chair: The variance is comparable. The variance is close to the voters, about 2,000 apart.

Mrs. Jacejko: Okay. Yeah. Right.

So it got us to thinking about various things. One is that not far from Vermilion is the little town of Mannville, and the trading area for Vermilion is Mannville. I mean, Mannville is only about 12 miles away, so they are lumped in with Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, which is a long way away from them. And it is really quite close to our trading area.

The Chair: Yeah. We drove through that today.

Mrs. Jacejko: That was one thing that we noticed.

The other thing is that we – Colleen, actually, was going to speak on this. Her first husband was First Nations, and she has a daughter that is, and her daughter has had quite a lot to do with the First Nations people. The interesting thing is that we have in our constituency this area, which is Onion Lake, and the reality is that apparently Frog Lake and Onion Lake people go back and forth an awful lot. Some of them actually have some place to live in both places, so in many respects it would make sense for them to be part of our constituency just for that reason alone. I think the numbers come out quite well if we're looking for a couple thousand. I know that it interrupts the northern part, which then gets more complicated.

6:55

The Chair: But you have Onion Lake, and Frog Lake is next door.

Mrs. Jacejko: Yeah. We do not have Frog Lake.

The Chair: Yeah. And you're prepared to take it.

Mrs. Jacejko: We would. We think that probably they should have a little more attention, and we could do that using both communities and kind of try to, you know – actually Colleen is our plumb to help us to make some contacts and get them properly more involved in politics than they normally do sometimes. I'm not saying they all don't.

We also have a Hutterite colony. I've heard in the past that the only reason they voted was that they were given a lot of booze and then put on a bus and brought to the voting area, which doesn't sound right to me. I think it's better to help people to understand the voting before . . .

The Chair: Okay. Where is the colony on the map?

Mrs. Jacejko: The colony is near Marwayne. There are plenty in the area, but I think that's the only one that's in our neck of the woods.

What else did I want to say? Also, when I submitted a written report, I mentioned that street people didn't seem to be a big deal, but apparently in Lloydminster they are.

Mr. Evans: Did you say street people?

Mrs. Jacejko: It is a huge problem, so we need to send more oversight on that.

Also, the fact that Lloydminster is a border city: there are a lot of issues, and health care is another one. If Albertans go to Lloyd to see a specialist, it's worse if it's on the Saskatchewan side, but even if it's on the Alberta side, all the medical is looked after by Saskatchewan, even records coming back and forth. If you go to a doctor in Alberta, everything is in your online records. These are not, so you can go to your place that did your MRI, for instance, and say, "I want the results," and you can get them to take them back to your doctor, but there needs to be a lot of work done there, too. Little by little we start discovering some of these things. I don't live in Lloyd, but Colleen was, and she's actually just moving to Vermilion, the core.

I don't know. Did you get a copy of the report I sent you?

The Chair: Yes. We would have received it.

Mrs. Jacejko: Okay.

The Chair: I can't say that I specifically recall your name attached to it, but we have the records.

Mrs. Jacejko: Okay. It's just also that we've learned since then, too, so things change.

The other thing that had come up is that one of our members was involved in the Anglican church, and they use the pie-shaped kind of grouping, and they said it was a disaster. The communication just doesn't work properly. You know, you've got people up here and down here. I can understand that for a city that might be an idea, but it does pose its own problems. I was hoping to get Elizabeth to come, but she couldn't make it today to explain their experience of that, but I think she submitted a letter as well.

The Chair: Okay. When you say pie-shaped, what are you referencing?

Mrs. Jacejko: Well, like, if you took Edmonton, because that's where a lot of the population is, and you came outwards . . .

The Chair: Oh, for creating boundaries you mean.

Mrs. Jacejko: Yeah, for creating a constituency.

The Chair: Okay.

Mrs. Jacejko: Yeah. You know, it might look good on paper, but it brings with it a whole lot of . . .

The Chair: Challenges.

Mrs. Jacejko: Plus, you have a whole different kind of people living in each one. I mean, city versus semicity versus farming and ranching: you run into all kinds of issues that way.

Any questions?

Dr. Martin: Lots. Thank you very much. I love the map, and I'm sad it was taken away.

Mrs. Jacejko: You can have it back.

Dr. Martin: I wanted first to thank you because your presentation hits on many themes that we've been discovering in other hearings and the like, so thanks, and all your friends and colleagues who weren't here tonight to help you to discuss all this are to be thanked.

I wanted first just to clarify about the town to the east of Vermilion that is part of your market economy circle. What's the name of that?

Mrs. Jacejko: Mannville.

Dr. Martin: Mannville, ah. Jolly good.

Mr. Clark: Is it east or west?

Mrs. Jacejko: It's west.

Dr. Martin: It's west; excuse me.

Mrs. Jacejko: You know, just like the right of the table.

The Chair: That's very good.

Dr. Martin: I wanted to touch not upon Lloyd in particular but the whole general issue of sharing a border with our friends in Saskatchewan. Do you find that there are other issues that we as a commission should be alive to? For example, your reservation, which is tightly on the border up there in the northern part of your electoral riding: is there an equivalent one on the other side? Do these sorts of things happen, or is it just a special feature of Lloyd?

Mrs. Jacejko: No. There are other reservations not that far away.

Dr. Martin: So the transit across the Sask-Alberta border is quite common all along this stretch for any number of reasons.

Mrs. Jacejko: It is, yes, very much so. For the whole province, I believe.

Dr. Martin: Well, I'm sure that's true.

Mrs. Jacejko: Because on one side you might have Provost, and on the other side you've got some other town or community that keeps you going.

The Chair: Are you near Alsask?

Mrs. Jacejko: No.

The Chair: Okay. It's one of my favourite names.

Mrs. Jacejko: It is a nice name, isn't it?

Dr. Martin: I wondered if I might just pursue the economic theme that your mention of Mannville brings up. Do you feel that there is a lot of economic traffic south of Wainwright, past the military base, into, well, Provost? People go to Provost or people come from Provost to Wainwright, in your estimation?

Mrs. Jacejko: For Provost they might. I'm not positive about people coming up to Wainwright. But it is quite possible, yes. There are a lot of little towns in between.

Dr. Martin: Well, yeah. Your presentation, like others we have heard over the last couple of days, really points out that fact. You know, there are lots of villages that are active and vibrant and alive.

I have no further questions at this time. Thank you.

Mrs. Jacejko: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Clark: I'll just build on what Julian was saying. First off, I thank you very much for coming and giving some thought to this. It's a very important exercise, and for us it's been a real pleasure to travel around the province and just see different parts of the province and how it changes. It's really important to hear from people who live in the community, so thank you for coming and making that happen.

I'm curious. Practically speaking, talking about Mannville and the sort of trading area, how far west does that go, would you say? Sort of up highway 16 or places as far away as, like, Viking? That seems a little far away.

7:05

Mrs. Jacejko: I think by the time you get to Innisfree, then they start going to Vegreville.

Mr. Clark: Right. Okay. That's sort of what I thought just kind of looking at it.

Mrs. Jacejko: Yeah.

Mr. Clark: But I was just kind of curious what your perspective on that is. That's very helpful. Thank you.

Mrs. Jacejko: You're welcome.

Mrs. Samson: Again, thank you for coming out. You know, you got under pressure here with losing your colleague, and I think you've done quite well.

I wanted to ask you: we were in St. Paul earlier in the day, and they spent quite a bit of time talking about the industry in the area and potential growth. I have to say that I'm not that familiar with your riding of Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright. Can you talk at all about the industry or any forecast or big things coming on board that we should be aware of that might see an increase in your population, that people would move into the area for?

Mrs. Jacejko: That's always a good question. Well, Lloydminster is an oil centre, definitely. They have some very big refinery type things. I don't even know all the things they do with oil there. When oil goes up and down, Lloydminster also does go up and down, for sure.

We have to the south – part way, actually just out of Vermilion, to Mannville, running along the Battle River is a brand new wind farm. It's now been there about two years. For many of us that was fantastic. There are people who didn't think so, but I think so. I come from farther north of Vermilion originally, in the farmland there. It hurts me every time I drive down highway 41 to see the number of black tanks that are in practically every single field all the way to pretty much Elk Point. This is probably not your issue, but I don't understand why wind farms are considered so ugly compared to all these black tanks and all the problems with trying to clean up after the tanks. I mean, one of our members on our executive has had their oil well cleaned and fixed a number of years ago, and it's starting to seep through the ground again. I don't know if we ever will end that problem. I don't know. Just the fact that it can happen, hopefully not too often, but that is an issue.

We have a lot of farmers. The farmers have become bigger. Some of them have turned into corporations. Bigger machinery, bigger amounts of yield, and that is for the most part going well. Some are ranching. The oil industry, of course, is smattered around the whole region. Then there is, of course, the army base here at Wainwright. We have a few of them that take some interest in local politics. I also think that what happens is that they're moved around so much that they never really . . .

The Chair: They're not there very long.

Mrs. Jacejko: Yeah.

What else? That's some of the highlights anyway.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: John?

Mr. Evans: I don't have any questions. Thank you so much.

Mrs. Jacejko: You're welcome.

The Chair: We're all concerned about representation, okay? I don't see on the list your MLA here. Have you talked to him or her about any challenges that they usually might have about the size of the riding or anything like that?

Mrs. Jacejko: Unfortunately, our MLA doesn't seem to – I mean, he'll hear you, but he doesn't really help.

The Chair: What about access to your MLA? Can you get a hold of his office?

Mrs. Jacejko: We can, yes. Actually, his office is in Vermilion now. It used to be here in Wainwright.

The Chair: Okay.

Mrs. Jacejko: Lots of letter writing, lots of that kind of thing. Yeah. I don't know.

Mr. Evans: I take it you're not in his constituency office.

Mrs. Jacejko: I have been in it. But, yeah. I've been to the one on wanting to get rid of the Canadian pension plan.

The one point that Colleen was going to make is that she actually was in Saskatchewan for a while, and she said that there is that one minister that has the top third of Saskatchewan and uses his plane. You might have heard me saying that before we started. They seem to think that that's a better way of doing it than trying to stretch out constituencies the way we have to.

The Chair: Now, is that a plane provided by the government?

Mrs. Jacejko: I'm not sure. I would hope so, but I don't know. It would seem to be reasonable. I mean, if we're going to have to look after a bigger area just for the population, we have to find some other ways to deal with it. I mean, we still would really like to have population-based voting and not have 50,000 over here and 20,000 over here. I know it happens, but if there's a way of circumnavigating that, that would be good.

Do you want my map?

The Chair: No. Actually, I want to go back to the formula. I just want to make sure. Okay. So right now according to our figures the population of this electoral division is 48,001, so you're in the low end of the sweet spot, basically. Populationwise you're doing fine here.

Mrs. Jacejko: We're not complaining, but at the same time if we do have to make some accommodations, we thought, well, then it should be something that makes sense.

The Chair: Now, you did say – can we go back up to the map? Yeah. If you wouldn't mind maybe just showing us. Initially you mentioned a couple of things, a town that is in your electoral division but is disconnected with the community. So it should be in another one. Did I understand you correctly?

Mrs. Jacejko: The opposite.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Mannville.

Mrs. Jacejko: Mannville is out of it. Yes.

The Chair: So you would be happy if Mannville went the other way.

Mrs. Jacejko: Yes. For their sake. We had four people that showed up at one of our meetings and didn't realize that they weren't from our constituency because they're across the road.

Mrs. Samson: Right.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. That's not very far off the boundary.

Mrs. Jacejko: No, it isn't.

The Chair: Okay. Any other questions, or any questions that you may have of us?

Mrs. Jacejko: No. I think that you do a fantastic job.

The Chair: Thank you. I've noted that we have your written submission as well, and we will be sure to look at that.

Dr. Martin: Just as a passing final remark, I think Justice Miller has remarked the fact that we, under the act, are charged with looking at population, which obviously is a larger pool of humans than the voting pool. I looked at that chart myself a few weeks back and did a rough and ready calculation that the average across the province is to multiply your voter population by 1.67 because that tends to be the mean number across the province. But we've also found that nearly every district is so different that that really isn't a helpful finding guide for us.

7:15

In some districts, some parts of Edmonton, if you multiply their voting population by 1.67, it's right on. Every 100 voters are carrying a responsibility for voting for 167 persons. But it's not true in other areas. So there's a very limited kind of argument that you can push by examining the voter totals. It is valuable because if this riding hasn't changed very much and others, of course, have changed wildly because of the growth of their populations – I found at least that it wasn't a tool that I could apply very readily in other places.

We're also asked in the act to only accept figures, census figures or any other useful information that we can distribute across each of the ridings. I know the line of argument that goes along with looking at the voters, and I pressed it myself until I discovered that it faltered. I think we'll have to leave the voter argument by the by.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much and for, obviously, the time you've put into it.

Mrs. Jacejko: Thank you very much. I appreciate your time.

The Chair: Anybody else have any comments? I don't want to put anybody on the spot, but I can.

Yes, sir. Can you come forward so that the mic catches you? One thing I failed to mention is that we are recording everything.

Mrs. Samson: That's how we record, through the mic.

Mr. Jacejko: Okay.

The Chair: I like your hat. I like your cap.

Mr. Evans: *O Canada.*

Mr. Jacejko: Okay. You're saying that taking the numbers by the voters will go by the by. How is the emphasis on the population more valid than that?

Mr. Clark: I'll take a quick crack at that. There are a few things. MLAs represent things like schools, hospitals, postsecondaries, social services. And, of course, people under 18 don't vote, but they're a big part of what MLAs work on, schools and things. Then people move to Alberta from other places.

Mr. Jacejko: You're saying MLAs?

Mr. Clark: Yeah. The Member of the Legislative Assembly, your representative.

Mr. Jacejko: Oh, okay.

Mr. Clark: They would be responsible to make sure that schools are in place, for example. If there's a significant population of kids in a particular constituency, it's picked up in population, but it's not picked up in the voter rolls. The voter roll tends to lag behind pretty far in terms of population. We're pretty good at population; we calculate that on a pretty regular basis. But until there's an election or a big enumeration, the voter numbers are pretty unreliable.

Then, of course, as you know, lots of people move to Alberta. That's a good thing. Those people get their health care card, they get a job, they pay a bit of tax, but they don't tend to register to vote right away. That, again, sort of lags behind. So there a few reasons why those voter roll numbers are a little less reliable than population. Does that makes sense?

Mr. Jacejko: Yeah. That makes perfect sense.

Dr. Martin: I would add to that that you have shadow populations in the oil patch. You know, they're here. They're not registered to vote here, but they're here. That skews numbers as well. It's certainly true in the big cities we have a lot of new Canadians. They're not eligible to vote, but they're here. So the burden on the MLA is that they're all the same.

It seems a little awkward when you first confront these facts, but I'm starting to get comfortable with it. That is to say that the MLA has the responsibility for all of those people as well as the voters. Well, in fact, the voters have a responsibility for all the other people as well. I never had thought about voting from that point of view before, but it is the case that there are more people who every single voter has to carry the burden of representing, a bunch more people who can't vote. I'm not sure we're making your life easier, but that's the way we are dealing with it, and then the sheer, brutal, formal fact of the law is that we're directed to pay our attention to the total population number.

Mr. Jacejko: Okay. I should have worn my t-shirt that has a slogan on it that says, "I just don't get it."

The Chair: We could all have one of those.

Mr. Jacejko: Shall I take your names down?

The Chair: Oh, we didn't get your name for *Hansard*. They would just want to know.

Mr. Jacejko: For which?

Dr. Martin: We just need you to identify yourself.

Mr. Jacejko: Michael, or Mick, Jacejko, Linda's spouse. That would be my title: Linda's spouse.

You know, sometimes in a discussion or decision, two sides are presented, and neither one seems to really fit the bill for what's trying to be accomplished. It seems to me there's a third place somewhere that's slipping away.

The Chair: You mean in terms of numbers?

Mr. Jacejko: I thought constituencies were set up according to the number of people that could vote to vote in their MLA, whoever that might be. So whether you've got 10,000 people in there – that's the population – but of the 10,000 only 50 are eligible to vote. How does the population carry more weight than the voter? I'm missing something. I'm sorry. I'm a little bit slow at this kind of stuff.

The Chair: No, you actually raise a conundrum.
Go ahead.

Mrs. Samson: I'll just add a thought that the population is a snapshot in time of everybody who is in that area, and that area is made up of, as they indicated, voters and nonvoters, but the boundaries that we put together today will stay in place for eight years, two election cycles, and the change happens. Those groups: the new Canadians will become Canadians and vote, the 17-year-old will turn 18 and vote, and other people will die.

Mr. Jacejko: Okay. Before I lose my train of thought, because where I'm at, it slips away quickly: then we're looking at the potential of the number of voters that could come from the growth of that population.

The Chair: That's part of it.

Mrs. Samson: Also, that's another group that I didn't touch on. There will be a change in the people moving in and moving out, so they felt that the best representation of how large or small your area

is is to not look at voters but to look at populations because that is easier to track over the next eight years.

Mr. Jacejko: Okay. For me, unless I'm mistaken in my interpretation, the keyword there is potential voters in that population over the eight years. I mean, what you have now is maybe not what will be in four years or five years.

Mrs. Samson: You're exactly right because the number we use today is already out of date. That population number is changing as we speak, so is that voter number. It's either one or the other, but it's always been population because of the span between this kind of work that we do. It's also, you know, more nonpartisan. You know, it's everybody. It's not any specific voter. It's everybody in the riding.

The Chair: Several generations before the decision was made to do population, and that's not unique to Alberta. It's every province and federally as well. There was a time back as recent as the '60s they did enumerate or calculate the numbers based on voters, but that has changed. We can disagree, but there's nothing we can do about it.

Mr. Jacejko: Yeah.

The Chair: So the act is very specific as to how we do that calculation.

Mr. Jacejko: That makes a little bit more sense to me. Thank you very much.

Mrs. Samson: I'll take that shirt, too.

Mr. Jacejko: Thank you. Thank you very much.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

7:25

The Chair: Thank you.

Okay. Well, we can adjourn, have our early break now, and if anybody else comes by 8 o'clock, we can – we've advertised for this time slot. Sometimes people come late, so we'll wait here till about 8 o'clock before we shut down things completely.

[The commission deliberated]

[The hearing adjourned at 8 p.m.]



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

Drumheller

Monday, June 9, 2025
1:31 p.m.

Transcript No. 12

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission

Justice Dallas K. Miller, Chair

Greg Clark

John D. Evans, KC

Julian Martin

Susan Samson

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Managing Editor of *Alberta Hansard*

Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Drumheller

Public Participants

Brian Golka
Adrian Zinck

1:31 p.m.

Monday, June 9, 2025

[Justice Miller in the chair]

The Chair: Well, good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to our Electoral Boundaries Commission public hearing here in Drumheller. We're pleased to be here. This is our third week of travelling the province and listening to presentations from concerned citizens, individuals who have input for our work. We've got the whole afternoon blocked off, and normally we curtail presentations to seven minutes, but I can tell you that I think we can go over seven minutes this afternoon, so you've got some flexibility.

First of all, my name is Justice Dallas Miller. I'm the chairman of the commission, and I also serve as a judge of the Court of King's Bench for Alberta.

The other commissioners are at the table with me, and I'll start with my immediate left. Susan Samson is a long-time resident of Sylvan Lake, an experienced municipal politician who served a four-year term as mayor of Sylvan Lake. Susan has been honoured for much of her volunteer work in the community by being named citizen of the year and receiving the Queen Elizabeth II diamond jubilee medal in 2012. She's a dedicated volunteer in her community with a focus on public health care. After the session if you want to talk to her about her astronaut career, she's more than welcome to discuss that with you.

To Susan's left is Mr. John Evans, KC, a lawyer. John practises out of Lethbridge with a province-wide firm known as Stringam. John does litigation and conducts trials across the province, and his legal ability has been honoured by way of a KC designation recently. He also volunteers as a member of the Alberta Judicial Nominating Committee.

To my immediate right is Dr. Julian Martin. Dr. Martin is a retired history professor from the University of Alberta with advanced degrees from Cambridge University. He has volunteered on many committees in the Sherwood Park area, where he lives, and also serves on provincial tribunals such as the Surface Rights Board and the Land Compensation Board. Dr. Martin, in effect, is from the capital region, Susan is from central Alberta, and John hails from Lethbridge.

At the far end of the table is Mr. Greg Clark. Greg is an entrepreneur and consultant from Calgary focusing on information and knowledge management. He has had the benefit of serving as a member of the Legislature for Calgary-Elbow for a term, and that experience is valuable to us as a commission. Currently he serves as the chair of the Balancing Pool of Alberta for energy purposes, and he consults and advises widely to various organizations relative to proper governance.

We are your Electoral Boundaries Commission, and there is a little bit of dialogue or questions about the types of the commissions. We are an independent body established by the Legislature of Alberta. If you go to the website, you will see that the Speaker of the Legislature announced this commission in late March. The commission is composed of myself as chair, two representatives from the government, and two representatives from the opposition.

Our task as a commission is to look at the existing boundaries, which have been in place since 2017, and based on the change to the legislation, which expands the number of electoral districts from 87 to 89, allocate the appropriate boundaries based on population, and our population has grown incredibly as a province.

We have a timeline, and the timeline starts from our appointment in late March. We first met as a commission a couple of times in April. We started our – I want to say road show – public hearings

across the province in late May, and we go until the beginning of next week. After we get the input from the public this first time around, we will work on completing a report. We'll all put our heads together and work on a report, that must be released by late October of this year. That is what has come to be known as an interim report. It will be available publicly and will receive comments and feedback from the public, again, through a public hearing process, through the Internet, and submissions to our website.

From late October through to late March of next year we will have an opportunity for more public hearings and then write and submit a final report, which will be submitted to the Speaker. Then the government and opposition, or the Legislature, will deal with our report in terms of whether they accept all the terms or adjust boundaries or whatever. But then it's the Legislature's responsibility.

We're on a timeline, and we are here, as I said, the beginning of the third week of our across-the-province tour. As you are aware, each electoral division or riding or constituency has one member representing it in the Legislative Assembly. The people in that constituency or electoral division elect that particular MLA.

Now, by way of background and comparison, we want to look at the last commission, whose report came out in 2017. If you look at the graph, the commission in 2017 made recommendations for 87 boundaries based on a population of just over 4 million. The population of Alberta has grown considerably, such that we're now in excess of 4.8 million. Our task is to add two ridings and deal with the significant increase in population. Again, going back to the last commission, they used this formula. They took the estimated population of 4,062,609 people and came up with a mean average of 46,697 individuals for each electoral division if it was divided equally. However, the goal isn't to have exact equality in terms of population per electoral division; rather, we look at a target, a wide-ranging target. The target range is 25 per cent below that figure or 25 per cent above that figure. Again, those are the numbers for the 2017 electoral boundaries, that we've lived with, based on the last two elections.

Now, fast-forward to our time to date. The population that we are relying on is 4,888,723. The mean average, when you take into consideration 89 electoral divisions, is 54,929, and the minus/plus target range is 41,197 to 68,661. The population has increased dramatically, but it has not been evenly spread across the province. Our task as a commission is to come up with a set of boundaries that provides Albertans with what we call effective representation. In order to arrive at effective representation, we are considering several factors outlined in the legislation: the relative sparsity and density of populations in each electoral division, common community interests and organizations, geographic features – I'm sure we'll talk about some geographic features when we talk about the boundaries with the presenters here this afternoon – communication and transportation lines across the province.

Our goal, our task, is to create understandable and clear boundaries for the voting public of Alberta. In addition, and finally, we are entitled to take in any other considerations we think are important in compiling our report and in allocating the boundaries for the 89 electoral divisions. That's the background of why we're here and what we've been doing the last several weeks and what our job is and our task is in the weeks and months ahead.

1:40

Now we want to hear from you, and we want to hear from the presenters. This map is the current Alberta electoral map based on 87 electoral divisions, and you can see Drumheller on the left-hand side, a large geographic area. We want to hear from presenters that

are here today. I'll take any questions at all about the presentation as the presenters come up.

Is Brian Golka here? Brian, do you want to come forward? Just have a seat at the table there, introduce yourself, and proceed to give us your comments. Don't feel rushed; take your time. These sessions are recorded, and they're also transcribed. The audio recording will be on the website. The website you're probably familiar with; you've already had access to it. A *Hansard* transcript will be available in a few days as well.

Mr. Golka: Do you have just one map right now? That's the map that's current. Do you have a variety of different maps you're going to show?

The Chair: Well, what map do you want to see?

Mr. Golka: Have you figured out, using your . . .

The Chair: We're in the figuring stage. We haven't designed any new boundaries.

Aaron, can you put up the map of the current riding? It's up on the wall, but we'll also put it up on the screen.

That would be our reference point. If you want to have a conversation about changing the boundaries, we want to hear you.

Mr. Golka: One thing I'd like to talk about is that between Camrose and Drumheller: it's divided by a river. Now, maybe 50 years ago a river was more important, but I think you need to start dividing by roadways, major roads, instead of rivers. It doesn't really matter if you have a county that is in two or three different areas. For example, I live in the Camrose area, but there's a river. I live here, and a half a mile across is the river, and then I have land on both areas.

The Chair: When you say the river, do you mean Battle River?

Mr. Golka: Battle River. Sorry.

Anyway, having your land cut off by even two counties is very confusing because of the river. If you have a half section of land and part of it is in the county of Flagstaff and part is in the MD of Provost, it's very difficult to get stuff done. What I'm saying is, instead of having the Battle River cutting off Camrose and Drumheller, pick a road, pick 872, or pick an area, and do it more by roads than rivers.

The Chair: You're talking about a township road, I assume.

Mr. Golka: A township road, yeah, like 872 or 599 or any of the major roads like highway 12. Right now I have Nate on one side and I have Jackie Lovely on the other side, and I have land on both sides, so it's very difficult to work with these people. You're better off to have more straight-cut lines than a river cutting divisions.

The Chair: So you're talking about the northern border.

Mr. Golka: The northern border, yes. Right now if you look at the northern border, it's between Camrose and Drumheller, and the Battle River is the dividing line.

The Chair: The bulk of the boundary.

Mr. Golka: But if you went across, say, highway 53 and cut it off 53 to 872 and went up and took that out, I think it's a lot less confusing.

The Chair: Aaron, is there any way we can get the north riding up on the screen? What number is that?

Mrs. Samson: Fifty-three.

The Chair: Fifty-three?

Okay. Sir, if you want to go up to the screen and just show us.

Mr. Golka: Going across and then, see, Hardisty – that's where I'm from – is stuck between Nate here. People have land on both sides. If you had to cut off 53 to 872 and then went up this using a road, like, here it's not bad. They're using township lines and stuff. It makes it cleaner is what I'm trying to say, instead of having a river divide boundaries. Even counties and everything, I think there's a lot. Yeah. Square it up, basically, is what I'm saying.

The Chair: Okay. So 53 would be the complete northern boundary. Is that what you're saying?

Mr. Golka: Yeah. You could have 53 as a northern boundary, and then you could have 872 up, and then that cuts – or you could even come over if you wanted to make it bigger. You could come to 36 and go over, depending on population. I mean, you're still going to have to deal with how many people are in our area. But what I would say is: 53 over, 872 up, and then you could go up. I guess it's 870.

The Chair: Do you have any idea as to villages and towns that would be added?

Mr. Golka: Well, Hardisty would be added to Drumheller, then.

The Chair: Yeah. Okay.

Okay. I've been monopolizing things, so other commissioners will have some questions. Go ahead, Julian.

Dr. Martin: Thank you, Judge. Thank you, Brian, for – I didn't catch your last name.

Mr. Golka: Golka.

Dr. Martin: Okay. Well, sir, I like the whole concept, and I want to press you further on this general concept of following road lines. You know what? My last visit to Drumheller was by canoe. I went on a real nice paddle down the Red Deer. It really hadn't occurred to me that for a long time, I guess, the boundary straddles the river. It goes to the west side of the river, which is kind of a precedent because, as you had alluded to, people think in terms of the river as being the boundary. Here's a clear instance where it hasn't been for an awful long time, I think.

I wanted to press you further on what could be done a bit north of Drumheller. As you know, Drumheller has not had a growing population, so we as a commission struggle to keep these things more or less in balance, right? I wonder, then, given your notion that the roadways are more important than the river in this instance: what do you think about a notion of going to the west flank of the river against Stettler or against Camrose itself?

Mr. Golka: Yeah. I mean . . .

Dr. Martin: Would the same logic apply? I mean, you know the ground. I don't, but I just think that the principle is very interesting.

Mr. Golka: The principle of trying to keep away from using the river as a boundary because then it cuts people's lands in half. You know, it's like counties. We have the same problem with the county of Flagstaff and the MD of Provost. It cuts in half, and then of course there's land that's taxed differently on both sides.

Dr. Martin: But we have no control over that.

Mr. Golka: You have no control over that, but I'm trying to say that if you started with electoral boundaries like that, then maybe these other people will follow. I'm just saying that it makes life a little easier for people because they're not having to jump across the river to – like, if my land is on one side and I lived on the other side, well, I'd be in Drumheller. I'm basically right on the boundary. I'd rather have it more defined by roads than rivers is what I'm saying.

Dr. Martin: Can I – indulge me – ask one more question? To give a more concrete example, has Alix got more to do with Stettler than it has to do with Red Deer?

Mr. Golka: Yeah, but, like, Hardisty has got more to do with Provost than it does with Camrose.

1:50

Dr. Martin: Okay. But it's just, again, an instance of: if you move that boundary, I mean, are you doing violence to some people's sense of how their property works?

Mr. Golka: Well, that's what I'm saying. If you move the boundary off the river to a more defined road system with a major road – like, 872 is a good one because it's a major, and 53 is a major. Those are fairly definitive roads, and I think it makes it more clean.

Dr. Martin: Well, it does that. Thank you.

Mr. Golka: Yeah.

Mr. Clark: All right. Thank you. I appreciate you coming. It's really one thing to look at it on a map, and it's another to talk to someone who literally knows the lay of the land, right? The literal lay of the land.

I'm curious about Hardisty itself. What is the trading relationship with Hardisty sort of up and down highway 13? Like, does it belong – I think you just sort of said something that triggered me here a little bit. Do the people in Hardisty or that whole area look a little west towards Camrose? Do you they look a little east towards – where is their sort of natural trading area, natural kind of shopping, family, whatever?

Mr. Golka: Have you ever been to Hardisty?

Mr. Clark: I have. I've seen the tanks. Yeah.

Mr. Golka: What happens in Hardisty, for people that don't know: 4 million barrels of oil leave there every day to go to the U.S. We create \$83 billion worth of economic value to Canada. We trade everywhere. We have people from Provost, Lloydminster, Camrose, Edmonton, Calgary, Red Deer; you name it. It comes to Hardisty.

Mr. Clark: So it kind of belongs anywhere. What we've heard in some of these, especially ones that are fairly close to a boundary one way or the other, is something similar to what we've heard from you: you know, this place really doesn't belong with those places it's lumped with; it actually belongs with these places, right? We always know that this place orients east or west or north or whatever, but what you're saying is that Hardisty is sort of the United Nations of this whole thing. It's sort of with everybody. So if we were to move a boundary one way or the other in Hardisty, it's not going to cause, in your opinion anyway – I'm not going to put words in your mouth – a lot of upset.

Mr. Golka: A big problem? No.

Mr. Clark: Okay. That's really, really helpful. Thanks.

The Chair: Roughly, do you know the population there?

Mr. Golka: In Hardisty?

The Chair: Yeah.

Mr. Golka: There are 550 people that live in town. There are another 250 that live in acreages and stuff around.

The Chair: What about the – those are permanent people?

Mr. Golka: Yes. We can have them anywhere, if you want to talk about the shadow ...

The Chair: Yes. That's the word I was looking for. Thank you.

Mr. Golka: ... from 500 to 2,000, all depending on what's going on.

The Chair: Okay.
Any questions?

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. Yeah. I just have – I don't know if you can shed a lot of light on this, but one of the issues that we're tasked with, as the chair alluded to, is that we need the population. The mean number is 55,000, and we can go plus or minus 25 per cent either way on that. The Drumheller-Stettler riding, with the 2024 StatsCan number, is sitting at 41,600. It is just about at the lowest mark of the 55,000. I think one of the things we're hoping to hear today would be that the riding is quite large, but we need more population in it because we're looking for that fair representation for the voters. So I like the idea of Hardisty, but quite frankly 500 people isn't going to solve the problem.

Mr. Golka: I agree a hundred per cent with that, but the unfortunate part about east-central Alberta: you got to go a long ways. Like, you get over in the Oyen area and Acadia, and there's nobody there.

Mrs. Samson: I know.

Mr. Golka: So you'd have to go north. You'd have to go into Garth's riding a little bit to get Wainwright, Irma, you know.

The Chair: Can you give the people's full names?

Mr. Golka: Oh, sorry. Garth Rowswell.

The Chair: Okay. And that's the Camrose riding?

Mr. Golka: No. Jackie Lovely is the Camrose riding. Garth Rowswell is Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright. Yeah.

Mrs. Samson: So moving north.

Mr. Golka: Yeah. Moving north is probably your only – see, I was thinking, depending on where you have to go to do new boundaries, maybe Drumheller would be better off going in a new area or in the south because it's a long way. For me to drive, it was two, two and a half hours to get here, so it's a long ways across. If you go more north, maybe – I don't know. I don't envy your guys' jobs, put it like that. I mean, you've got a tightrope to walk.

The Chair: So are you saying that from Hardisty to Drum is two and a half hours?

Mr. Golka: Yeah, it was two hours to here.

Mrs. Samson: There's no straight shot on this on your . . .

Mr. Golka: No. You go over 53 – yeah. I know.

Dr. Martin: It's – what? – an hour and a half to Stettler?

Mr. Golka: An hour and 10 to Stettler. Yeah.

That's the trick. If you go a little bit north, you're going to get more people from the Irma, Wainwright area, but then you've got to do something for that riding, too.

Mrs. Samson: The ripple effects keep going.

Mr. Golka: Yeah. I'm also on Damien Kurek's board of directors, which is Battle River-Crowfoot. It takes him three tanks of gas and three days to get across his riding – it's so big – which is the same riding as Drumheller.

It is a problem, but maybe going north on our end and trying to take Drumheller, so they get closer to the people that – I don't know. Every time I talk about Drumheller, people say, "Well, we more associate with Calgary" whereas we associate with Wainwright, Irma, Provost. A lot of stuff comes from Provost to our area.

That's the thing. Maybe going to 14 and over, but then you might have to go more north. Lloydminster is growing quite dramatically, so that'll help out that area. Vegreville and Vermilion are doing not bad. Hardisty is about the only one that's really growing in the county of Flagstaff. It's about the only community that's growing. They're all losing. County of Flagstaff, between the census they've had: we've lost 300 people.

Mrs. Samson: That's significant.

Mr. Golka: That's big. Hardisty is the only town that grew at all, and they will continue to grow depending on what happens in the next – could we have the ability to grow?

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: John?

Mr. Evans: No questions. Thank you.

The Chair: Any rough estimate if we were to take highway 53 as largely the northern border and then cut up – 872 or 870?

Mr. Golka: 872, yes.

The Chair: Which includes Hardisty. Do you have a rough estimate? Would that be 1,500 people, maybe?

Mr. Golka: Probably, yeah.

Mrs. Samson: You could get Forestburg, too.

Mr. Golka: You could get Forestburg as part of that. You get Alliance that comes in there, Galahad. There are a few little small towns.

The Chair: And then Camrose loses a little bit there.

Mr. Golka: They lose a little bit, yeah.

The Chair: Have you had any conversation with people in that riding?

Mr. Golka: I'm on the Camrose EDA, so yes.

The Chair: Okay, so tell us about pushing their border out north.

Mr. Golka: I don't know. See, it used to be Wetaskiwin-Camrose back in the day. We used to be with Wainwright, Hardisty-Wainwright, and then Wetaskiwin-Camrose had their boundaries there, but now they've moved.

Camrose is growing, too, of course. Tofield is growing, which is in that area. Bashaw: I'm not so sure about what's happening there. I don't know if you split the difference with, you know, going toward Ponoka more or even up in that Hay Lakes area.

The Chair: What if we just went and used Highway 13 up to Camrose and didn't take in any of Camrose?

Mr. Golka: Yeah. You could do that, too. Or you could go up 36. You could go up 855 to Daysland. It gets big, but then Camrose starts to lose. But Camrose, if you cut it off, they could take some of the stuff lower. Maybe it should be Camrose-Drumheller.

Mrs. Samson: That would be huge. A huge riding.

Dr. Martin: How about going west from Camrose to Bittern Lake? Just take it back north-south, back up near New Sarepta, perhaps. Anyway, that north side of the road on the west side of the current boundary: add that to the Camrose division. It would give them a bunch more people, and it sort of extends the thought that we were having. These would be the west flank of the Red Deer River, so that might work, too.

2:00

Mr. Golka: Yeah. And that's probably more . . .

Dr. Martin: As long as it's along a known range road in this case.

Mr. Golka: You know, the people in Bashaw and Camrose maybe are more suitable. They're more – I don't know. Like, Camrose is, of course, more retirement, and they do have the farming there, which is background. The big thing with Hardisty, the area, Provost and Wainwright and so on: we have a lot in common with that area, more than we do – we have more in common with the east than we do with the west. A lot of kids play hockey. They go to the east, you know, instead of the west or the north to Irma.

The Chair: But you would acknowledge and recognize that no matter what happens, these ridings are going to get bigger geographically.

Mr. Golka: Well, of course. They have to because we don't have the people.

The Chair: Yeah. Fair. And the rural are going to have to really – okay.

Mr. Golka: Yeah. It's a different ball of wax than being in downtown Edmonton on the street corner. You could see all your constituency in half an hour sitting at a Starbucks. But in rural Alberta you get in your vehicle, and you drive.

The Chair: Just to give you an idea, sir, if we combined Drumheller-Stettler and Camrose, just for a thought experiment, that would be 87,000 people. That's about what Edmonton-Ellerslie is right now in terms of population.

Mr. Golka: Yeah. Oh, I know. I realize it.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Golka: I realize the problem you have. Yes. Believe me, I door-knocked in some of those city ridings this year, so, yeah, I

know where you guys – it's not easy. That's why I'm here trying to help in my way, I guess.

The Chair: We're also tasked with naming the ridings, but I think it'll be relatively easy once we figure out the boundaries. In this one it's no catchy name. It'll just be the major centres, likely.

Mr. Golka: Yeah. Exactly.

The Chair: Yeah. Okay.

Other questions or conversation? I mean, we've got time.

Mr. Golka: Any other questions?

The Chair: Okay. Any other presenters? Adrian Zinck.

Okay. Well, thank you very much, Brian, and please stay to hear the rest of the conversation because we may end up bringing more people in.

Mr. Zinck, come forward, please.

Mr. Zinck: Yeah. My name is Adrian Zinck. I'm just going to follow up with what Brian said. I wanted to kind of second his comments. When you made reference – I'm in the Camrose constituency as well and have an acreage in Hardisty.

If you were going to move Hardisty into Drumheller per se and if Camrose was going to make a gain to pick up any slack, I want to make a follow-up point to Dr. Martin here. If you wanted to tailor Camrose off the Battle River-Crowfoot federal riding for boundaries, yeah, you can move Camrose west to the village of Bittern Lake, which would then – you could still keep it coming down highway 21 to Bashaw like it is, but you could move it over, I guess. Then going north, if you were going to go up north on 21, we would go up north to, say, New Sarepta and then come across . . .

Dr. Martin: Along with the railway.

Mr. Zinck: . . . with the railway, exactly, and then use that kind of to pick up the east end cut-off of Hardisty if you were going to move Hardisty in wherever the boundary cut-off would be between Killam and Hardisty, for an example. You could move, balance it off by taking the western end of Camrose by going out to Bittern Lake, which now would be in Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin. But then I don't know how their population looks on that side.

Yeah. Going back to prior to the last boundary change, we were Wetaskiwin-Camrose, right? I do believe that the way it's set up now does work better for everybody, Camrose being separate from the Wetaskiwin riding. But, you know, if you were to look at the Battle, the Bittern Lake hamlet or the little village there, and then follow it up highway 21 north to, say, New Sarepta, the Hay Lakes area, you could use that as a pick-up for a few extra numbers in population.

The Chair: Do you know what region – oh, it's in Wetaskiwin.

Mr. Zinck: No. New Sarepta right now would be Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin, I believe. They kind of dog wag over there in a weird fashion. Right now the boundary comes to highway 21. We actually go on highway 21 south to the east, and then they're on the west, and then we go up highway 21 north to – and by then it kind of veers off again going east, and it runs in through Tofield, Kingman area. If you brought that out and, much as Brian was saying, using a roadway, if you used highway 21 as a boundary line – but then I guess that wouldn't take in Bittern Lake, but it would kind of alleviate a few pieces without making a huge ripple effect off everybody else.

Dr. Martin: We don't need to worry about the details; we're just working with a big crayon right now. The concept is, I think, the thing, and I appreciate your thoughts about that. We've got clever people among us who could work out the population numbers without asking us to build a footprint.

Mr. Zinck: Right. Because then the Camrose county border line, again, is just west of Bittern Lake, so that would be another, right?

Dr. Martin: That sounds more and more plausible.

Mr. Zinck: I just kind of never even thought of this side of it until you guys brought up the map.

Dr. Martin: Well, like I was saying before, you see, Drumheller is both sides of the river. I mean, that precedent was set a very long time ago. Now we're in a circumstance where population figures become significant issues, so we've got to revisit that precedent and see if we can work with it in a way that isn't too stupid.

Mr. Zinck: I don't know what our exact population is in the city of Camrose, but if you were to cut it off on the eastern end, like you were talking with Brian, we could easily make up those gains, or it would probably balance it out on the western side of the riding boundary.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

The Chair: Did you have a question?

Mrs. Samson: I have a question with regard – and this is a question that we're faced with in other ridings. What's your opinion when you get cities but they're not even the mid-size cities – they're cities, but they're the smaller size, so they're somewhere between 10,000 and 20,000 – and you combine, for example, Camrose and Wetaskiwin together? How do you feel about the MLA representing not only a large rural area but, too, what I would consider to be small urban areas?

Mr. Zinck: Well, speaking from past experience when we had it in the last go-around prior to where it is now, I think this system works much better, having an MLA focusing on a main – if you want to call Camrose more urban than what it would be rural, they would have Camrose as the main urban centre point and then branching off to the smaller communities. I think that is much more of an advantage over having Camrose and, say, Wetaskiwin, right?

Mrs. Samson: Right.

Mr. Zinck: Even though they're about 40 kilometres apart, they both have very different needs. The way we have it set up now, being separate from Wetaskiwin or being separate from another major city: I think that it works. I think we have fair representation that way.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. That's what I was looking for. I was guessing because my own riding, the town of Sylvan Lake, at 17,000, is the largest centre, and when there are distances between two large centres but only one MLA, that's a different problem.

Mr. Zinck: Right. And I think that if you take Camrose, you can still have Camrose and have proper representation going to Tofield because Tofield is, again, much smaller than what Camrose would be, if you're using it as an example, whereas prior, when we were Camrose-Wetaskiwin, it always seemed like we were competing with each other.

2:10

Mrs. Samson: Yes, I get what you're saying.

Mr. Zinck: If that makes sense.

Mrs. Samson: That's why I'd like to know. I was speculating on that. I didn't know for sure, so thank you.

Mr. Zinck: Right. Again, if we're all Camrose city and Camrose county, it seems to flow better as opposed to being separate to Wetaskiwin county. And I'm not using that to be critical to Wetaskiwin, but just basing it off facts from the way it was to what we have now, I think it's a much better split.

Mrs. Samson: Right. Thank you.

The Chair: Was it you or Brian that mentioned the federal electoral district?

Mr. Zinck: We were both involved when the federal electoral district split up.

The Chair: Okay. So you know the geography of that riding?

Mr. Zinck: Correct. Massive.

The Chair: Yeah. Okay. Would a realignment of this be about 50 to 55 per cent of massive? It might be getting up there, right?

Mr. Zinck: It'd be getting up there. It just depends, I guess, on what you're looking at. Rural folks are used to driving. It's nothing for us to jump in our vehicle and drive two hours. Like, it was two hours to get here from Camrose. Same as Brian; two hours.

The Chair: Right.

Mr. Zinck: We're going to Three Hills when we leave here for another. I guess we're used to driving because being in the rural setting, that's what we've done. If we wanted to go anywhere, we jumped in our vehicles and we drove, right? But, again, with these smaller towns getting smaller, the population is not here, so we have to be cognizant that we're going to have to drive.

The Chair: Prepared to drive. Yeah. Okay.

Mr. Zinck: Unlike in Edmonton, where you just walk to where you need to go.

The Chair: Okay. Well, this has been most helpful.
Any other questions or conversation?

Mr. Clark: I appreciate that you guys see that this is a challenging endeavour, but it makes it so much better for us to have people who are actually from the communities offering, like, really thoughtful input. I think in the public conversation, certainly online but even in person, it often isn't like this.

Mr. Zinck: No.

Mr. Clark: I just really appreciate you coming out and making the trip and sharing your knowledge about your community. It makes a huge difference. It really helps.

Mr. Zinck: And it's a tough task for you guys. I mean, as much as I'd hate to see Hardisty go from Camrose, you know, for an example, we have to be realistic and look at the big picture. We can't be focused on one certain subject in front of us.

The Chair: Well, thank you for your realism.

One other thing I can point out. As I said at the beginning, we're going to do an interim report, which we'll have filed by late October. Then you will see what we've come up with across the province. You mentioned driving. We'd be interested in your feedback on that first report, that interim report, but you're probably going to have to come to Calgary to give us the feedback because we can't go to all these smaller centres for the next stage, or we'll do it online because it's going to be smack dab in the middle of winter. So watch for that and take a look at what we've done and, before you yell and scream at us, you know, book a meeting for the second public hearing. We'll be interested in carrying on this conversation.

Mr. Zinck: We appreciate that.

Just for closing, like, if you were going to get away from the river as a boundary line out on the east, I think I would strongly encourage looking at the Camrose county line as a pick-up – if we were to change, right? – because it seems like it works really well on the federal side. We just came through a federal election. We were on the road lots, and it worked really well with that concept.

The Chair: Okay.

Brian, anything you want to add as a result of this?

Mr. Golka: No. If you want to know anything else, feel free to call us or get a hold of us.

The Chair: Yeah.

Mr. Golka: We're out in the public all the time, with our involvement in the EDAs that we go to.

The Chair: No one said anything about municipal or county politicians and contact. Any concerns, you know, in terms of the challenge of the MLA?

Mr. Golka: I don't think so. If you've got a split county, where it's half and half – like, I know some guys have three MLAs in one county because of the way it worked out.

The Chair: Yeah. Right.

Mr. Golka: I don't seem to think it's a big deal.

The Chair: So you've adjusted, or they can adjust. In fact, three voices may be better than one.

Mr. Golka: Well, a guy told me the other day, here – we were talking about, you know: if you have three voices at the provincial level, that's three voices versus one. It's just like these cities that are, like, say, Medicine Hat: wants to have one MLA. But why have one MLA there? If you've got two there, then you get two voices at the table, not one, and I thought, well, that was very interesting.

The Chair: Yeah. We'll hear from them on Friday.

Mr. Golka: If you have to split some of these bigger cities, well, like Calgary: there's a bunch of them there, right? If you split them up a little bit, then there's, I think, more hope.

Dr. Martin: That's a really interesting point, you know. We've heard MLAs saying: well, you know, I've got nine counties, and I go to meetings, and all in all, there are 128 councillors or reeves or mayors and whatnot, and it's all very confusing. But then on the flip side, all those people have a voice that they could talk to, so it cuts both ways, I think. You have richer conversations about the fine,

granular business of the day, but if there were two MLAs, they'd have two voices as advocates.

Mr. Golka: At the table. Yeah. You've got two voices now at the big table in Edmonton.

Dr. Martin: Yeah.

Mr. Golka: It makes sense to me to have that.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you very much.

Mr. Zinck: Thank you. You're welcome.

Just one final comment going back to the two cities. I do think that we should stay away from combining two larger urban centres in one riding because I feel that we are in a much better place the way it is now as opposed to when Camrose and Wetaskiwin were merged together.

The Chair: For example, you mean large urban centres being Camrose and Wetaskiwin together.

Mr. Zinck: Yeah. I guess I know from past history, knowing both ridings really well, that they both seem to work better separated, apart than what they did under one boundary.

Thank you, guys.

Mr. Golka: Yeah. They both have different interests, is the other thing, too. Like, they both have different agendas.

Mrs. Samson: Yeah. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you so much for coming and presenting. Safe travels. Having driven up here just this afternoon, I get a sense of the vastness of this place.

Mr. Zinck: I just flew in from Nova Scotia this morning.

Mr. Clark: Are you headed to B.C. tonight? You'll see the whole country.

Dr. Martin: You were in Nova Scotia?

Mr. Zinck: I flew out on Thursday. I only came back this morning. Yeah.

Dr. Martin: Wow. You're a masochist. That's nasty. Unless you flew first class, it'd be all right.

Mr. Zinck: No. No.

Dr. Martin: Tough man.

The Chair: Okay. Well, we'll adjourn this hearing. We'll stay around in case other – there were a couple of other people that had signed up, and they may come later. We'll reconvene if they show up, so we'll stay here for the next hour or so.

[The commission deliberated]

[The hearing adjourned at 3:01 p.m.]



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings

Westlock

Wednesday, June 4, 2025
1:02 p.m.

Transcript No. 9

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission

Justice Dallas K. Miller, Chair

Greg Clark

John D. Evans, KC

Julian Martin

Susan Samson

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Clerk Assistant and Executive Director of
Parliamentary Services

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Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Westlock

Public Participants

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Karen Doidge
Nick Gelych, Deputy Reeve, County of Lac Ste. Anne
Heather Stocking
Landen Tischer
Glenn van Dijken, MLA, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock

1:02 p.m.

Wednesday, June 4, 2025

[Justice Miller in the chair]

The Chair: Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to the Electoral Boundaries Commission afternoon hearing. We're happy to be in Westlock. This is our third day of the week, just having left Edmonton. Glad to be out here. Thank you to everyone for coming, and a special thank you to those of you who are going to be presenting.

By way of introduction, my name is Justice Dallas Miller. I'm the chairman of the commission, and I would like to briefly introduce you to the other commission members. For full bios please go to our website, which is abebc.ca. Check with Aaron before you leave if you are not sure what the website is.

First of all, to my immediate left is Susan Samson, a long-time resident of Sylvan Lake. By the way, I'm from Lethbridge. We consider Sylvan Lake central Alberta. Susan is an experienced municipal politician and served as a council member and mayor in the town of Sylvan Lake. She has volunteered in her community for quite some time and for that was recognized as citizen of the year and is a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II jubilee medal.

Next to Susan is John Evans, KC, a lawyer with a firm in southern Alberta known as Stringam. John conducts trials throughout the province, and his legal ability has been recognized by Executive Council by way of being awarded the King's Counsel, or KC, designation. John also volunteers as a member of the Alberta Judicial Nominating Committee.

To my immediate right is Dr. Julian Martin. Dr. Martin is a retired history professor from the University of Alberta. He hails from Sherwood Park, and he is the pulse of the capital city region for us. Julian has volunteered on committees throughout his career and currently serves on the Surface Rights Board and Land Compensation Board, and we're glad to have his experience and wisdom on the commission.

At the end of the table is Greg Clark, an entrepreneur and consultant in the area of information and knowledge management. Greg is a businessman and consults widely in the area of board governance. He holds an MBA and a designation from the Institute of Corporate Directors. Greg has also served in the Legislature for a term, representing Calgary-Elbow, and his wisdom and experience in that area are very important.

As you probably are aware, we are an independent body established by the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to fulfill the requirements that are set out in the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act. Every eight to 10 years it's the law in Alberta that the boundaries must be examined and looked at for the express purpose of redistribution.

In this current round of commission hearings we've got two basic tasks. We have many tasks, but the two main ones are to find where the two new electoral districts should be located because the legislation has expanded the Legislative Assembly from 87 to 89 seats. That's one of our main tasks. In order to give you some sense of the timeline we have – and this is all set out in the legislation – we were appointed as a commission by the Speaker of the Legislature in late March. Once we are appointed, the clock starts ticking, in a sense, for us. Our timetable is set out starting from the time of our appointment.

In April we met as a commission a couple of times to discuss process, discuss scheduling, dates, things like that. Then in late May we started our public hearings in southwestern Alberta. This week we're in Edmonton, here, St. Paul. Next week we go through central Alberta, and the following week we are in the north in Fort McMurray, Peace River, et cetera.

After our public hearings, which will end in late June, our task is to write a report based on our legislative mandate, based on the

population of Alberta, based on what we've heard in the public hearings, and other factors in the legislation. That report will be filed with the Speaker of the Legislature, it will be gazetted, and it will be available to the public. It's at that time that you will have something clear in terms of what the commission's thinking is as a result of this series of public hearings and reviewing the population statistics and boundaries, et cetera.

Once our interim report is filed with the Speaker, we will then have a second round of public hearings. I'm not sure we will be back in all the same places, but we will cover the province as best we can. Because it's winter, when we are doing the second round, we may chicken out and do some virtual hearings that way so we don't have to travel on Alberta's winter, January and February, roads. That is unclear yet. We haven't decided that, but we will have in-person meetings and a combination of virtual hearings.

That gives you a sense of our timeline. Of course, each electoral district in Alberta – currently there are 87 – elects one Member of the Legislative Assembly. To give you a sense of perspective and what has happened and what the last two elections have been operating on, in 2017 the previous Electoral Boundaries Commission gave a report, and their report was based on the numbers you see on the graph before you, just over 4 million people.

In 2017 that population of 4,062,606 was extrapolated over 87 constituencies and resulted in that perfect average number of 46,697. In Canada and in Alberta we do not operate on the system of one person, one vote. Rather, we operate on the basis of effective representation. That's terminology out of the legislation and out of the case law that has been governing Canadian elections since the advancements and the signing of the Charter of Rights and Freedom.

That was the target zone for 2017's report, 35,000 people per riding to a maximum of just over 58,000. For our commission the statistics or the population that we will be relying on is 4,888,723. That figure arrived as a result of relying on the 2021 national census affecting Alberta, and that figure is regularly updated by the Alberta Treasury Board Office of Statistics and Information such that we've calculated and we've arrived at the conclusion that the figures that we're going to rely on are the figures verified by the province as of July 2024. So that's that figure, 4.88 million.

1:10

Now, you've probably heard news reports that Alberta's population may be even higher than that, and it may very well be, but ascertaining population statistics is somewhat of an art as much as it is a science, and we have made the decision to use the figures that are verified as of July 2024 by the provincial Treasury Board. Of course, the population has increased dramatically since 2017, and that population growth is not spread evenly across the province. It's located in the two major cities, Calgary and Edmonton, but our task as a boundary commission is to hear from Albertans, take the information we hear from the presentations, the data, and the written submissions that we received, and come up with a recommended electoral map that provides for effective representation.

In doing that work and coming up with our report, we will be relying on, as I said, the presentations, but we'll also be guided by the terms in the legislation. We will be looking at the relative sparsity and density of population and the rate of growth in areas. We will be considering what's come to be known as community interest, including boundaries of municipalities, regional and rural communities, Indian reserves, and Métis settlements.

We'll also factor in geographic features. Geographic features can be prominent and helpful for electoral boundaries, especially in areas outside the large urban communities. Means of communication and transportation routes across the province will also play a factor in determining electoral boundaries. Our goal is to create understandable

and clear boundaries. We also have the ability to incorporate and bring into effect or bring into our process other factors that we consider appropriate in terms of drawing the boundaries and creating new boundaries.

At this stage, we want to hear from you. We publicized. We're glad to see at least five or six people signed up, and if you haven't signed up and if you're here just viewing, we may have some time to see if you voluntarily at the end want to make a presentation.

By the way, I failed to introduce the clerk of our commission, Aaron Roth. If you have a written submission and you want us to get a copy of it, just leave a copy with him, and he'll make sure we get it.

If we go to the list, the first presenter is Glenn van Dijken. Typically, we limit the presentations to seven minutes. I don't think we're going to have a problem with time this afternoon, so we're flexible. Mr. van Dijken, we're not going to shut your mic off at the seven-minute mark. So you don't have to worry.

Mr. van Dijken: Good. Thank you, and welcome to the true centre of Alberta. If you travel just, well, about three-quarters of an hour to the west, the geographical centre of Alberta is just west of Fort Assiniboine, close by Swan Hills, and I know Speaker Kowalski made a huge effort to ensure that Albertans understood that this is the centre of Alberta.

Welcome, and thank you for taking the time to come to Westlock. Welcome to the constituency of Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock. I've had the honour of representing the people in this region for, now, 10 years, initially with the constituency of Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock, and over the last six years, it's been the constituency of Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

What I'm going to try: I know I put in a written submission as well, but what I hope to try and do here today is try and help the commission understand the struggle we have as rural MLAs to actually do effective representation over sparsely populated areas in large geographical areas. It is about effective representation. Our constitution has that outlined.

Rural MLAs spend a considerable amount of time on the road, and it becomes very difficult over such large areas to remain visible and accessible. This riding: if you travel two hours to the east, you'll get to the eastern boundary, Mallaig. I was privileged to speak at the graduating class of 2025 in the Mallaig school this past weekend. Yes, it's a little over two hours from my home to there, and it makes it very difficult to participate in other events in the constituency when four and a half hours out of the day is, essentially, driving. So this is one of the areas of challenge for a rural MLA, the amount of time we spend on the road and trying to make personal contact with constituents.

The other complexity that I would suggest is that our riding, this riding of Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock, consists of parts of nine different counties. We have seven towns. We have a number of villages. I think there are four villages, nine summer villages, 40 hamlets. These are all municipalities with elected representatives that the MLA is charged with engaging with. I believe in just the counties and towns alone I have 128 elected representatives that I engage with. Most of that engagement we try and do through the mayors and reeves because it just becomes very difficult to do it in a way that everybody stays on the same page. When the councillor phones me or e-mails me with a concern, I try and make sure that the mayors are also aware of the concern that's being brought forward to the MLA.

Another area of elected governance that we as MLAs oversee and that is part of the education file that the province has jurisdiction in, is that I have seven school divisions within my riding. Some of those school divisions I only have one of their schools, but it's a

reality that I do have to get to know those trustees and those boards and get to understand what their needs are as well, what's working for them, and what's not working for them. That just adds to the extra burden that a rural MLA faces. Many of my urban colleagues, with their elected representation, the elected representative that they deal with – we have more MLAs in the city of Edmonton and the city of Calgary than we have actually councillors. So some of my colleagues from the large urban areas will share councillors. Same thing. They primarily deal with two school boards. Some might deal with an extra charter school or an independent school board as well. This is where I believe that effective representation starts to dwindle, when so many of the decisions are made based off population base.

Another area of engagement that a rural MLA is charged with is essentially being on the front lines of our industry, our four main industries: agriculture, energy, forestry, and tourism. The vast majority of these industries and their footprint in this province happen in rural Alberta. The concerns that come forward from, say, our ag industry, our forestry industry, and our energy industry is that as rural MLAs we are a lot of the time the first line of communication that they have towards government. It is our job to be that first point of contact for local businesses, and we're expected to advocate regularly at all levels of government. That ongoing engagement adds substantially to the workload of rural MLAs.

1:20

I guess that the primary concern I have is that when the decision-making is based largely off population base, it becomes very obvious that for effective representation to happen in a heavily populated area versus a sparsely populated area, it becomes very hard for the individuals that are representing sparsely populated areas to provide effective representation. I think what I will say is that the legislative flexibility does exist to ensure that we can find effective representation in this province. I would encourage the commission to fully utilize the variance that section 15(2) speaks to in the ability to have for electoral ridings, and I would suggest that largely that will be northern areas because we are very sparsely populated the further north we go.

But to fully utilize the opportunity to land in that 25 per cent to 50 per cent population base for four ridings in the province, I would also submit that the flexibility is there to provide effective representation throughout Alberta both in large urban and sparsely populated rural. The ability to have a variance of 25 per cent below in what I consider real rural – that's large geographical areas, sparsely populated areas – regions. In order to accomplish effective representation, there will need to be a consideration for that 25 per cent below. You know, it's outlined in the act, the reasons for that.

I think it's important for the commission to recognize that when we're talking about regions like Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock, Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul, West Yellowhead, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, even when you have to have all of these names just to identify one riding, it indicates that possibly that riding is much larger than it should be in order to ensure effective representation.

One other item I will bring into the conversation – and I know the commission is not making decisions based off the elector numbers, eligible voters, but it struck me in the last election that our riding of Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock had more eligible voters than many of the large urban ridings, whether you go to Calgary or to Edmonton. Currently, in May of 2025, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock has more eligible voters in this riding than 14 out of 20 Edmonton ridings, and this riding has more eligible voters than seven out of the Calgary ridings, which to me is somewhat of an

indication that we're a little bit out of balance on how we distribute when we strictly look at population.

Now, the legislation doesn't allow you to take that into consideration, but I do want you to recognize that it is an indicator that you could utilize to give you a better understanding of the dynamics within rural – real rural – versus large urban. I think where I will land here is, I think my final appeal to you is: rural Alberta and rural Albertans deserve fair and effective representation, not just numeric parity. The cumulative burden of geography, industry engagement, municipal complexity, and constituent casework must be fully acknowledged. Rural Albertans are not asking for special treatment. We are asking for realistic and workable representation.

This commission has the opportunity and the legislative authority, I might add, to ensure flexible and just boundaries in sparsely populated areas such as this region. We are in the largest town in my riding: about 5,000 people in the town of Westlock. In order to give good representation for all rural Albertans, I respectfully urge the commission to apply the 25 per cent to 50 per cent variance for qualifying rural ridings under section 15(2). Apply up to 25 per cent variation to sparsely populated rural ridings to ensure that effective representation is possible.

I also would submit to target urban ridings with high density to absorb up to 25 per cent more population. Some might consider that to be unfair. I would consider that to be understandable and recognizable for effective representation as outlined. Consider the unique workload, distance, and voter representation for rural MLAs when you outline the boundaries.

I know that when the last commission did their work, when the final report came out, it was significantly different than the initial report. I would urge the commission to do the work early, to come out with an initial report that will require minimal interruption, difference, before the final report.

The former MLA for Athabasca-Redwater-Sturgeon, alongside myself, when the final report came out: we were very concerned with how our ridings had hardly changed, and all of a sudden we had this riding just about four hours of driving from one side to the other. We had really no ability to change that at that time.

So thank you for your time. I really am very much appreciative of the work that you're doing. I do believe that, in order to have effective representation for rural Alberta, there is a need to utilize the legislation and utilize what's outlined in section 15 to ensure that what I call real rural – it's large areas that's sparsely populated – can find effective representation.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much. With your presentation, I'm sure there are going to be some questions of the commission. I'm going to start on our left of the table here.

Mr. Evans, any questions or comment?

Mr. Evans: What would be your proposed solution to the size of the current constituency and the difficulties that you face in representing the constituency geographically, the size that it is, with the numbers that it has? Would you pare it down even more? What would you do?

Mr. van Dijken: This constituency, in my opinion, is far larger geographically than it should be.

Mr. Evans: Okay.

Mr. van Dijken: I believe the commission – if I was in your seat, I would take a look at the large urban areas and work my way out. I would look at Edmonton centre, Calgary centre, even our mid-sized cities. I think mid-sized cities are in good position for representation, but if we take a look at Edmonton centre – the former MLA Clark would understand this – the ability to increase the population base

within the centre of Edmonton and Calgary, to draw new boundaries there and then work out from there.

1:30

I truly believe that the number – what was the number that was cited? The average population base would be about 55,000 in the centre of Edmonton and the centre of Calgary, to understand that effective representation up to 68,000 can be accomplished. That would be the starting point of how your ridings grow out from there.

I don't expect that, say, Red Deer-North or Red Deer-South should be considered as needing to be adjusted from that 55,000 mark downward. They're rural, but they're not what I would classify as "real rural," out in the sparsely populated regions. I'm not saying that all rural ridings should be targeted to be 25 per cent, but I do believe that – you know, currently I represent half of St. Paul county. I represent Swan Hills and Big Lakes county. I represent half of Lesser Slave county. In some of those boundaries to reduce the municipal workload that is required, it would be helpful for rural representation.

Mr. Evans: Let me ask you this, Glenn. Two questions. One, are you envisioning this like a series of concentric circles? We'll take Edmonton, for example. We have a circle in the core of Edmonton, whatever that looks like, and then another circle, and then we would have these series of circles in the concentric format, that would be the boundary type of a solution?

Mr. van Dijken: I'm not sure what you by concentric.

Mr. Evans: Circles within circles.

Mr. van Dijken: Yeah. No, I don't believe that that's effective. I believe that you would have Edmonton-City Centre and then you would have a number of ridings built around Edmonton-City Centre and then a number of ridings built around that, to accomplish the goal of starting to move in a direction where you can see the ability to reduce the numbers in the rural areas, the real rural areas.

Mr. Evans: Let me ask you another question, and it's on where we have a split county, for example. That county, I think you said you have two of those.

Mr. van Dijken: Yeah. I have four, actually, four of the nine.

Mr. Evans: Okay. So each of those counties would then have, really theoretically, at least two MLAs representing them.

Mr. van Dijken: Correct. Right.

Mr. Evans: Does that provide more effective or less effective representation for the county? This is just me thinking on my own without any guidance, even from Greg, but I would think you would have better representation because there would be two MLAs voicing the concerns or, you know, the agenda of that one county. Is that true?

Mr. van Dijken: No. I hear that's a possibility, but how it actually plays out really depends on who's elected in what riding. I'm going to reflect on the working relationship with the county of St. Paul in my last term. We had a resident from the county of St. Paul as our elected MLA for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul. He did the majority of my work in St. Paul county, to just be frank, because he recognized that he was right there and able to do it and be the face of our representation for the county of St. Paul.

I think where it becomes difficult is trying to provide effective representation when you have nine counties at the table. It becomes

very difficult, like, for one MLA to handle that. It's very hard to actually accomplish that representation.

Mr. Evans: It's a lot of voices.

Mr. van Dijken: I'm going to be honest. Some of the concerns are not fully represented because of the workload that's put on an individual in that circumstance. Like, MLA Piquette, he understood it as much as I understood it, that this is going to be very hard to properly represent all of these areas. So that was a concern right from day one when we saw that current map.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you

The Chair: Susan.

Mrs. Samson: Just a couple of questions. I read your written summary, and I paired it up with MLA Cyr's written summary for his comments referring to Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul. A couple of questions regarding that. The population of Athabasca, your riding, the number that we're dealing with to make decisions is 46,782. The number is plus or minus that 25. It hasn't shown any growth since the last electoral division. I see that the suggestion is to move the reserve that's located in the corner of your adjacent riding, Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul, the one that's located in the corner, the southwest corner. Can you shed more light on that reserve moving over? How do the people who live in that area feel about that?

Mr. van Dijken: I wouldn't be able to speak to the Saddle Lake reserve and their feelings towards the potential of being put to another electoral division or constituency. I would submit to you that where I'm not against that if that was to be decided, I still don't think it fixes the difficulty of effective representation. It just essentially moves a group of people that are currently represented in Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul and swaps it with a group of people that are currently represented by Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock, and I don't see that it makes a significant impact on the concern that I have, that having effective rural representation does require a shrinking geographically of these large rural ridings.

Mrs. Samson: The other follow-up to that is that also in that suggestion, between those two written submissions, was half of the county of St. Paul – like, half straddles your riding, and half straddles electoral district 51. Can you shed more light on moving that into 51?

Mr. van Dijken: I think that's perfectly reasonable, but I do believe that if it was just moving half of St. Paul county into another, it's going to put that population base significantly over. I guess the best person to talk to about effective representation in that case would be the local MLA there. They do have a larger town there with Cold Lake, so that helps to put the population base up. Yeah. You know, when the constituency was initially constructed or put forward, there was conversation with the town of Swan Hills and swapping out some of, say, the town of Swan Hills in Big Lakes county, from this riding, and to keep the population base, we would take the little piece of Westlock county above the area that is not currently in the riding. We would take on that, keep the population about the same. They actually frowned on amendments to the final report, so no work got done with that.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: While, I said, sir, I'm not sticking to the seven-minute timeline, we're approaching 30 minutes. I want every commissioner to have a chance, so one quick question from each of Julian and Mr. Clark.

Dr. Martin: Well, thank you. I'm particularly struck by the number of hamlets and school divisions and summer villages and the like. How do you arrange your schedule to maintain a respectable cycle of communication with those people?

1:40

Mr. van Dijken: Like I said earlier, most of my communication is with the mayors and reeves of the towns and counties and villages. The hamlets are largely a function of the counties. We have an understanding with the summer villages that most of the communication between the area and the MLA will be done through the counties. It's about trying to work together to actually allow that communication to happen.

There are times where we – you know, a couple of the summer villages we had some issues about five years ago with high water levels and that kind of thing, and they had to directly come to the MLA. They were working quite closely with the county on other projects, so it was felt that the best way to actually manage that side of the file was with the reeves of the counties. Most of the summer villages are to the east of us here in the Athabasca region.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

The Chair: Greg, any questions?

Mr. Clark: Thank you. Yeah. I will try to be brief. I have a lot of questions. MLA van Dijken, thank you so much for coming. Good to see you again. Yeah, I always enjoy travelling the province. It's a real privilege to be able to be here and get around. You know, one of the big, big challenges we're grappling with – and I hear you, absolutely, on the big challenge of dealing with such a large geography. There are some benefits. You're in a beautiful part of the world. We're pretty lucky to be in Alberta anyway, and there are some benefits, but I hear completely the big challenges you've got.

One of the things we have to struggle with – kind of good news, bad news, right? – is that the population of Alberta has grown enormously, and a lot of those people just come to the cities. I'm looking at the numbers of Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock. It started off in 2017 exactly on provincial average, and now it's 15 per cent below. You've sort of stayed the same; the province has just gone like this. It's stable. The challenge is that all of a sudden you just haven't changed at the same rate.

On the flip side, we've got seven or more constituencies that are more than 25 per cent over the population number. Some of them are 50 per cent over, and we don't have the ability to go the other way, right? Like you say, the 15(2): we can be below 25 per cent on a few, but we can't be above 25 per cent on any. So that really makes it a puzzle, right? Even if we're a little bit, you know, inequitable in terms of allowing for some smaller populations in rural, there are just some changes that have to happen kind of legally, right? That's a real struggle.

In that context, would it help – and I'd love for you to talk about your consistency offices and constituency staff. They do a lot of the front-line work. Do you have constituency offices in more than one spot? Even if you do, would it help if the Legislature would provide – not like it's in our remit to do this; we can't do this. We can recommend and ask and poke and prod, which previous commissions have done. I've just got a lot of time for an argument that says: you can't be everywhere. Even if you made it smaller, you still can't be everywhere. But could you do with more staff and a bigger budget to

open more offices, have more people actually in the different parts of the constituency? Would that help?

Mr. van Dijken: Okay. I will speak to that. We currently run with two full-time and one part-time staff. The constit office: we did have one in Athabasca, one in Barrhead. But it becomes difficult when the conversation is: Smoky Lake should have one. Then it seems like everybody's an hour from the constit office.

I will say that technology has made the constituencies smaller, because it's not the same, but I can do quite a few of my meetings virtually. Having the constit staff working together – we did close the Athabasca office and utilized all constit staff in the Barrhead office just because they find it works better to be together. I don't think you solve all of the issues by increasing a budget. I do believe that in order to – just take a look at the legions that we represent. I represent, I think, eight or nine legions now. On Remembrance Day we like to get around to each of them at least once in a term, but we can't. Ten years now, and I've been able to get through pretty much all except for Mallaig for their Remembrance Day ceremonies. And graduations: they all have kind of the same time frame, and you're two hours that way and you can't get to it. It does become hard. I don't think it's necessarily a budget issue. So that part of it – I like to engage but even, like, agricultural societies: we have 22 agricultural societies in the riding. It becomes a big part of advocating for your constituency, trying to ensure that your societies and not-for-profits are properly represented and able to access the services they need as well.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much, sir. I'm going to conclude with a couple of quick questions, though.

Mr. van Dijken: Okay.

The Chair: Okay. As you appreciate, we're going across the province. Two days ago we had the MLA for Edmonton-Meadows. If you look at the uppermost population figure, his constituency, I think, is about 67,000 right now. He's at the upper limit. He has a population base that probably carries seven or eight different languages than English as their first language. Small geographic area in the east part of Edmonton. But he's got a challenge, too, and it's those types of challenges we're faced with. I'm not arguing against what you said. I just hope you understand that we've got presentations all across the spectrum that way.

Having said that, if we look at the upper limit of 68,000, approximately, for MLAs – I'm not sure if you realize this – even with 89 ridings Alberta has some of the highest population per MLA, when you get to that category, in the country. Was there any discussion in caucus, that you can share, or in the House or when you drafted this legislation to move only to 89? I think there's – you know, I'm starting to see that maybe there's room for a bigger house with the population that we've got. Just very quickly if you can respond to that.

Mr. van Dijken: I think you would see that there was casual conversation. But even in the legislation that was passed there would have been conversation recorded with regard to the need to move to 89. I think the decision was largely based in the Legislature off of – I believe B.C. has the same number of MLAs.

The Chair: I think they have more. I think they have 92 or something like that. I'm not sure.

Mr. van Dijken: Okay. It was going to be – a lot of the conversations I had with colleagues was essentially, you know, that we've got to try and align ourselves with other jurisdictions and ensure that we're being responsible how that's distributed.

The Chair: Okay. A different question. You made a comment about the interim report and the final report back in 2016-17. We're fortunate. We can travel the country in beautiful weather this first go-round. I'm cognizant that after our first report and working to hear from a broad base of Albertans on that report, we're not going to be able to go to – I don't think we're going to be able to go to St. Paul, Westlock, Drumheller, all the places we're going now. As an MLA and as someone representing this riding, do you appreciate that if you want to give us feedback on the first report, you may have to do it in Edmonton, you may have to do it in a larger centre, or you may have to do it remotely?

Mr. van Dijken: Yes. What I would say is that as long as the initial report comes back in more or less the final form, it makes it a lot easier to represent. I think the frustration that we experienced in the last endeavour to do boundaries was the fact that the final report was massively different than the initial report. If it's going to be a final report, I think it would be understandable if the initial report comes out and there are minor tweaks to be done, which is kind of understood that there might have to be minor tweaks, to have that in a couple of locations. I can understand that, absolutely.

1:50

The Chair: Okay. You've caused us to think more long term on this, so thank you very much. Thank you for your presentation and your answers and the dialogue. Much appreciated.

Mr. van Dijken: Good. Thank you for the work you're doing.

The Chair: Okay. Our next presenter is Nick Gelych. Nick Gelych? I've got Nick. Who's Nick?

Mr. Gelych: Right here.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Blakeman: I'm Joe Blakeman.

The Chair: Okay. Oh, you are here. It's a tag team. Okay.

Mr. Blakeman: We represent actually Lac Ste. Anne county. I'm the reeve of Lac Ste. Anne county, and Nick is deputy reeve.

The Chair: Okay. Give us a second here, sir.
Okay. Good. We'll hear from you.

Mr. Blakeman: We're in Shane Getson's riding, Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, and our only concern would be the urban-rural mix. I think that's one thing that we don't want to lose, our rural identity, when these lines are drawn, right? A keep-Edmonton-Edmonton kind of thing. Right now I think there are five counties inside of there. We all get along. Everything is good. You know, Shane has been a great MLA. We don't have the same social and economic needs that the city people do, and I think that's what our concern would be. If we get mixed into that, the MLA's decision-making, the drive for funding to the different municipalities, and all that changes the minute that that urban mixes in there. That's probably our biggest concern.

The Chair: So keep it rural. Keep it rural. Don't bring those city folks in.

Mr. Gelych: We can go north-south. We can go west. We just don't really want to go east.

Mr. Blakeman: Yeah. It doesn't sound like there are any plans – for lack of a better term, there's nothing derogatory about the urban or the rural mix. That's not the point.

The Chair: That's what they said about you yesterday.

Mr. Blakeman: And true enough.

Yeah. I think it's more or less taking a look at it from a – you know, I was in the private industry for quite a few years, retired, then got into the municipal government side of things. When you see – how can I say? – the struggles that it is with regard to a private entity trying to get a hold of government and at the same time in the municipal sector trying to get a hold of government, there are different needs that are required at that point in time. One is a private issue that needs to be addressed, and I have a mission and I have an obligation to the shareholders.

The other one is, you know, our obligation to our ratepayers. When we start taking a look at grant funding and you take a look at the bridge files, you take a look at all – how can I say? – the assets that we have to maintain on a day-to-day basis and taking a look for additional grant dollars and then getting it confused in with the urban sector, which have totally different needs or requirements than what we do in our area. You know, you could talk about mass transit, whatever the case may be, versus a bridge file. There are two different aspects, and both require a certain need to be taken a look at.

At the same time, when you take a look at the numbers and what MLA van Dijken has said about the fact that the miles that have to be put forward and see what our MLA has to do with regard to meetings – at one point he's in St. Albert at 4 o'clock, and he's got another meeting in Edson or Entwistle at 7 – I think from a safety perspective it actually puts our MLAs at risk. Trying to put more staff in the picture is one of the questions that we heard earlier. People don't want to talk to staff. They want to talk to their MLA. That the – how can I say? That's the issue and that's the ordinance that we actually place on these MLAs, that there's a target on them and people want to talk to them personally.

I took a look at some of the discussions that we're having and taking a look at – I'm also the president of Shane Getson's constituency association. When you take a look at the demographics, we have approximately around 46,000 in our riding.

The Chair: Sorry. You said your riding name?

Mr. Gelych: Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

Mr. Blakeman: God's country.

Mr. Gelych: As Shane puts it, yes.

When we take a look at the numbers, and just off the top of my head I think it's around 46,000, but when you take a look at what the requirements of some of these people are, we have, I think – what is it? – 14 summer villages.

Mr. Blakeman: We have 12 just in our county.

Mr. Gelych: Yeah.

Mr. Blakeman: So we're going to offer some to Glenn.

Mr. Gelych: We look after our own hamlets, as stated earlier, but we do have a couple of other municipalities, a town and a village. At the same time we wind up – for lack of a better term it tends to be that we as a county – how can I say? – take a little bit of the issues on our shoulders. They look to us as, and I'm just using this again in a form that it shouldn't be, but more of a big brother. They look at us to say

that if there's any assistance or any help that is needed, they come to the county, and then it's up to us to go ahead and deal with the MLA or deal with the governing body at that point in time to try to come to a reasonable solution to any of the issues that we have.

It can be as simple as, and I don't know if you ever heard about it, but the weir at Lac Ste. Anne, that seems to be a big issue because of lake level. One side of the lake can be happy because the water levels are right. The other side is unhappy because the water levels are either too low or too high, and it's up to the governments and municipalities to deal with things. It makes it easy for us when we have an issue like that to deal with specifically one MLA and, at the same time, dealing with the issues that are current with us.

The Chair: Okay. Anything else?

Mr. Blakeman: No, I don't. I think just, you know, being children of the province, all the municipalities, I think it's easier for us in our case just having the one MLA. I did hear that discussion with Glenn, and when we just have that one body to go to – as we represent the other municipalities whenever they seem to get into trouble, there's always big brother. It's just easier that way.

The Chair: Let me ask you about the name. Are you happy with the name of it?

Mr. Blakeman: Well, my family's been at Lac Ste. Anne since 1906, so I'm good with it.

Mr. Gelych: A name is a name. You know, you grow with it. The one thing that I kind of heard, one of the questions that kind of came up with regard to the demographics, and you made mentions around certain – and I totally understand that we may have specific issues because of geographic footprints that we need to contend with and deal with. Other people maybe have demographic issues around language or social issues. Totally understanding.

I think the big thing is that when you take a look at, as I alluded to earlier, the requirement for the people actually to have visible contact and personal contact with an MLA, maybe the numbers have to change in certain areas, especially around urban areas versus rural areas so that you could take a look at it in a dual role rather than just saying that we're going to look at it one way as being just a total demographic issue with numbers. Maybe there's a geographic component that you can put into with square miles or travel or whatever else that you kind of looked at. I know that just adds a little bit to it, but maybe that's something that we need to look at. Maybe the numbers are lower and maybe some of the Edmonton or city ridings, we can give them higher numbers, but it's a lot easier to travel 15 minutes from meeting to meeting than it is four or five hours.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, gentlemen, for this time.

Mr. Clark: I don't have any questions. I absolutely empathize with the real challenges in large municipalities. You know, like you say, there's an inherent trade-off – right? – in terms of access to the outdoors, nature, and the rural lifestyle, and the flip side is that you've got these big spaces to deal with, and it does make for a challenge.

I guess maybe the quick question I would have: you mentioned there's a sort of – you'll work with your residents and you'll sort of filter those questions up to the MLA and act as a bit of a clearinghouse for that. Is there some benefit in doing that in the sense that some of those issues are genuinely municipal? Some of them are probably not the highest priority on Earth. It has been known to happen occasionally, and then you can maybe kind of gather up a few things that are sort of consistent, like issues. Back in the day I would tell my

constit staff that if there are five e-mails or phone calls from constituents on a specific issue, like, wow, there's something really serious going on because no one really ever calls their MLA unless it's a big deal a lot of times. Is there some value, though, in that, in being able to kind of clear that out and provide a kind of a singular voice to your provincial rep?

2:00

Mr. Blakeman: I think a lot of it, too, is that you don't want to be redundant. If you've got three or four summer villages complaining about the lake level, and then they're blaming us for a weird – and we'll use that for an example. It's better us get together and have that discussion first and then carry that forward to the MLA as a group instead of each individual going with a different story. I think everybody in high school played that game, didn't we? You started hearing, and you know what it was like when it got around to the other side.

We think it's beneficial. A lot of it is infrastructure. It's probably the biggest thing that we work with our other municipalities. Then it's, like, grant funding. We have a commission set up with our other municipalities. We work as a group there. Then when we need to build a transmission line, whether it be water or waste water or something like that, we're going as a group to our MLA instead of each individual. We found it to be actually very productive, for that matter.

Mr. Gelych: I think that's one of the things that we did initially, when we got on council two years ago, was we tried to build those relationships with those communities so that we can in some way foster – how can I say? – a generated interest in a topic rather than going ahead and having an entity of, you know, a few of us.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

The Chair: Julian, a question?

Dr. Martin: I know you're both, in fact, the managers of the Lac Ste. Anne municipality. How far afield do we get from there? Sometimes it would seem logical, and you'd have to go and drive 50 miles to get the conversation you need. Is that the case?

Mr. Blakeman: The conversation with our MLA or just within our own municipality?

Dr. Martin: With other reeves and the like.

Mr. Blakeman: Yeah. We have, I think, seven municipalities around us. Different counties. Fortunately, because through the RMA we're called the Pembina zone, we do meet once every three months with all of them.

Dr. Martin: Right.

Mr. Blakeman: We're all in there, but if we have a certain discussion, yeah, it can be quite a little drive to talk to them. You know, especially mutual aid agreements and things like that, which are becoming more and more important with the state of the environment and what's going on.

Dr. Martin: In terms of total population the riding probably isn't growing, but have you got hot spots where you've got growth?

Mr. Blakeman: Yeah. These numbers that we're using today, are those generated from the last census?

Dr. Martin: No.

The Chair: They're generated from the last federal census, 2021, supplemented regularly and verified up until July of 2024.

Mr. Blakeman: Because we know for a fact that we're running out of land in the east end of our county. When I say running out of land: we had lots of subdivisions, country recreational, and recreational properties on the lakes. We had a lot of them that were empty. You know, lots of empty lots. Like, you'd have, say, a 15 per cent rate. Our inventory probably went from 1,500 down to about 100.

Mr. Gelych: Yeah.

Mr. Blakeman: People are moving out. The other thing we see with the economy is that a lot of people can't afford their two houses, so they're leaving Edmonton. You know, you used to have the cabin at the lake and you headed out on your acreage, and then you'd have a house in Edmonton. Now they're getting rid of the house in Edmonton, and they're building their retirement home or they're moving their children out because they think the education is better in rural. We're seeing that a lot on the east end of our county. The east end of our county is west Sturgeon county, Parkland county, and we know that they're growing just by the development that's coming across our development office desk. It's incredible.

Mr. Gelych: Yeah.

Mr. Blakeman: Yeah. It's a hot spot from about the middle of our county east towards Edmonton.

Dr. Martin: These are good problems to have. Just remind yourself of that.

Mr. Blakeman: Well, we wish it would be more industry and less residential sometimes. But, yeah, one brings the other, though, right? We're lucky enough to have the north, and that's important, too. We have that highway 43 corridor that runs right from the beginning of the southeast end of our county right up to pretty much Whitecourt. That's an important driver along with the heavy rail there. That has brought some industry, so it would be nice to keep that together.

The Chair: Susan?

Mrs. Samson: Just a question regarding counties. Are there any counties in your electoral district that are split? Could you speak to whether you support or not split counties? Where it would straddle two electoral divisions.

Mr. Blakeman: Yeah. Yellowhead county is Shane and Martin Long.

Mr. Gelych: Yeah. Woodlands.

Mr. Blakeman: There would be Woodlands county, which would be Martin and Shane again. I don't know if Glenn has got a piece of that. Yeah. Glenn has got a piece of Woodlands, too. Then south is Shane and Boitchenko, Parkland county split.

Mrs. Samson: How do you feel about split counties? Do you manage them, or would you like to see the whole thing in one or the other riding?

Mr. Blakeman: I personally would like to see it in one riding. I think it's easier although east of Calgary I've seen Wheatland county. I think they had four MLAs in Wheatland county and one time was the previous – they just changed. McIver is the new Speaker of the House. Anyways, they had just changed. It was Nathan Cooper before.

I think that was beneficial on the De Havilland thing for them to bring that in because they had a lot of MLAs saying: we need it; we need it; we need it. But on average I think it's easier for us to deal with one person. I think it's just more one person, one party, too. You know, that could happen. If you start splitting the counties, having two parties, you never know what you're going to get. The idealism between our two major parties in the province are quite different. When we're a little bit oil and gas and a lot of country where we're at, it might not be the best for us if that was split.

Mr. Gelych: Totally understanding that, you know, when you take a look at the county borders, it would be rather difficult to say that we're going to encapsulate one county or two counties or three counties. I think it would be difficult to do on your part, but if you could maintain a sense of – how can I say? – the demographic issues that we deal with pertinent to the urban versus rural versus let's say an industrial area, so to speak, it does help us to kind of actually get to the point where we can accommodate what our ratepayers are asking.

In our case, we aren't a Sturgeon county. We're not a Yellowhead county. When we start talking about municipal revenues, we're a small county. When we talk about having a good problem such as residential, that is a good problem to have. The unfortunate thing is that our tax assessment is based specifically on country residential or residential, which makes it onerous in trying to operate the entire county without – how can I say? – that industrial or the commercial background.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

Mr. Blakeman: It's definitely easier on the people running the polling stations if the whole county is in the same constituency. In the last federal election it was quite split, and the question flies: why am I here and my neighbour is across the road? You know, that kind of thing.

Mrs. Samson: Yeah. Exactly. Thank you.

The Chair: John, any questions?

Mr. Evans: No. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay.

Well, thank you for a most informative presentation and dialogue.

Mr. Blakeman: Thank you for your time. We know you have a tough job ahead of you.

Mr. Gelych: Yes. Thank you very much.

Mr. Blakeman: I do agree there should be more seats than they're saying.

Mr. Gelych: Yeah. I had a note there.

Thank you, gentlemen, ma'am.

The Chair: That now takes us to Heather Stocking.

Ms Stocking: Well, first I want to thank each of you for accepting to be on the commission and the staff assisting you – I'm sure that it can get a little hairy at times – and as well to everybody who shows up to these things.

My name is Heather Stocking. I am from Barrhead, and I am now living in Athabasca. I am not an elected official. I am a private citizen, but I think that because of where I'm from and where I live it gives me some unique insight into this constituency.

Personally, I want to thank MLA van Dijken for pointing out the geographical centre of Alberta. I'm just going to take a point of privilege here. My aunt was mayor of Swan Hills when they did that, and she worked very closely with then MLA Ken Kowalski to make that a tourist attraction, so just a point of privilege.

I also want to mention that I know personally that MLA van Dijken has shown up at events far away from home. We know, as you pointed out, there are the issues with weather and travel. An event I can think of clearly is in Grassland, which is – what? – an hour and a half away from home one way, and he shows up at these things, and he continues to show up at these things, and I appreciate his diligence on the travel. I can't imagine how many kilometres he's put on in those 10 years. So it is extremely relevant to look at the size of these constituencies.

2:10

I don't really have a long presentation although I did make a few notes while people were talking. I'm here speaking to you today to keep the Barrhead, Westlock, Athabasca, Swan Hills portion at least intact. For generations the Barrhead to Athabasca corridor and the Barrhead to Swan Hills corridor, Swan Hills to Athabasca has been a trade route. For years when I volunteered at the Barrhead Blue Heron Fair, we saw people come from Swan Hills, from Westlock, from Athabasca. Now I'm living in Athabasca. There's a magnificent river rats music festival every July, and you see people from Swan Hills, Barrhead, and Westlock come to Athabasca. We know that that movement is there within those four communities.

More than one business recognizes that these communities are tied together. For years it was the *Barrhead Leader*, *Westlock News*, *Athabasca Advocate* newspapers. They shared a second section which covered news across the region. Now, of course, since the pandemic it's *Town and Country Today*, but it's still a shared newspaper, communal news at the front that they figure will be of interest to any reader and then alphabetically *Athabasca Advocate* right in the back of the paper.

Alternative land use services: ALUS is Barrhead, Westlock, Athabasca. They're another business that recognizes that geographical tie. While these businesses and other businesses that might be named after this geographical region would continue regardless of where the boundaries are, I think that it speaks to the importance of keeping these communities together.

Actually, to your point, Athabasca is growing. There are no rentals to be found. Airbnbs in the area have been snapped up and are being rented for months at a time. The town is going to give a property tax break on new buildings, and they're actually working with the Athabasca University on some vacant land to determine whether they can expand a subdivision. So it's not that the growth isn't there; it's that there's nowhere to grow because there's nowhere for people to move. The growth is happening. We just need to get a place for people to live.

And then the last thing is that I don't want to ignore the east end of the constituency, but Smoky Lake, that end, has never, in my experience, been necessarily, like, a trading area with the Athabasca-Westlock. They seem to go more east and south. So if there was a place, you know, to move, that would be where I would move it. Like, I would keep this geographical – the kind of triangle of Swan Hills, Barrhead, Westlock, Athabasca: I would like to see that kept together as much as possible.

That's it. Thank you for your time.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Questions? John?

Mr. Evans: No. Thank you.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. Thank you for your presentation. I think I'm challenged because we have a county that falls below the magic number of 55,000, and I guess I'm overwhelmed. I came out of Edmonton and everything is way too big populationwise, and here we're faced with not enough population. I know I was feeling around about the county of St. Paul moving out, the half that's sitting in there, but I'd never contemplated Smoky Lake and parts to the east. That's quite a big jump. I just don't think – you know, population is only one criteria in the mix, but it's a big one. We don't base everything on that, but it is the starting point. I take your comment. I understand what you're saying, but we're leaving it at that.

Thank you.

Ms Stocking: Fair enough. Yeah.

The Chair: We're also tasked with naming the electoral divisions.

Ms Stocking: Yeah.

The Chair: I assume you're content with Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

Ms Stocking: Sure, or it could be named after former MLA Ken Kowalski. I don't think the name necessarily has . . .

The Chair: Names are very important overall.

Ms Stocking: They are. They are important.

The Chair: Okay. Julian?

Dr. Martin: Thank you. Thank you for pointing out the difference between the economic activity in the western part of the riding and the relative stable to stagnating situation out Smoky Lake way. Do you think that's been the case for a long time, or is it a function of oil and gas? What comes of this?

Ms Stocking: Well, if you want to get into oil and gas, I think that, you know, if counties got paid on the oil and gas wells, that there wasn't that tax break. That hit counties hard. I mean, yeah, there are a lot of things, right? Right now, today, tariffs and the threat of tariffs and who knows: there are a lot of things that fluctuate. But definitely I think that the slowdown in the oil and gas has contributed greatly to that.

Agriculture is agriculture. We're always going to have crops and cattle and swine and whatever. Yeah, it's a definite impact when that oil and gas takes the hit.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Thank you for being here. I appreciate it. No questions.

Ms Stocking: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.
That takes us to Landen Tischer.

Mr. Tischer: Hi. My name is Landen Tischer. I'm glad you all made it out here. I'll probably keep it a little bit short. I only managed to get four pages, so four minutes. I'm no speaker.

Yes. I'm a farmer from Barrhead with a political hobby. This is my first time involving myself in the boundaries discussion. I've travelled this riding a bit in the north in my spare time, and occasionally I've driven out east of Smoky Lake on vacation. In my past I have worked in agricultural retail, selling and moving agrichemicals, as a support worker for people with complex needs, a disability and a drug

addiction, and I was previously a horizontal directional driller. That's low-impact underground infrastructure for the oil field and in municipalities.

As a directional driller I was drilling both in towns and out on a pipeline in the oil field. In fact, I've had a few years as a diamond club member at the Best Western hotel in Edson, platinum member at the Econo Lodge in Fox Creek, and I'm working on my Wyndham rewards in the Ramada in Hinton. Do you know what these towns – Barrhead, Westlock, and Athabasca – typically don't have? It's people who max out rewards cards in hotels and actually in the chain hotels, but I wouldn't chop up a riding for hotels, and Westlock does have a Ramada.

I find it interesting because the economy here is different in Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock. There are pipelines, there's oil and gas, but they're routed through people's fields under the wheat and barley and canola and cattle. Every couple of fields may have a pumpjack, but that's not the main driver of our communities. We don't have nearly as much of a population surge during the busy season. I call them oil towns, and I suppose they call us farm towns.

Farm towns are made up of landowners and moderately sized business owners, who have a large influence on the culture of our communities, the needs and the politics of those towns. There is a large ignored economic sector in rural communities, the agribusiness. We need representation who has the ability to say the hard things to protect their small-business owners and farmers. It's representation who can tell the oil corps to pay their lease in full and not in half and make sure that the towns and counties are not writing off taxes owed to them by these fly-by-night gas entrepreneurs who start oil companies and sell them to their friends: insert large oil company here.

2:20

When we mix our economic drivers too much, we will have an MLA that either has to play favourites or go into hiding. Do they go around to the oil companies and say, "You need to pay this county for your oil lease," or do they say, "Well, we need to let them have a little break because they're running behind in these small towns?"

Our representation would have an easier time if they were less committed to one industry or the other. With oil towns they are getting iced drinks and pools built by a single oil company while farm towns have to fund raise and fight with the county to pay for these facilities.

In farm towns the emergency runs out of staff on the weekends and closes while the emergency doctor in an oil town asks if you've done cocaine this evening before you explain your pneumonia symptoms. It's just a different way of life in Hinton there. It's happened to my friend. He had bad pneumonia, and they were like: did you do cocaine? And he was like: what? Because where we're from, we don't really ask that.

There's even variation on farms from our area to the farms down south or to the north in the Peace Country. Here a large number of farms are not corporate. They don't have a payroll, and there are fewer seasonal workers. I have not worked this out numerically; however, the farmer identity is different than southern farmers whose wheat grows a foot tall and three X9 combines drive seven to nine miles per hour all day.

Ours is often stuck at four or five miles per hour. It's not an X9. Mine's a Case 8230, it's different, but it has been chipped to have the power of a class-9 combine. But the point isn't the speed. It's that the X9 is the top of the market, \$1.2 million per machine, and I got mine second-hand, old, for \$200,000. It's a different farm life, and it involves different conversations.

Out here we sometimes have the opposite problems to urban areas. It seems that although our communities were built in the '70s, we aren't getting new sidewalks with bike lanes, however popular those may or may not be. We have grass-covered sidewalks that end at random points. In our farm towns hospitals are in danger of shutting down on the weekends due to the lack of staff rather than being overloaded. We are losing surgical capabilities for something like an appendix burst on the weekend or a pregnancy, while also replacing every hip in the area right here in town. The north of this area closes more schools than it builds while to the west it then overcrowds tiny niche schools. Some areas with a small population have three different school systems while the next town over has a single grade with the same population of each of those schools.

I say this because we have a different problem set in different municipalities out here, and it quickly changes on the border of cities and the suburban hellscape where a person can sit in traffic to leave their neighbourhood. In our towns it often takes 15 minutes to walk to the grocery store, five minutes to drive anywhere in town, and you may understand there are different pressures on representing our communities. Even though we can talk to anyone instantly, we're further from the group than we were before.

It could be difficult for one MLA to build our communities. While one area is made up of provincial campgrounds and tiny social halls, which have been slowly falling apart, and also needing to research for a business park in Acheson or something like this. Representatives out here need common threads to maintain their own riding and develop the areas in a particular way they need.

This riding seems to cut into other territories, particularly when it gets out east. Ashmont relates to St. Paul more closely. Many people in Barrhead or even Smoky Lake haven't had contact with people in Ashmont or Mallaig. Vilna still remains relevant to us. These people are often quite disconnected from the riding. So I would hope that we would move more to the west than moving more to the east, in the St. Paul direction.

Athabasca and Fort Assiniboine have a unique relationship due to being river towns accessed by the Athabasca River in the past. It's not that the communities are connected that way anymore, but Fort Assiniboine is a 200-year-old settlement that was built as a trading post for the Hudson Bay Company, while the grain industry took off in the area around the 1900s, much like Athabasca Landing became known for its grain production during that time.

There are differences in the riding that are difficult to contend with: the change of appearance of the land, that a person can easily see from Google Maps. When we look at Google Maps, there's a lighter path that is generally farmland and a darker path that is forest and where the oil hides. I find there is a difference between oil and gas in this riding and oil and gas in Fox Creek or Valleyview, where the land is owned by farmers here, and over there they're digging up Crown land. There are different concerns when making pipelines on private land and public land, and it would be easier for representatives to make these decisions and support them if their area is kind of cut out in that way.

Thank you for putting effort into this riding. It takes a lot of work to understand the nuances of what looks like a big, flat piece of ground. I believe the communities can be very different and have different needs, and trying to keep them together helps. I hope that you see that, too. This is a huge undertaking, and I can't imagine myself trying to split these up to make them make sense.

Thank you for coming out to Westlock and listening.

The Chair: Thank you. You've done very well in those seven minutes. Questions, starting with you, Susan?

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. Specific to the riding that you live in, 49, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock, can you drill down and say: do

you like it the way it is, or should we be looking to move more to the north through that natural corridor of Westlock-Athabasca?

Mr. Tischer: I think that going north might be a little bit better than going east.

Mrs. Samson: Because you identified that Smoky Lake disconnects that area.

Mr. Tischer: Yeah. Even though the fellow I was talking with, with Smoky Lake, doesn't know what happens past Spedden.

Mrs. Samson: Yeah. Right. I see it now on the map. It's pretty small.

Mr. Tischer: Yeah. Well, I mean the area, but like that cut-off there. It's weird.

Mrs. Samson: Yeah. Okay. Thank you. I appreciate that.

The Chair: John?

Mr. Evans: No, nothing. Thank you.

Mr. Tischer: Also, I saw that the St. Albert and Lac Ste. Anne – disclosure: I was with the NDP candidate, trying to figure out how to get down to all the towns to win them over. I mean, like, it's a tough game anyway, but, man, for St. Albert there, for Lac Ste. Anne, that was great. A whole road that just went all the way through. You could just go and drive through. I was a Peace River-Westlock candidate, and we had 33 – or, no, the road going to Whitecourt. You could actually just follow the road going all the way up north, and you could go off and diverge off to the different communities. Making it accessible and following along a road also helps. That's a little off my thing.

Mrs. Samson: That's good. Thanks.

The Chair: Julian?

Dr. Martin: No.

The Chair: Greg?

Mr. Clark: I'm just looking up Spedden to make sure I know. That's good. I do appreciate you coming down, and it was a thoughtful presentation, so thank you.

The Chair: Okay. So you were a candidate in Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland or this one?

Mr. Tischer: Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock. Yeah.

My rival is here. You do a good job, Glenn. I appreciate you.

The Chair: Good. Well, thank you so much. We always appreciate people that have travelled the electoral district over – I don't know; what is it? – 30, 35 days' span to connect with people who've got a different perspective or a more in-depth perspective, so thank you very much.

Mr. Tischer: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Aaron, I think that goes through our list.

Mrs. Samson: We have another MLA locked in.

The Chair: Do we? Do we have another presenter?

Ms Hoffman: I presented yesterday in Edmonton. I'm just here to watch.

Mrs. Samson: We saw you.

The Chair: We were hoping – we thought you were a stalker, but . . .

2:30

Mrs. Samson: Now we know.

The Chair: And we appreciate stalkers.

Ms Hoffman: I'm a roadie, yeah.

The Chair: EBC groupie.

Okay. Well, anybody off the floor? In light of the presentations, the discussion, the conversation, the back and forth, any comments that anyone wants to make or corrections?

Mrs. Samson: Or questions?

The Chair: Yes.

Ms Doidge: Do I speak in a mic if people can hear me?

The Chair: Well, we actually need it recorded. Sorry. I should have maybe warned you about that. If you can just come forward, just have a seat, take your time, and identify yourself.

Ms Doidge: Hello. My name is Karen Doidge, and I live northwest of the town of Athabasca, within the county of Athabasca, so Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock is my provincial constituency. I've been very, very busy with work, and I just caught the information about this meeting on short notice, so I'm not terribly well prepared, but I did just have a couple of questions. I do think that addressing the electoral boundaries is a brilliant idea, because it is quite obviously a problem when we can have constituencies such as Lesser Slave Lake or Central Peace-Notley with 26,000 and 27,000 constituents versus some of the Edmonton and Calgary constituencies with 68,900 and 65,500 members, which are numbers I know you're all extremely clear on.

I do feel that I have deep sympathy for our MLA and for other MLAs who are in large constituencies, physical ridings where they have hundreds and hundreds of kilometres to travel all the time. However, I do feel that, when we get too grossly broken up in terms of what we feel as individuals – and I think one of the big problems right now in society is people don't feel represented. If you look at 69,000 people having one MLA versus 26,000 people having one MLA, you feel: my vote does not equal the vote in another constituency. So I really appreciate why you have to look at this, along with all of the other permutations and complications that the other speakers have so clearly elucidated.

I also really appreciated Brandon's speech or presentation on . . .

The Chair: Landen.

Ms Doidge: Landen. Sorry. Yes.

Landen's presentation on the differences, and Heather Stocking's

on the communities involved and how some, as in our particular riding, how Smoky Lake and east are not tightly knit as a community and an economy with the rest of us in the west. I don't know if Lesser Slave Lake is the constituency, as a very small one, that would have a connection through Swan Hills and Chisholm and the others; Smith because Smith, which is in there, the Lesser Slave Lake provincial riding, is part of the Athabasca Aspen View school division. So if taking some of these super small ridings and seeing how they could perhaps separate and join a decent mid-sized constituency such as ourselves I think might be a grand idea because there are connections on the highways and with business and a lot of these that I know you would take into consideration.

I also think that Albertans, that Canadians want to be well represented in our different levels of government, and that right now, provincially, we have a lot of our MLAs who have auxiliary roles assigned to them, so they are receiving in terms of salary more than a standard MLA's salary. If one is looking at the financial burden of increasing the size of the Legislature, perhaps look at having more members, and then some of the members wouldn't have to have dual roles in a cabinet situation, so financially that would compensate there. Again, if you're balancing out your constituency numbers along as much as possible with size, then the amount of hours each MLA has to put into work in terms of travel and people to deal with might be more readily balanced and worth the additional MLA that you might have.

I just wanted to thank you very much for taking the time to be on this commission and looking at making life more fair for Albertans and for people to feel more thoroughly represented, and then they'll be more engaged in elections and in their community.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much, ma'am, for coming forward on an impromptu basis.

Ms Doidge: Very impromptu.

The Chair: In fairness, any commission members want to have a dialogue or ask questions? Okay.

Yes, sir. Landen

Mr. Tischer: Are there towns with shorter names we could pick to name it after? Athabasca whatever it is: it's literally long.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Spedden. That's easy.

Well, thank you very much.

Thank you, everyone, for coming. We will stick around if anybody has any questions about, you know, who cuts Julian's hair. Any questions about our role? Okay. Thank you, everyone. We will remain here if you want to talk to us individually and have a chat. We're happy to dialogue.

If you know of anybody in St. Paul, we'll be there tomorrow.

Mrs. Samson: And Brooks.

[The commission deliberated]

[The hearing adjourned at 3:15 p.m.]



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

Calgary

Tuesday, June 10, 2025
9:01 a.m.

Transcript No. 13

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission

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Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Calgary

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Linda Goold
Samir Kayande, MLA, Calgary-Elbow
Julia Law, Vice-president External, Students' Union, University of Calgary
Allison Leonhardt
Ruben Nelson
Gordon Paynter
Alexander Shevalier, President, Calgary & District Labour Council
Joan Stauffer
Kevin Van Koughnett
Ross Watson

9:01 a.m.

Tuesday, June 10, 2025

[Justice Miller in the chair]

The Chair: Well, good morning, everyone. Please come on in. Find a chair, and make yourself comfortable. Welcome to the very first public hearing in the city of Calgary for the Electoral Boundaries Commission.

First of all, I want to thank each of you for coming, and I know more people will be coming. The expression of interest and the full schedule of presenters encourages this commission that Albertans and, particularly, Calgarians are concerned about this very important issue of redrawing the boundaries in Alberta.

By way of introduction my name is Justice Dallas Miller. I'm the chairman of the commission, and I also serve as a justice of the Court of King's Bench in southern Alberta.

I want to introduce the commissioners to you. To my immediate left is Susan Samson, a long-time resident of Sylvan Lake, Alberta, and an experienced municipal councillor, and she also served a four-year term as mayor of Sylvan Lake. She also volunteers and was a business owner in Sylvan Lake, and for her volunteer activities she was awarded the citizen of the year and also received the Queen Elizabeth II diamond jubilee medal. She continues to volunteer in her community with a special focus on public health care.

To Susan's left is John Evans, KC, an experienced litigation lawyer who conducts trials across the province but with a focus in the Lethbridge office of Stringam barristers and solicitors. John's legal ability was recognized recently by being awarded the King's Counsel designation, or KC. John also volunteers as a member of the Alberta Judicial Nominating Committee.

To my right is Dr. Julian Martin. Dr. Martin is a retired history professor from the University of Alberta with advanced degrees from the University of Cambridge. Julian has volunteered on many committees in the Sherwood Park area, where he lives. He's our capital city representative, and he has served and continues to serve on tribunals such as the Surface Rights Board and the Land Compensation Board.

At the far end of the table is Mr. Greg Clark, an entrepreneur and consultant in the area of information and knowledge management. Mr. Clark lives in Calgary, and he has had the distinction of serving as a Member of the Legislative Assembly, representing Calgary-Elbow for a term. For that experience we are very grateful to have his input as a commissioner as well as many other items he brings to the table. Currently Mr. Clark serves as chair of the Balancing Pool of Alberta, and he consults widely with organizations relative to proper governance.

We are your Electoral Boundaries Commission from across the province and with varied interests and professions and life experience to bring to this issue. The Electoral Boundaries Commission, as you see in the slide, is an independent body established by the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. Every two election cycles, or approximately every eight to 10 years, the legislation requires that Alberta boundaries be looked at to determine whether they need to be revised or changed.

Two issues are driving this commission in terms of this process. First of all, the Legislature has authorized the expansion of the Legislative Assembly from 87 electoral divisions to 89. Currently there are 87 seats, and soon there will be 89 representatives in the Legislature, but before the next election legislation will be passed to expand to expand that to 89, so we must take those two electoral divisions into consideration.

Our timeline as a commission is very strict, and it is running. This commission was appointed by the Speaker of the Legislature in late

March of this year. In April we met as a commission on a couple of occasions. We started our public hearing process in late May, and we're partway through that public hearing process. We've had meetings in Lethbridge, Pincher Creek, Edmonton last week, Westlock, St. Paul, and we're here in Calgary two days this week and moving to Brooks and Medicine Hat later in the week. Then the following week we do northern Alberta. By the end of June we will have completed our public hearing process.

We take the information and the submissions and the presentations heard at the public hearings, and we work on a report that must be registered and filed with the Speaker of the Assembly no later than late October. That will be what we call an interim report. It will be made available to the public, and the public will have input and response to that report. We will then in turn have a second round of public hearings to receive specific input relative to our initial interim report. Then, finally, we must provide a final report within 12 months of our appointment, which will be late March of 2026. That's our timeline as a commission.

Of course, you all recognize that in each of the electoral divisions one Member of the Legislative Assembly represents that division, and voters in that constituency or electoral division are the ones responsible to elect that person.

In order to give some perspective on the task that's before us as a commission, it is helpful to look back at what happened eight years ago. In 2017, that was the last Electoral Boundaries Commission that served its purpose in the province, they had to deal with a population of just over 4 million people. They took that population, and they came up with a mean average of population per electoral division using this formula. They had a population of 4,088,609 people. Divided by 87 constituencies, that left an average of 46,697. That's not the exact amount that is in each electoral division. There's a target population or range that we are concerned about. That can vary from as low as minus 25 of that figure to plus 25. You can see those figures, 35,023 to 58,371. That was the situation the last Electoral Boundaries Commission found itself in.

This time around, eight years later, as you all know and are aware, the population of Alberta has grown incredibly. We are required as a commission to rely on the most recent census for our population to be supplemented with further statistical information if the census is not immediate to the commission's work. The last decennial census from Statistics Canada was issued in 2021, but it is updated annually, and those figures are verified by the province, specifically Alberta Treasury Board.

We've come up with a population figure, and the figure that we're utilizing is 4,888,723. That's the population of Alberta as of July 2024, so 4.8 million. Taking that population and dividing it among 89 electoral divisions yields a population number of 54,929. Then you see underneath that the target range of population from minus 25 of 41,197 to as high as 68,661. Those are the figures that we will be using as a commission. Of course, the growth has not spread evenly across all electoral divisions, and that makes our job somewhat of a challenge. Our task is not to implement the principle of one person, one vote. Our task is to provide boundaries that give us effective representation.

9:10

In completing our work, we will be considering several factors in addition to the presentations that we hear throughout our touring the province last month and this month. The factors specified in the legislation are that, of course, we take into consideration the relative density and sparsity of population across the province. For example, we were in Drumheller yesterday. Drumheller does not have the population growth challenges that Calgary does, it goes without saying, so we have to take the sparsity and density of population

into consideration. As well, we take into consideration common community interests and organizations. That criteria will no doubt be important in Calgary ridings. As well, we take into consideration geographic features across the province. That is most prominent in electoral district divisions outside of Calgary and Edmonton. Communication and transportation lines across the province is also a factor that we consider. Our ultimate goal is to create understandable and clear boundaries that provide effective representation for Albertans. Finally, we are entitled to take into consideration other important and appropriate factors that we determine are essential, and those factors no doubt will be gleaned from the vast number of public presentations we conduct.

This is an opportunity to hear from Albertans. We are on the road in the next couple of weeks to hear from Albertans, and that gives us an opportunity to hear from folks like you who are present. I can tell you that we have a full day today. People signed up for all afternoon and indeed this evening as well as all day tomorrow. Thank you, everyone, for coming and for being willing to participate.

As we start our day today, I'm going to call upon our first presenter, Allison Leonhardt.

Miss Leonhardt: Good morning. Do I just come up over here?

The Chair: Yes, please. Just have a seat to my left there and introduce yourself. Normally we have a timeline of seven minutes with a three-minute exchange. We haven't been strictly enforcing that. Make yourself comfortable, take your time, identify yourself, and begin your presentation.

Miss Leonhardt: Oh, perfect. Well, thank you so much, Justice Miller. My name is Allison Leonhardt, and I live in Highland Park, which falls within Calgary-Klein. I've lived there for the last two years, but I'm a born-and-raised Calgarian. Calgary-Klein lies in the heart of central-north Calgary. It's characterized by mature tree-lined streets, postwar bungalows, vibrant parks, and a strong sense of community. The current boundaries for Calgary-Klein encompass about 60,000 residents. It's had a growth of about 10,000 people from 2019.

The boundaries as they stand fit well with this vibrant riding and should stay the same. The growth of population in Calgary-Klein has kept pace with the rest of Calgary. Much of the growth has come from infill housing. The wide lots of the postwar bungalows have been an attractive proposition for developers to increase density and thus split the lots. Particularly, on corner lots in Highland Park and Tuxedo you've seen a lot of infill housing go in and several families occupying the same space that was previously occupied by one family. Right now, as well, you drive down 4th Street, and every second corner lot is being turned into infill housing.

To move across the Deerfoot, the population projection for Mayland Heights shows the community growing at a rate of 1 or 2 per cent according to the city of Calgary population projections. This is much below the growth rate for the rest of Calgary and much below the growth rate for the rest of the riding, meaning that leaving this neighbourhood in the community will not greatly increase the resident population of the riding over the next 10 years. However, areas such as Tuxedo Park and Winston Heights are expected to see substantial growth with an over 10 per cent population increase, again, according to the city of Calgary statistics, which I can share with you afterwards.

Keeping communities such as Mayland Heights in the riding helps keep the population growth in the riding proportional. With Tuxedo forecasting growth at such a high rate, it makes sense to keep it in Calgary-Klein as neighbourhoods to the south of it such

as Crescent Heights are forecast to have quite a large population increase that will outpace Calgary's population projection. Yeah. I'll share charts with you afterwards.

Looking at the boundary commission's own findings, Calgary-Klein has grown by about 9.8 per cent. This rate of growth is proportional and sustainable in terms of the size of the provincial riding. Adding in new communities would skew the riding greatly and increase the growth rate to an unsustainable level and make it larger than it should be. Picking up communities to the east of the riding does not make sense as much of the border to the east includes industrial and retail areas, and then you also have the airport there as well north of McKnight. Picking up communities to the south: they're growing too quickly. We could pick up communities to the north or the east and still maintain a sustainable growth rate, but I would like to advocate that Calgary-Klein maintain its current boundaries, as these communities have much in common and are generally growing at similar rates.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Let me start on this end of the table. There will be some questions from the commissioners. Mr. Evans?

Mr. Evans: Thank you for coming and for your presentation. The growth rate on our numbers would have it at 9.8 per cent.

Miss Leonhardt: Yes.

Mr. Evans: And, in your perspective, that's consistent with the surrounding electoral districts.

Miss Leonhardt: Yes, and with the rest of Calgary as a whole. Yeah.

Mr. Evans: Would you agree that you would say that would carry forward to Calgary-Lougheed, for example?

Miss Leonhardt: I haven't looked at the numbers for Calgary-Lougheed. I mean, I'd imagine, where Lougheed is situated, you'd have some density going in, but you wouldn't have, like, new communities being built or anything like that. It wouldn't be growing outwards or anything like that. It is fairly landlocked.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you, and thank you again for coming out. When Justice Miller started with the introduction, we talked about the number that we want to target is 55,000 per electoral district. Calgary-Klein is sitting at 60,000 and showing growth, so, hypothetically, if we had to trim back and move in and, you know, look at sharing that in other areas like Calgary-Varsity, which is below – just hypothetically. I'm not saying anything more than that. Where do you see in your riding the possibility to carve off something?

Miss Leonhardt: To carve off something? I mean, Tuxedo, I would think, would make sense. The only challenge is the population growth increase in Tuxedo. I would say that that's just a little bit different than the rest of the community, partially even down to how the streets are laid out differently than when you get into, say, Winston Heights, Highland Park or North Haven or Collingwood.

Mrs. Samson: Right. Okay. Thank you very much.

Miss Leonhardt: Thank you.

The Chair: Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you. As you can see, Calgary is growing everywhere, and you're a very good example in your riding of growth, upward pressure on sort of the target boundaries. That's why my colleague was asking that question. Perhaps I could ask it in a different way, which is to ask you your characterization of the area to the east of the freeway. Are there opportunities for residential growth amid what is now commercial development?

Miss Leonhardt: Oh. That's a good question. Looking at the city of Calgary population projections, I haven't seen anything about new developments going in there. What I've also found that's interesting, too, is when you go into a community like Vista Heights, it reminds me a lot of what Highwood looked like about 10 years ago. That was my grandma's neighbourhood, and it hasn't had the same redevelopment that communities like Highwood have had. Highwood has a lot of infill. Vista Heights is still relatively untouched. It does have some density in the form of townhouses over there, but there haven't been any major apartment buildings that have gone in.

It's interesting as well, because, since it is kind of bounded by both industrial and retail – you've got Marlborough Mall on the one side and quite a bit of industrial – I haven't seen a lot of zoning applications going forward for higher density. I do know there is more push for density south of Calgary-Klein on that side. In Southview there's a new Calgary Housing development that's supposed to be going in, but there haven't been as many applications for Albert Park or Radisson or Vista Heights or Mayland Heights. They have generally stayed the same.

9:20

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Thank you so much for being here. Yeah. I have many, many questions. I'll ask sort of a couple of specific and then one general that you may or may not have an opinion on. Just maybe situating myself here to make sure I know exactly where I'm talking about: Tuxedo Park is where?

Miss Leonhardt: If you look on that part of the riding by 2nd Street and 16th Avenue with Centre Street there as well, it's at kind of the southwest corner of the riding.

The Chair: Between Edmonton Trail and Centre Street.

Miss Leonhardt: Yes. Then all the way over to 2nd Street.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Clark: I see. Okay. Yeah. That's helpful.
You said that is growing quicker, is it?

Miss Leonhardt: That is forecast to grow quicker, yes. Even as well driving through the community, there's a lot more infill housing and a lot more apartment buildings in that area than the rest of the riding.

Mr. Clark: That's really helpful. Let me just make a quick note here. That's very helpful.

That, then, actually leads nicely to the next question. I look at a lot of the neighbourhoods up towards SAIT, even the parts that Commissioner Samson mentioned off towards Varsity and the university. A lot of those neighbourhoods are, like you say, that sort of postwar, single-family bungalows. What, if any, opinion do you have on the impact of the blanket rezoning, of turning some of that

into increased density? Do you see that happening? What's your thought on that?

Miss Leonhardt: That's definitely happening. I think a big reason in part is that a lot of the bungalows in, for example, Highwood typically go for around \$750,000 as kind of an average price. When a developer buys that, they're typically not going to tear that down and build a new house. It's a lot more attractive for them to split the lot and build two homes. A lot of those new homes as well, the infills, are going for around a million dollars, which makes sense when you look at what the development charges are, what the permitting fees are, and then what they had to pay for the initial property as well. It does increase density. It doesn't necessarily improve affordability, but it does increase the density.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. You're right about the growth. I mean, the whole city has shot up. But you're right; Klein was above average at the last boundaries. It continues to be about the same amount above average. Again, you feel like that's likely to continue and that growth – it's not that sort of the inner city is hollowing out and the edges are the only place growing. You feel like there's a reasonable prospect of continued growth here.

Miss Leonhardt: Yeah. I'd say a continued, sustainable growth. You don't have as many apartment buildings going in. Even, for example, I know in Highland Park a friend of mine who's a landlord has looked into building apartment buildings there. One of the obstacles for him has just been the city development charges and that the city wants him to pay for the sewer, the this, the that, and he's like: it's just not sustainable for me to build here; I can't build something that's big enough that I'm going to be able to recoup what I spent developing it.

I think that's why a lot of the increased density will focus on more like infill housing, which is more affordable for developers. I do work in housing as well, so I know a bit about it.

Mr. Clark: You've got some opinions. We can't, I'm afraid, deal with the city charges but lines on a map, we can.

That's it. Thank you. Really, that's very helpful. Thank you so much.

Miss Leonhardt: Awesome. Well, thank you so much. Would you like copies of my notes?

Mr. Clark: Absolutely. Yes.

The Chair: Leave them with Aaron. Thank you very much, Ms Leonhardt. We appreciate you coming out, and we like it when people say leave things alone.

Miss Leonhardt: That's good. Yeah. Makes your job easy.

The Chair: I can't guarantee we will, but we like it. Thank you, and you're more than welcome to stay for the rest of the presentations.

Miss Leonhardt: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Alexander Shevalier. Good morning.

Mr. Shevalier: Good morning. My name is Alex Shevalier, and I am president of the Calgary & District Labour Council.

The Chair: I'm sorry. Could you repeat that?

Mr. Shevalier: My name is Alex Shevalier. I'm president of the Calgary & District Labour Council.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Shevalier: First, a thank you; you have the unenviable task of determining the boundary commission. You're on the boundary commission and you get to decide lines on a map, which generally pleases nobody, so I do not envy you on that.

You've outlined a lot of my presentation. One of the major points is: where possible, keep seats contained within cities. Again, where possible. There are instances where you won't be able to.

I'll just give the highlights. I think in my submission I made one mistake, and I have to correct it here. I had said that Grande Prairie deserved one seat. They actually deserve one seat and one hybrid seat based on their population because a lot of this is math. Rural Alberta, just based on the sort of population, would deserve 26 seats; Grande Prairie, one seat and one hybrid seat; Calgary would have 28 seats; Edmonton would have 21 seats; Red Deer, two seats; Lethbridge, two seats; Medicine Hat would have one seat and one hybrid seat; Airdrie, again, would continue to have one seat and one hybrid seat; St. Albert would have one seat and one hybrid seat; and then Wood Buffalo, just because of geography, would have to have two hybrid seats.

That's sort of my topline. We looked at the populations, and we divided them. We got a slightly higher number than you did, but we used the January 1st numbers as opposed to the July numbers.

That was it. That's our highlight. I live in Calgary-Currie. I don't have strong opinions on where things should go in Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Clark: Can I ask you just to repeat those numbers one more time? I didn't quite catch them. I know they're in your presentation. I think you have a written version.

Mr. Shevalier: Yeah. Rural Alberta, 26 seats; Grande Prairie, one and one hybrid; Calgary, 28 seats; Edmonton, 21 seats; Red Deer, two seats; Lethbridge, two seats; Medicine Hat, one seat and one hybrid seat; Airdrie, one seat and one hybrid seat; St. Albert, one seat and one hybrid seat; and Wood Buffalo, two hybrid seats.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

Mrs. Samson: Did you have an opinion on Sherwood Park?

Mr. Shevalier: I did not look at Sherwood Park, so, no, I would be guessing at this point.

Mrs. Samson: Okay. Thanks.

The Chair: We will be going to Medicine Hat later this week.

Mr. Shevalier: Okay.

The Chair: So is your suggestion one city, one hybrid, just leave the status quo the way it is now?

Mr. Shevalier: Yes, because there has been growth in Medicine Hat. Like, their population has only increased about a little over 2,000, 2,700 people roughly. Any growth that they have would push them beyond the maximum they're allowed to have, so you would have to have one and one hybrid. I just think that you can't make the math work any other way.

The Chair: Of your proposal, it takes into consideration the two new electoral divisions, obviously, because I quickly did the math to make sure we had it at 89. Does it involve attracting any further ridings out of the non-Calgary/Edmonton area?

Mr. Shevalier: Does it involve subtracting?

The Chair: Yes. I could figure it out if I went through the math, but you might know the answer quickly.

Mr. Shevalier: Yes. My suspicion is yes, it would, because of population growth, because the city of Calgary has grown almost a quarter of a million people. The city of Edmonton has grown over 100,000 people. Of the growth, more than half of it has occurred in two cities.

The Chair: And one riding in each city doesn't do it?

Mr. Shevalier: No.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Shevalier: It doesn't, because otherwise you're pushing yourself beyond, I think, the population limits. There was an instance near the end of the last – not this last boundary, but the boundary commission before – where you had Fort McMurray-Conklin, that the population was about 20,000 and you had Calgary-South East with 100,000.

9:30

The Chair: Oh, really?

Mr. Shevalier: In terms of electors, though, it ended up being 45,000 on the official electors roll. We can't enter a situation where the value of a vote is three times more valuable in one place than another. So this is the unenviable task because population growth is unpredictable, and it can slow and it can rapidly increase.

The Chair: Thank you for your empathy. I'm going to start. I usually don't interject right away, but Mr. Clark . . .

Mr. Clark: I did interject right away, and I apologize for jumping over. No. That's fine. I answered my question. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay.

Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Just a comment that I'm grateful that you recognize the difficult position we're in. It's kind of, you know, we're going to be treated like the way you treat your dentist. You know it has to happen, but you don't like it.

If it was just about the numbers, we'd hire a computer, not have a commission. The act is very clear about the range of factors that we are to weigh so we can juggle all the balls in the air at the same time.

Mr. Shevalier: Yeah. To that what I would say is that there's actually a quote I included. It is:

Relative parity of voting power is a prime condition of effective representation. Deviations from absolute voter parity, however, may be justified on the grounds of practical impossibility or the provision of more effective representation. Factors like geography, community history, community interests and minority representation may need to be taken into account to ensure that our legislative assemblies effectively represent the diversity of our social mosaic. Beyond this, dilution of one citizen's vote as compared with another's should not be countenanced.

Dr. Martin: Can I follow up on that?

Mr. Shevalier: Sure.

Dr. Martin: We're not talking voters; we're talking populations. The case law is about voters, so we have a difficult set of analogies

to build, but the act talks about population. So reliance on the case law, very famous cases about effective voter parity and the like, the Saskatchewan reference and so on: not directly relevant.

Mr. Shevalier: It informed the legislation, though.

Dr. Martin: Maybe.

Mr. Shevalier: No. It did.

Dr. Martin: But it's not in the act.

Mr. Shevalier: Okay.

Dr. Martin: If you read the act, they do not use the word "voter."

The Chair: Susan.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

Thanks for your presentation. The reason – my apologies. I jumped in on Sherwood Park because somebody else had laid out the numbers for the ridings based on the big cities and mid cities. I was just checking on my notes here, and you're pretty darn close, but they did include Sherwood Park. Honestly, if it was just the numbers, I think we could wrap it up tonight, but it's not that easy. I appreciate we're all on the same page, and that's an excellent starting point, and then the details flow from there.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Evans.

Mr. Evans: Thank you.

Thanks for your presentation. I'm interested in your calculations, and I want your perspective on the positives and the negatives of the hybrid ridings, you know, in terms of looking at that, looking at the numbers. But it's more than just numbers. I think that's clear. I want to know: is it a necessary evil? Are there advantages, disadvantages? Have you contemplated that? Have you thought about that?

Mr. Shevalier: With a hybrid riding there's no good way to do it because taking, I don't know – I'll take the example of Airdrie, which has a population of about 88,000. It's far too big to contain in one riding. You would be breaching the population limits, so you have to have a hybrid in some way. So they created Airdrie-Cochrane. I think there's a community of interest because they're both satellite communities outside of Calgary. They sort of share the same struggles, which are, you know, advocating with the provincial government for things like hospitals and health care, and they share the same struggles of trying to do economic development outside of a large centre. So you can create those communities of interest together.

Now, in terms of effective representation in terms of the Airdrie case it's hard to say because I don't know how well represented – somebody might get the short end of the stick. Like, if you have 15,000 people in Airdrie and the rest are in Cochrane and in the rural areas surrounding, somebody might not feel as well represented. But it's determining what the least bad option is.

Mr. Evans: I mean, let's look at a specific example, you know, sort of segueing off Airdrie. Tell me why you would think there would be a significant difference between the community interests of Calgary-North East and any of the Airdrie riding, or a hybrid riding, or Airdrie itself. It would seem to me that geographically they're very close. They would also have the same issues that you were talking about in terms of economic development.

Mr. Shevalier: Strangely enough, oftentimes satellite communities and cities compete for economic development in odd and strange ways. There's also competition for provincial subsidies. Airdrie for the last forever has been struggling to get a hospital – I'll use a hospital as an example – and Calgary has also been struggling to add additional hospital spaces because we still have fewer hospital beds than we did in 1993. So if you have a hybrid Airdrie-Calgary riding, how then do you manage those competing interests?

Mr. Evans: Well, I mean, based on what you're talking about there, in terms of competing interests, there would be competing interests between Calgary-North East and – I'll pick any Calgary riding – the centre of the city, and we'll say Calgary-Mountain View. They would not have the same interests.

Mr. Shevalier: They would have similar interests in that they both live within the city of Calgary.

Mr. Evans: But that's like saying that you and I are both White, so we have that interest.

Mr. Shevalier: No, no. They're represented. For example, they would both advocate for additional transit dollars.

Mr. Evans: Would they? The centre of the city would have less interest in transit than the external, than the fringe.

Mr. Shevalier: No, no. There's always an interest for transit dollars.

Mr. Evans: But in terms of priorities it would rank as a lower priority because they have transit.

Mr. Shevalier: For Calgary-North East, for example, they would want additional transit dollars so they can easily transport downtown but in other sections of the city.

Mr. Evans: My point would be this, that our priorities, however we list them off, depending where we're located in the city, on the fringe or city centre: how you would weight them would be different. You would agree with that.

Mr. Shevalier: Okay.

Mr. Evans: Isn't that exactly the same with respect to a hybrid riding or even a rural riding? Many of their interests would be on that list. It would just be weighted differently. Isn't that just a factor of what the elected representative has to deal with, regardless of the riding they're in?

Mr. Shevalier: I would simply suggest that within Airdrie and the rural context, the economic development factors are different than they would be for Calgary – that's all – and a lot of other factors would be different. That would simply be what I would say.

The Chair: Mr. Shevalier, thank you very much for coming. We've run into the time limit here, but could you just remind us – first of all, you relied on the January 2025 numbers in your report.

Mr. Shevalier: Yes.

The Chair: So it acknowledges a slight difference there between what we're relying on.

Secondly, are you from the Calgary office?

Mr. Shevalier: Yeah. My office is in northeast Calgary.

The Chair: Yeah. Okay.

Well, thank you for giving us this 30,000-foot level of the province and for presenting. Very much appreciated. We have your written presentation. Thanks for coming. You're more than welcome to stay for the rest of the presentations.

Mr. Shevalier: Thank you so much.

The Chair: Our next presenter is Mr. Kevin Van Koughnett.

Mr. Van Koughnett: Close.

The Chair: Kevin, right?

Mr. Van Koughnett: That's the easy way.

My name is Kevin Van Koughnett, and I live in Calgary-Varsity. I also have a farm near Pincher Creek in Livingstone-Macleod, so I have a foot in each area, so to speak. One of my children lives in Calgary and the other lives in Pincher Creek, so I'm back and forth all the time, and I'm very familiar with both of them.

9:40

The task of setting electoral boundaries, to me, is a blend of principles and pragmatism. I think you probably appreciate that. I think attaining effective representation is through creating electoral divisions of equal voting power unless justified by identified and weighted factors in each division and with the objective of keeping the population deviations as small as possible. In doing so, you are bound, in my view, by the Supreme Court decision and by Alberta legislation. I'm going to skip over the part of reading into the record what Justice Beverley McLachlin said in the 1991 decision because you've already had that today.

The Chair: By the way, she's from Pincher Creek, too.

Mr. Van Koughnett: I'm well aware of that. I can go into the history of that, but I won't.

Anyhow, the Supreme Court, to me, was very clear that the primary condition of effective representation is in equal voting power and that any deviations should be limited as much as possible and can only be justified to enable more effective representation. I've read through the entire decision of the Supreme Court and the dissent and everything else, and I think it's very clear. The intent is to achieve parity and only moving away from parity when justified. Justification does not mean that just so long as the population is within plus or minus 25 per cent, it's okay. Justification means a measured and appropriate adjustment from parity to address identified issues in an electoral division.

To me, the myriad of conditions identified as impacting effective representation would easily fall within a variance from parity of plus and minus 10 per cent. Given the quotient of 54,929 this means being over or under by 5,493. That's a wider variance, for example, than the size of most Alberta towns, which on average in 2021 was under 4,500 people. You wouldn't split a town on a boundary, which would be a community of interest, with a boundary. In cities and metropolitan areas I think a smaller variance is possible and reasonable, of 5 per cent. I thought about whether there was a de minimis pragmatic variance, and I would think that it would probably be of the order of plus and minus 3 per cent.

Perhaps the only condition that may warrant a wider variance than, say, the plus and minus 10 per cent is where the population density per square kilometre is much lower than the average for electoral divisions outside of the cities and metropolitan areas, so where the geographic size becomes very large. The commission should review and publish the square kilometres, the geographic size, if you will, and the population density of each electoral

division. I haven't seen that in the past, and it would be most helpful if it was there.

The two northern exceptions are extreme examples of why this is necessary. There are other divisions which are geographically large and so have low population densities: West Yellowhead and other northern ridings; Livingstone-Macleod, Drumheller-Stettler, and some other southern ridings. The commission could pragmatically develop a matrix of allowed variances for a range of low population densities as guidance for fairly allowing appropriate deviations. Concerns about size indicate to me that section 15 of the legislation needs to be reviewed regarding division, geographic size, and population density to provide guidance to address a wider range of size-related concerns than just the extremes.

Another principle to think about is to recognize that the process uses population as a proxy for the number of eligible voters in an electoral division. A possibility would be to allow a deviation in an electoral division to better reflect the number of eligible voters. Census population data, of course, includes those under 18, who are ineligible to vote, as well as noncitizens, who are also ineligible. The assumption should not be made that the demographics in each electoral division are the same. You may have the same number of people but very different demographics and, hence, very different numbers of eligible voters.

Population across the province varies greatly. From the 2017 commission, which used 2016 census data, to the estimated 2024 data, the change overall is plus 20 per cent. The range of that change across divisions was from minus 1 per cent to 111 per cent. Amazing. The legislation requires the commission to regard population growth; theory would say that if you expected above average population growth in a division, you should adjust its starting size downward to try to accommodate future growth. The key to this, of course, is to recognize where higher growth may occur. The population changes noted above would suggest, for example, urban areas and on the periphery of urban areas where a municipality may have annexed land for future development.

The tool box the commission has is limited in that the government has preset the maximum number of electoral divisions. It would be more effective to meet the needs of effective representation and voter parity if future governance allowed the commission, as an interim step, to recommend the number of divisions to achieve the objectives. Increasing the number of divisions, for example, could reduce the cascading changes to borders by better adjusting to local changes and keeping electoral divisions much smaller. There are trade-offs, of course, and compromises, but fettering the commission in this way is unwise.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, sir.

Mr. Evans, any questions or comments?

Mr. Evans: No. Thank you for your very well-put-together submissions.

The Chair: Susan?

Mrs. Samson: Thank you again. I thought your thought process and interpretation of what we're working with is very good. I made some notes for myself because although it's out of the authority of what we can do, we can certainly list in the reports, both interim and final, some of those areas where you're suggesting that if we had the tools, we could do a better job. The thing that I'm really struggling with is that cascading effect. Thank you for those thoughts that you put together so well.

Mr. Van Koughnett: I think that's appropriate because, you know, you may have legislation and things like that, but you're on the cutting edge or the bleeding edge or whatever of trying to implement that. So first-hand you have the experience of what works, what doesn't work, what should be changed, that kind of thing.

Mrs. Samson: Exactly. Yes. Thank you.

The Chair: Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you. Thank you for your brief, and I hope we have a copy of it because it is obviously a very thoughtful assessment of what you have determined is our tool box and how it could have been more robustly designed. Quite obviously, we have what we have. But, all the same, I would like to be able to review your general pitcher, so I do hope you are able to pass a copy to Aaron, who's right behind you there.

I could go on and on, but just with respect to the representation by proxy of those who are at this time unable to be eligible voters: it is a condition that we see in virtually every riding. Most spectacularly, in parts of Calgary and parts of Edmonton it is pretty obvious. There's a representative, on the one hand, but the pool of eligible voters in those districts carries the responsibility of all those who cannot vote. It's a high degree of responsibility although I'm not sure they quite think about it that way sometimes. That's never going to be eradicated from a province like Alberta. There are always going to be people in the population who are not simultaneously in the eligible voter pool, so we have to accept that as part of understanding effective representation in Alberta.

9:50

As you heard me say before to the previous gentleman with some anguish, the Saskatchewan reference and other case law is not immediately pertinent to the particular expectations of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act.

Mr. Van Koughnett: I guess I would say in regard to the eligible electors that as I look at the demographics – and that's the point I was trying to make – the demographics across the divisions are quite different. As I spoke to before, I'm very familiar with the Pincher Creek area in Livingstone-Macleod. If you look at what is termed the hollowing out of the population, it's that – you know, and that's pretty typical across a lot of rural areas, where you find that the children are growing up, they go through high school, and then they disappear. They go off to university, they go off to find work elsewhere, and you find that you've got that hollowing out. Then the population is sitting back there again at age 60 and up, so a whole bunch of your voters that you would normally have – say, if you had the city of Calgary, you'd get that the opposite way where there's a ballooning out of those eligible voters that are in that range.

My point is that if you are looking at the possibility of doing an adjustment, if you will, when you go into rural areas – for example, take the town of Pincher Creek. Claresholm is the same. They have an awful lot of seniors' residences. They have that because the amenities of the hospitals and things like that are there in those towns, so you have a wide range of those people, but those people also vote. You know, that's what they do. My point was that if you ever were trying to close the gap from getting away from the proxy per se – and I do understand your point – you could perhaps in the future have some kind of adjustment to that.

I did look at Elections Alberta's website, and they do have the elector count, and I found it because I looked, for example, at the three upcoming by-elections. You know, two out of the three in

terms of the numbers made sense, but one I would say would be wonky, so I didn't know what the validity of that data was. That would obviously be one of the concerns you would have.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: Thank you. Well, thank you. You know, the voters versus population thing in some ways is a bit of a red herring. I mean, an MLA represents all of the people in that constituency whether they're voters or not. Our anchor is population. It's on the maps.

Mr. Van Koughnett: I think it's driven by the data.

Mr. Clark: Yeah, it is. I mean, I think we all agree – you've referenced it, and a couple of presenters here today have – that the population growth in Alberta has been vast. The population growth in Calgary and Edmonton specifically has been remarkable, like, historic, all time. I don't anticipate that will continue exactly, but it has really kind of put us behind the eight ball, right? You've got some constituencies that are just almost double. It isn't only a numbers game, but I think it is first a numbers game, and then there are mitigating factors in terms of effective representation.

In all of that context, I guess I'm just curious if you can just expand a bit on your thoughts on hybrid constituencies versus clear communities of interest being together. Because I guess I didn't ask it of the previous presenter: why do people live in Airdrie and not in Calgary? Why do people live in rural Alberta and not in Airdrie? Any thoughts on what connects communities and how we might want to think about that?

Mr. Van Koughnett: I think that, pure and simple, it's probably economics and lifestyle. You know, you live where you live. If you have a family and you want to have a house and you want to have a backyard, if you can't afford to have it in Calgary, then you perhaps consider Airdrie or Cochrane or wherever because then you can get the kind of property you want and the amenities you want at a more affordable price to you.

We're not going to talk about affordability, but for people starting out these days, I shake my head because I think it's almost impossible for somebody starting out to put together a down payment for a house or anything like that. If a property is available outside the city and it's \$200,000 or less than you can get it for in Calgary, that is a very big deal. I don't know if that answers your question.

Mr. Clark: It does help, yes. Thank you very much.

Mr. Van Koughnett: But you talked about hybrids. I was talking to somebody earlier, and I said: you know, to me it's sort of like layers. To me there's not a lot of difference between, say, the people in the city of Calgary and the immediate layer of residences, if you want to call it that, that is outside. If you're in a Chestermere or you're in an Airdrie or a Cochrane, I would submit that you're not too far different than what you are as a Calgarian in terms of what is there. If you want to call that a hybrid, I think that makes sense to me. How far do you stretch that? There's another layer out there, however – you may define it as being rural or agricultural or whatever – which is far more difficult. The rural people, in my experience, are very I'll say proud of being rural and want to retain their ruralness, if that's a word. I don't know how far you go in doing that.

When I looked at some of the things like where you've done Airdrie, with a split or if you want to call that a hybrid – Medicine

Hat is a hybrid as well – where you're stretching out and you're gathering up all those communities outside, I think the further you are away from that urban core and fringe, the less you are going to be similar.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, sir. Time is our enemy here, so I'm going to have to cut you off.

A couple of things, though. Thank you for your big picture, somewhat philosophical, but getting it down to the pragmatism as well. Your comment about the square kilometres: I think we will discuss that. That's kind of a novel little indicia that doesn't hurt that much for us to include, so we'll discuss that.

Mr. Van Koughnett: Yeah. To me what was important there is that when I looked, for example, at the exception, it talks about something being 15,000 square kilometres and things like that. Well, I had nothing to compare that to to sort of say: "Oh. The two exceptions: do they meet that criteria, or do they not meet that criteria?"

The Chair: One other thing. In your written submission do you have your comments about section 15(2)?

Mr. Van Koughnett: Yes, I do. What I read out there.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you. Make sure we receive a copy of that. Thank you again.

Our next presenter is Linda Goold.

Linda Goold: You did pronounce that correctly.

The Chair: I did? Thank you. We're off to a great start.

Linda Goold: I live in Cambrian Heights, and I've lived there since 2001. Cambrian Heights is part of Calgary-Klein. I'm a practising lawyer and a family lawyer, so I, too, am like the dentist. I sympathize very much with that earlier comment. I make that comparison all the time. Nobody wants to see me, but they're always happy I'm there.

Calgary-Klein is over the 55,000 or so limit that I understand is the goal but within the 25 per cent deviation. I'm not going to be able to give you the kinds of statistics that the other speakers have given you, all of which were excellent; I'm just going to give you a bit of a snapshot of Calgary-Klein. I've lived there for a very long time. I would agree with the previous speaker about Tuxedo being one of the few areas that's a little bit different from the rest of Calgary-Klein. Calgary-Klein has a lot of different communities. We cover three different quadrants of the city, mainly northeast and northwest. A lot of different but very distinct communities.

10:00

I'm in one of the communities that, again, was described by that first speaker very well: postwar, '50s bungalows. We have 50-foot frontages. We were one of the communities that was the most annoyed about the bylaw changes in terms of development because, you know, people move into communities for a reason. I bought my house because it's a tree-lined, older street with a big frontage and lots of parking and various amenities, that may not exist if we get a lot of extra development there.

We're also a community that's often referred to as a complete community. We have everything within Cambrian Heights that you could possibly need, right? We don't have to go outside of our community to get anything crucial. And we're one of the greenest communities in Calgary. Again, that's important to a lot of us who live there. And many of us moved there because it's close to

downtown. That's certainly my reason, because that's where my office is.

I would make two submissions today. One would be that I would ask the commission to seriously consider any deviations into the sort of split ridings that we've heard talked about, where they're partly rural and partly urban. I would encourage you not to do that except where necessary, because city concerns are very different from rural concerns. I grew up in Small Town, Alberta. I come from a family of farmers in the U.S. I'm very familiar with both city and a more rural community, and the interests are very different. I don't think anybody would disagree with that. The biggest change since the last boundary commission, as I understand it, is that the population increase, which is large across the province, is much larger in Edmonton and Calgary, which would suggest that city voices need to be heard more, if anything, at this time.

Secondly, I would encourage the commission to keep communities together that are alike. Much like the first speaker, who spoke so much about the cohesiveness of the Calgary-Klein larger community despite the fact that we have a number of discrete communities within it, I would second that. Another piece of information about that community is that we have several bilingual schools. We have a Spanish one, Spanish-English, we have a Mandarin-English school, and we have two Muslim schools that also teach classes in Arabic. All of those schools tend to have constellations of like community around them because if you want your child in a school like that, in a Muslim school, for example, you also want to live close to it and you also want to live within your community in many cases, your cultural and religious communities. So those are citizen voices that are fairly cohesive in many cases. Not identical, none are identical, but those communities need to stay together, and I would agree with the first speaker that Calgary-Klein, because it's in the particular demographic that it is, does not need to be expanded or shrunk, that it should stay exactly as it is.

We still have room for growth. I can't know, but I would suspect, given my involvement in my own community and some surrounding communities, that we're not going to see as much of the big development growth that some of the other communities are going to see, with the possible exception of Tuxedo. My community as well has some three-level apartment buildings, certainly a lot of duplexes, townhouses, and I'm sure we'll get our infills, but we've had a large reduction of senior and retired people and an influx, from what I've seen, of younger couples. It's kind of an age-in-place community, Cambrian Heights, and I think large areas around there, and we're currently going through one of those transitions where a lot of people are going into care, and that opens up the area for young families with children. We have a lot of schools in the area, and that means that a lot of the houses in my immediate neighbourhood are not going to be selling any time soon, however much developers might be interested.

We have two permits being sought, as I understand it, in my neighbourhood right now. The community associations in my neighbourhood and surrounding neighbourhoods tend to fight those fairly aggressively, so I would suspect, as the first speaker said, we're not going to see apartments; we're not going to see major development. We're going to see low-grade development, if anything, which means a slower increase in population.

So I would just encourage you to consider the importance of keeping like communities together. Those are my submissions.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Goold. Very much appreciated.

Mr. Evans, any questions?

Mr. Evans: Yeah. First, Linda, good to see you again. We were classmates in law school.

Linda Goold: Oh, yes. I see the name. Hello.

Mr. Evans: I've got a question with respect to the Horizon area. Is that a growth area in Calgary-Klein?

Linda Goold: I'm not enough on the statistics to know that, sir. I don't know whether it is or not. I know the more inner-city neighbourhoods in Calgary-Klein much better and some of the northeast neighbourhoods.

Mr. Evans: What about South Ridge?

Linda Goold: The first speaker would have been in a much better position to answer that question than myself.

Mr. Evans: Okay. You're more familiar with the – I think you mentioned the Cambrian Heights area.

Linda Goold: Yeah. That's where I live.

Mr. Evans: What's the significant difference in the community-of-interest test between, say, Rosewood and Capitol Hill?

Linda Goold: Rosewood would be wealthier than Capitol Hill. Capitol Hill has had a huge amount of development. They don't have, I don't think, a square inch that doesn't have infills on it in Capitol Hill. The same cannot be said of Rosewood. So I would think, though I don't know, that Capitol Hill's population growth has been higher than some other areas of the northwest.

Mr. Evans: Thank you, Linda.

The Chair: Susan?

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for coming out today. You expressed a strong opinion on like communities being kept together, and with the growth challenges in Calgary, I wonder if you could give me your opinion on how alike are the communities, for example, between somebody in the north of Calgary and Airdrie.

Linda Goold: Well, I would think, certainly, as you get to the edge of northern Calgary, it would be closer in interest to Airdrie. I mean, I think of it as three different kinds. I know we lump places like Airdrie into rural, but I grew up in Small Town, Alberta. It's not the same as the agricultural communities of actual farmers. So I would say that Airdrie has different interests from Calgary and different interests from truly rural communities. I know that Airdrie, for example, has a huge problem in terms of needing a hospital. That's a major issue for them, and while we would all like more hospitals, they have a bigger problem with that than any community in Calgary.

Mrs. Samson: Yes. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.
Dr. Martin?

Dr. Martin: No. No, thanks.

The Chair: Greg?

Mr. Clark: Again – I think I've asked this previously – as I'm just getting my head around the different communities, you indicated that Tuxedo is a little bit different than the rest.

Linda Goold: I would agree with the first speaker, yes, that it's more developed.

Mr. Clark: That's perfect. I just wanted to make sure I got that right and not reverse it. We've had a bit of information coming at us here over the last couple of weeks. I just want to make sure I'm not getting that backwards.

Thank you.

Dr. Martin: I'm interested in the adjacency of SAIT, although it's not directly in your ED, and the effect of students seeking residences. Do you see that effect in your neighbourhoods?

Linda Goold: Yes. Even in my neighbourhood, which does not have a lot of student housing per se, we do have a lot of what were originally illegal suites and now legal suites in houses in that neighbourhood because we are close to both SAIT and relatively close to the university. Not as much as Brentwood or Charleswood, but we get a fair number of students. And we have a mall that's right next to SAIT, and there's a lot of student housing in there and a lot of parking issues in there in terms of students that want to park at the mall and go to classes.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Goold. Thank you for disturbing your practice this morning and coming.

Linda Goold: Thank you, sir.

The Chair: I want to jump the schedule. Who's – and that person's name is? Sarah Elmeligi. Thank you. Please have a seat.

Dr. Elmeligi: Good morning. Thank you. I have another commitment, talking to some grade 6s. I mean, that's quite important as well, obviously, because they're so cute. They want to know about provincial politics. I can't wait to tell them about this presentation.

My name is Sarah Elmeligi. I am the current MLA for Banff-Kananaskis. Thank you so much for hearing me today. I've lived in the town of Canmore for 18 years, and over that time I've been part of two different riding configurations. So I'm going to draw on my experience as a Canmore resident today but also on my experience as the MLA for this quite large, partially rural, partially mid-size city, I guess, riding.

I want to start by saying that I love every single community in my riding. Every square inch of Banff-Kananaskis is special and amazing. And what's great about this riding is that it is truly a cross-section of our province, and any MLA that's lucky enough to represent this riding can learn a lot about Alberta.

10:10

I have two main areas of comment. My first one is around keeping communities whole, and my second one is grouping like communities together, which particularly applies to rural communities being part of rural ridings and urban communities being together in urban ridings. I say this also recognizing that we use the word "rural" to mean anything that is not Edmonton or Calgary or Lethbridge or Red Deer, and that drives me insane. Rural means a lot of things. What I love about Banff-Kananaskis is that I actually have all definitions of rural in my riding. But I think we need to be careful how we use that word because it means something very different to somebody living in Millarville, who is a third-generation cattle rancher, than it does to somebody living in Canmore or Banff.

The first piece I want to speak to is this idea of keeping communities whole. I want to use the Stoney Nakoda Nation as the example here. The Stoney Nakoda Nation is actually comprised of three nations: the Bearspaw, Chiniki, and Goodstoney. Each of these nations has its own chief and council. I work quite closely with all three nations and with their chief and council and the community members to completely understand the issues that they face.

This is challenging in Banff-Kananaskis because only the community of Mini Thni, which is Morley, is actually in the riding of Banff-Kananaskis. The two other communities that are a part of the Stoney nations are Eden Valley and Bighorn, and because Mini Thni tends to be the centre of activity for the Stoney, and Eden Valley and Bighorn are smaller communities, I spend most of my time in Mini Thni, but I do also connect with residents and chief and council from Eden Valley and from Bighorn. Eden Valley is currently in the Livingstone-Macleod riding, and Bighorn is currently in the Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House riding. And, as I said, the centre of Stoney tribal offices is in Morley, or Mini Thni, in Banff-Kananaskis.

I don't mind representing Eden Valley and Bighorn and connecting with those folks, but I would say that it is confusing for them that I'm not their MLA but that I care and that I want to represent their voice because they're part of the Stoney. I recognize that Banff-Kananaskis boundaries are at risk – or not at risk, but likely to be edited – because we are adjacent to the city of Calgary, and there are going to be changes in the city that can trickle out to us. One of my recommendations would be to include Eden Valley and Bighorn in the riding of Banff-Kananaskis, just to make sure that all of the Stoney Nation communities are in one riding.

The other community that I wanted to be sure to mention today is Millarville. Millarville is at the very southern edge of the Banff-Kananaskis riding. It is a large, spread out community of farmers, ranchers, and acreage owners. Even though it is a dot on the Alberta map, that dot basically is the Millarville ag society and race track and a gas station or a corner store. Millarville itself is just really spread out across the landscape. The community of Millarville is currently split by secondary highway 549, and this really doesn't make sense to people who live there because they really do see themselves as one community. The north half of the community is in Banff-Kananaskis, and the southern half of the community is in Highwood.

I hear all the time from residents of Millarville how that's really confusing for them. They don't know who to talk to when they have an issue. You know, it's just kind of funny because Minister Sigurdson is the MLA for Highwood. People love R.J., they love me, and R.J. and I get along well, but it does create confusion for constituents around who they need to talk to when they need to talk to their MLA; should they try to work with R.J., or should they just try to work with me?

I think the boundaries commission should really consider the nature of some of those truly rural communities that don't have necessarily a central hub, but they have, like, a race track or an agricultural centre or stables or something that is the gathering place for the community but where there is not, like, a downtown or stores or a coffee shop. The community is spread out over a bigger distance, and we need to make sure that everybody who identifies as belonging to the Millarville community is within one riding. It's really important to keep communities together, not only to ensure clarity for residents of who they need to work with, but also this is an important part of reflecting real-world community connections and recognizing how people use and move through the landscape.

My second point today is about grouping like communities together. Similarly with Millarville, it's important for people to

identify with other communities across the riding. Canmore and Banff have a lot in common. Canmore and Banff and Jasper also have a lot in common. They're the tourist destinations for, you know, North America, frankly. There are a lot of times where I've also been working with the Jasper mayor and council just because their issues are very similar to those faced by Canmore and Banff.

We need a riding map that is fair for all communities. As an MLA I often think about how I represent all of the communities across large rural and mid-size city ridings. What works for Banff-Kananaskis – this is so critical; if I leave you with one comment, this is it – right now is that no one town pulls the vote because the population is fairly equally distributed. We've got the west end of the riding where the main population centres are Canmore and Banff, and in the east end of the riding our population centres are, really, mostly Springbank and area. Those populations are equal.

We used to be a riding called Banff-Cochrane, and during that time – Cochrane, of course, is the major population centre – every single person in the Bow Valley felt as though their vote didn't matter because all that matters is Cochrane. Cochrane has, you know, tens of thousands of people; we have 8,000 people in Banff. I would just say: please don't put us with Cochrane or Airdrie. Like, oh my gosh, it has been so nice for the last 10 years to have a riding where the population is more equally distributed. People really feel like their voice and their vote matter because there's not a big town pulling the vote and pulling the MLA's attention also, right?

The other thing is, like, everybody moves to the Banff-Kananaskis riding very intentionally and chooses to live in this riding because they don't want to live in the city. Whether that's Springbank or Waiparous or Millarville and Priddis or Banff and Canmore, people definitely choose to live here because we're so close to Calgary. They don't want to live in Calgary. Changing the riding boundaries in Banff-Kananaskis to include portions of the city of Calgary really won't resonate with most people in the riding. It creates that perception that it will become all about Calgary, not to diss Calgary but maybe a little. There is a growing sense of urgency in the Banff-Kananaskis riding that there is this really growing intensity of development pressure coming from Calgary into Banff-Kananaskis, and communities are concerned about losing their sense of identity and their community feel because of that development pressure. If, for example, Bragg Creek and Redwood Meadows would be included in a city of Calgary riding, people would be very upset about that. They don't want to be Calgary. They want to be Bragg Creek and Redwood Meadows.

Since the redraw of Banff-Kananaskis I think we've really seen a riding come into its own in a way that is seamless and where communities feel like they belong together. The Bow Valley communities have more in common with other foothills communities like Bragg Creek and Waiparous, who are also experiencing increased tourism and recreation demand and stuff like that, than they do with, you know, Cochrane, for example.

I would say that recreation and tourism is one of the things that ties all of these communities together, and the fact that this riding includes the most popular national and provincial parks just kind of reinforces that. What it does also is that it makes sure that all of the communities have access to a public service nationally and provincially that is accustomed to and has the expertise to manage tourism and recreation pressures on the landscape, which is really significant across this whole riding.

10:20

The other issue, I think, that ties these communities together is concern about wildfire risk. I went to two different community cleanups this last weekend removing deadfall from people's property and from the forest to reduce wildfire risk. Every

community in Banff-Kananaskis is concerned about wildfire in a very intense and meaningful way right now. People in the city of Calgary do not experience that same fear. You know, I held a workshop in Bragg Creek at the end of March, like, a wildfire risk prevention workshop, and was blown away by how many people came from across the riding to learn more about staying safe.

Most people in the Banff-Kananaskis riding want to continue to be part of a foothills, mountain riding. I would say there are some slight exceptions to this. I was door-knocking in the community of Elbow Valley this weekend. Elbow Valley is, like, 10 minutes from the city of Calgary, right by where highway 8 sort of meets the ring road in the southern end of the city, or I guess it's west central now because the south goes so far. The community of Elbow Valley is pretty split as to whether they would like to be part of a city of Calgary riding or not. Again, most people choose to live in Elbow Valley because they can have a little more space, and, you know, it feels more spacious and open than it does living in the city. However, the residents of Elbow Valley: a lot of them work in Calgary. That's where all the services that they access are housed. So it's a bit of a tricky situation. I would say that the sentiment is really 50-50 among residents there.

Millarville: I talked about how that needs to be in one riding. I would also say: the MD of Bighorn. One of the benefits of Banff-Kananaskis is that I have all of the communities of the MD of Bighorn, and they have a lot more in common with Banff and Canmore. I would like this riding – if the riding boundaries were to change, I would see it extending north-south to include more of the eastern slopes, basically. That's where the headwaters, the wildfire risk, and coal mining and a love of parks and outdoor spaces – that's really what identifies with people in this area.

Yeah. Is that my seven minutes?

The Chair: Yeah. I lost track of the time. Sorry. I'm going to have to limit questions, but thank you so much for your presentation. Have you submitted that in written form to the commission?

Dr. Elmeligi: No, I did not.

The Chair: Would you, please?

Dr. Elmeligi: I definitely can. Yeah. For sure.

The Chair: Yeah. Just check with Aaron as to where that goes. Very quickly, Mr. Clark, any questions?

Mr. Clark: No. You know, we've got a bit of a magical mapping tool here, so I was just trying to find the different geographies you were talking about. I did that, so if we have a written submission – but just, with our thanks, that was a great presentation. Thank you.

Dr. Elmeligi: Anybody?

The Chair: Julian?

Dr. Martin: You're speaking about the work you do with the Stoney and that it was a bit outside your riding to go to the central area to Mini Thni. Is that how you pronounce it?

Dr. Elmeligi: Mini Thni is in my riding. Eden Valley and Bighorn are not.

Dr. Martin: Okay. I wanted to extend this thought. What about the rest of the Stoney lands that are heading east from you? That's part of your community of interest, if you will, right?

Dr. Elmeligi: Yeah. The largest reserve for – like, the Stoney have three reserves. The largest one is entirely held within Banff-Kananaskis. That is around the community of Mini Thni, or Morley. Then there are two smaller reserves in Eden Valley to the south and Bighorn to the north, and they are not a part of the riding right now, but they are all part of the Stoney Nation. Yeah. That's how I work with the chiefs and council and residents there.

Dr. Martin: So in general you would think it coherent and helpful if all those Stoney Nation footprints were within one electoral district boundary?

Dr. Elmeligi: Yes.

Dr. Martin: That's why I was pushing further east with Ghost Lake and so on and so forth.

Dr. Elmeligi: Ghost Lake is in my riding.

Dr. Martin: Yeah. How far towards Cochrane do you go?

Dr. Elmeligi: To the edge of it, really, because I include all of the Ghost public land-use zone and Waiparous. I love having that area in as well because it is an area of growing recreation pressure and interest, so it has a lot in common. That's part of the MD of Bighorn that I was saying at the end there. They have a lot in common with Canmore and Banff.

Dr. Martin: Right. Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.
Susan?

Mrs. Samson: One question. Thank you again for coming out. Is this too far of a stretch to include Jasper? I was thinking of that mountain park, the communities of interest.

Dr. Elmeligi: Issuewise, no. I mean, issuewise I work with Jasper all the time because there are economies of scale to be gained by representing Canmore, Banff, and Jasper as, you know, mountain park towns with high tourism interest. I think, like, a riding of that geographical size does present the MLA with some challenges of travel, but it's definitely not bigger than some of the rural ridings in the north where MLAs are also faced with that same challenge, right? So there are ways to work around that.

I think it's more important to consider grouping communities together that have similar issues. It's just so much easier as the MLA to stand up in the Legislature and say, "the people of mountain communities" or "the people in communities in parks think X, Y, Z" than trying to find a way as the MLA to represent a small community that is so different from all of your other communities that still needs to have a voice in the Legislature. It's just really hard. As MLA you're pulled in a million directions all the time – right? – so it just makes more sense to have communities that have commonalities. It makes our job so much easier.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.
Anything, Mr. Evans?

Mr. Evans: Do you think there's an advantage of having two MLAs representing mountain communities mountains of interest, the way that it is now, or is it more advantageous to have one spokesperson?

Dr. Elmeligi: I mean, it kind of depends on who the MLA is, to be honest. Like, collaboration is a two-way street, I have come to learn, and some MLAs want to collaborate, and some don't. In some instances I think there's benefit, and in some instances I find it frustrating. I think it's easier to have one MLA represent all mountain communities.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you very much. We look forward to the written presentation. It's always helpful to have people present that drive that riding, walk those towns' sidewalks, so very much appreciate it. Thank you.

Dr. Elmeligi: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Say hello to the grade 6ers for us.

Dr. Elmeligi: I will.

The Chair: Boy, we're running into break time here. We're running over, but I want to get one more in. Dr. Ross Watson, are you present? Oh, good.

Dr. Watson: Well, thank you, ladies and gentlemen. Is that mic picking me up okay?

The Chair: Yes.

Dr. Watson: Okay. Great.

My name is Ross Watson. I was a councillor in the town of Cochrane for 20 years up to 2017, and my submission to you today is to consider Cochrane as a stand-alone electoral district. Now, we're currently a hybrid with Airdrie, and in 2016, when the statistics were used for the 2017 boundaries, Airdrie-Cochrane, that riding, had roughly 51,000 people in it; Airdrie-East had roughly 48,000. I'm rounding these off. Now, in the 2024 municipal census Airdrie was showing a population of 85,000, and Cochrane was showing a population of 37,000. Based on growth patterns over the last two decades for the 2027 election Cochrane will reach a population of 46,000 people; Airdrie will reach a population of between 106,000 and 110,000. To put that into perspective, Lethbridge is roughly 106,000 people with two elected officials.

There has been some talk today about hybrids, and they use terms like "communities of like interest." I would suggest to you that although we like Airdrie, we don't like being a part of it, and the same goes for Airdrie.

The reason is simply this: we are the two fastest growing communities in Alberta, and we are desperately competing for funding for infrastructure, for hospitals, for public safety. So we have a rivalry, much like Edmonton and Calgary. You know, we have similar situations. We are rivals for every dollar we can get.

10:30

And there is a bit of a cultural difference. Sarah, who just spoke, kind of suggested: please don't let Banff-Canmore be a part of Cochrane, which it used to be. You know, Cochrane always used to feel that we had the short end of the stick because our MLA always came from either Canmore or Banff, and that's always where the MLA office was. Now, with Airdrie and Cochrane there's a confusion in Airdrie. They were always wondering why a smaller part of Airdrie was a part of Cochrane's riding.

Quite frankly, after the election, the MLA for Airdrie-East really took on the burden of all of Airdrie. For the most part the MLA for Cochrane was seen as primarily a Cochrane MLA because, you know, when it came down to it, he had sort of one foot in Cochrane

and maybe a toe or two in Airdrie. When it came down to sort of defending either of the town's interests for municipal dollars or stuff like this, I believe Airdrie felt that there was a bias towards Cochrane with our MLA, and, quite frankly, I believe there was.

Going forward, for clarity I think that the people of Airdrie would find that having two representatives – and I think they could meet the threshold for two – would be advisable because it is big and it is growing. Cochrane, you know, like I suggested, would have a population of 46,000 by the time the election comes around, and I think that falls within your numbers. It might look a little small. I know you wanted to get up into the mid-55,000s. You could pick up some extra numbers – we share a lot because our schools draw from the Bears paw area.

My submission basically is based on the fact that when you're talking about the two fastest growing communities within Alberta, you kind of want to, if I can use in these days a hockey scenario, you know, skate to where the puck will be rather than where it has been. We have some real extreme, I guess, differences in infrastructure needs. Cochrane has what I always thought was a misfortune of being intersected by two highways, a railway, and a river. So our transportation costs and infrastructure costs are huge. Going forward our traffic situations need a lot of dollars, and Airdrie by the same token has a lot of pressures because of its proximity to Calgary. The pressures on Airdrie are quite great.

Just in summation, I believe that the concept of a hybrid that we are currently in in Airdrie-Cochrane is not fair to either Airdrie or Cochrane. I think a better boundary could be drawn, and I believe that it would add clarity. Other than just the concepts of population, clarity, and fairness, I believe that Cochrane needs to be split from the Airdrie riding and a new riding formulated around Cochrane.

With that, I will leave myself open to questions from the panel.

The Chair: Dr. Watson, thank you very much for your concise and targeted presentation.

Commissioners, if we're going to have a break, please keep your questions short and succinct this morning. We'll start with Mr. Evans.

Mr. Evans: Again, thank you for your submission. Can you tell me what the population is right now in Cochrane?

Dr. Watson: It's 37,000.

Mr. Evans: The number that you're projecting?

Dr. Watson: It's 46,000 by 2027.

Mr. Evans: What do you base that on?

Dr. Watson: Cochrane – and I'm just going by my memory – has not dropped below 10 per cent growth in probably 15 years.

The Chair: Okay.
Susan.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for your submission as well. I don't have a question, more of a comment. I was musing about having two large cities or mid-size cities in one riding, how that works, and this is a good example. You gave us a good explanation on mixed priorities and therefore mixed representation. Thank you for that clarity.

Dr. Watson: You're welcome.

The Chair: Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you very much for that presentation. You had mentioned towards the end of your submission, sir, about Bearspaw, which made me think: would you conceive of the immediate hinterland, Mitford up to Cochrane Lake, all the acreages, as part of your natural domain, if I can put it that way?

Dr. Watson: Definitely. Cochrane Lake and MonTerra, that area up there, use Cochrane's services. They definitely consider Cochrane as, I guess, their centre.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: Maybe going the southern direction, then, sort of Springbank area south of the river, those sorts of areas, you know, like Springbank Airport, down 22, is that sort of another world or is that functionally related to Cochrane?

Dr. Watson: Well, quite frankly, and this is an objective opinion, I think it's, like you suggest, another world. You know, you have the new community of Harmony, you have Springbank, which is in Sarah's riding, who just presented today: those communities I think just reach a little further out than Bearspaw. I suggest a lot of the people from Bearspaw shop in Cochrane. A lot of people from Bearspaw recreate in Cochrane. Their children are bused to Cochrane. Springbank, not as much.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much again, Dr. Watson.

We are way past our break time, so I'm going to suggest that we break for only five minutes, and then we'll commence with Member Kayande's presentation. Five minutes and then we'll be back convening. I'm going to have to watch the clock a little more. I've been a little sloppy this morning. My apologies.

One other thing I neglected to mention is that with all the public presentations the audio will be available on the EBC website in due course and a transcript of the proceedings will also be available on the website.

Thank you very much, and we'll see you back here in five minutes.

[The hearing adjourned from 10:39 a.m. to 10:46 a.m.]

The Chair: Commissioners, can we reconvene so that we can start post-haste? I was terribly negligent in keeping track of time. I'll be much more vigilant right now.

Member Kayande: Just in time for me.

The Chair: Yes. You were supposed to speak, sir, at 10:10.

Member Kayande: I'm good.

The Chair: Okay. Please introduce yourself and tell us what constituency you represent.

Member Kayande: Absolutely. You can hear me okay?

The Chair: Yep.

Member Kayande: Great.

My name is Samir Kayande, and I am the MLA for Calgary-Elbow.

The Chair: Okay.

Member Kayande: My submission is about Calgary-Elbow. Every MLA I know talks about how their riding is a little bit special. Calgary-Elbow is actually genuinely special because it has had two Premiers representing it, right? Strong cabinet ministers. The leader of the Alberta Party represented it, whose name currently escapes me right now.

The Chair: I'm sure it'll come back to you soon.

Member Kayande: Yeah, at some point.

It has also had numerous different parties represent it as well. We spoke of the Alberta Party, the UCP, the PC, now the NDP, and it's also been held by a Liberal. It's a microcosm for the city of Calgary in many respects. It is a fully urban riding that incorporates a lot of postwar housing stock, as well, like the original postwar suburbs in Altadore, for example, or new urbanist developments in Garrison Woods. Central Memorial high school is, you know, a real draw for people.

But the fundamental characteristic that defines Calgary-Elbow is not just the political awareness of the people there – because they really are. Like, I've been asked to comment on the UCP nomination race while door-knocking, which, if you talk to other MLAs about their door-knocking experience, is a very weird thing. When there isn't even a candidate selected, for me to be asked about: hey, what do I think about all the various different candidates for the other party? That's a conversation that comes up.

The physical geography as well of the Elbow River. The Elbow River gives us life, it provides water to the entire southern half of Calgary, and it can kill us. I know that the former MLA Greg Clark did a tremendous amount of work to make sure that Elbow is protected from flood. Protecting Calgary-Elbow from flood protects Calgary from flood. Protecting Calgary from flood protects the entire province of Alberta's economy. It is impossible to describe how important protecting Calgary from flood is to the future prospects of this province and our nation as a whole.

To protect Calgary-Elbow, you have to flood pieces of Springbank, which is a perfect example of how rural and urban concerns are, in many cases, in opposition to each other and how that voice of somebody who's speaking for Calgary-Elbow undiluted is so important to ensuring that we get the protection that we need, which has massive national implications, as I talked about, and leads to better policy outcomes.

Now the riding itself. You see the population numbers here, almost 56,000 as of 2024; 49,000, which I think was a little bit above average, in 2016. Basically, the growth in Calgary-Elbow has been kind of – to a first order you can think of it as being roughly average growth for ridings within Alberta because it had a variance of 4 per cent in '16 and it's got a variance of 2 per cent now.

Where does that population growth occur? We are not like a suburban tract development, right? You don't have any empty land here. How it happens is that when there is a housing crisis, people move into basements. You know, they start building carriage suites. They infill. It kind of happens. Like, the magic of the market kind of tends to build housing, and it builds it in a way and in a place that is not amenable to central planning, which is why I'm glad we live in a capitalist society. So that is probably going to continue and, in fact, is likely going to accelerate because the pressure on Marda Loop now is very real. What you see now are our proposals for large developments just to house all the people that we're going to house.

I remember that earlier this morning you had the presentation from Cambrian Heights from Linda, I believe it was, who was talking about: yeah; I don't know where future development is going to come from in this riding. I can tell you where it's going to come from. It's going to be from infilling and basements and all the

stuff that we have already seen in Calgary-Elbow. There is no way to stop it because the market pressure is so immense. People need homes.

When I think about, like, “what is the biggest concern in Calgary-Elbow from a provincial standpoint?” it is managing that growth pressure. It’s ensuring that we have the infrastructure that we need. Schools are overcrowded for the first time in a generation within Calgary-Elbow. The transportation networks that go all the way back to the first No. 7 Marda Loop streetcar in 1909 are being overwhelmed. These are the sorts of things that they need strong representation for, to make sure that they get appropriately managed growth, where the infrastructure precedes the growth that is coming and doesn’t lag it by, like, 10 years, which is the case right now.

With that, I conclude my submission.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much for your presentation and for your concise effort and for finishing in less than seven minutes.

Member Kayande: You’re very welcome.

The Chair: You are the MLA, right?

Member Kayande: I am the MLA, yes.

The Chair: Sorry. I couldn’t resist.

Mr. Evans, any question?

Mr. Evans: No. I had the advantage of talking to Samir during the break, so I peppered him then.

Thank you.

The Chair: Susan.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you again for coming out. I just wanted to ask you, in your opinion, if there was a need to get the population down that is sitting in that electoral division to make up for the expected infill growth, would it be reasonable to look at the community to the far west on the end? It kind of looks like almost an add-on piece.

Member Kayande: Glamorgan, you’re thinking of.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. Yes.

Member Kayande: This is extremely awkward for me as an electoral official, to throw one of my communities under the bus.

Mrs. Samson: Yes, I know. Just whisper in my ear.

The Chair: Which child do you like more?

Member Kayande: Yeah, which child do I like.

I’m going to punt on that, actually. Like, Glamorgan is lovely, right? It is also facing very similar infill pressures that the rest of the community is. It is definitely less explicitly urban in character. It’s more like a ’60s-style suburban development, like Altadore is, like postwar. Oh, gosh. Some lovely, lovely California-style, beautiful homes in Altadore. It’s not like, you know, Garrison Woods, which is like a new urbanist sort of thing.

10:55

The one thing I didn’t talk about was that I do have a massive proportion of renters in Calgary-Elbow. Calgary-Elbow, while it is most well known for Mount Royal and Britannia – those are large areas, relatively small population – about 40 per cent of Calgary-Elbow residents rent.

The Chair: Really?

Member Kayande: It is top five in Calgary, I believe. Please fact check that, but I believe that that is true. Definitely there is a balance right now between suburban single-family and urban, like truly urban, high-rise, those sorts of things. Yeah. And we’ve got – I didn’t realize this. Calgary-Buffalo is a Death Star up there, with almost 80,000 people.

One thing I will say is that Lower Mount Royal and Mount Royal actually historically have very strong connections with each other. Even though one, Lower Mount Royal, is a lot of walk-ups, a lot of condos, very dense, it’s the same sort of psychology, if you will, the same sort of historical connections that have existed for well over 100 years.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: Dr. Martin?

Dr. Martin: No, thank you. You answered my question.

Member Kayande: Thank you, Dr. Martin.

The Chair: Okay. Greg?

Mr. Clark: Yeah. A bit of a – hello. Good to see you.

I guess I’m just curious. I mean, I obviously have some insight into Calgary-Elbow, but I am actually really interested, because you are very much closer to this, I think, probably than I am: where is that growth happening? You’re exactly right. It has basically tracked the growth pattern to date. Other places, though, like Calgary-Buffalo, northeast Calgary, south Calgary, south Edmonton, northeast Edmonton, are really growing very, very, very quickly. I’m just curious if you have any prediction or perspective on going forward, again, to skate to where the puck is going to be, you know, over the next 7 to 10 years. Do you feel like Calgary-Elbow growth is likely to continue tracking that same population growth?

Member Kayande: I believe so, yeah, just because of its proximity to downtown. I know that after the pandemic it was thought that, well, maybe downtowns are out of style now. It turns out that’s not the case because people are now moving there, right?

What I’m concerned about – look, I mean, I went through the report that was written in 2017, the last time this was done, and there were lots of predictions on where ridings would grow. Most of them were all over the map, so I try not to predict the future. But in terms of where the pressure is coming from, definitely when we think about, like, South Calgary, which, ironically, is to the north of the riding here, so 26th Avenue to 34th, also the Marda Loop area: these are going from postwar suburban development in character to actually urban centres, like new downtown cores almost. It’s just that spillover. Yeah.

Of course, it’s my job to complain about the infrastructure, but when we think about infrastructure in inner city cores versus what it looks like in outer ring suburbs, where you could buy a house and not have a school built there in 15 years, you know, when your kids don’t need it anymore, literally, I think that a lot of people are realizing: “You know what? I get a little bit less space, but this is where I want to live.”

Mrs. Samson: Yeah. Good point.

Member Kayande: And they do that for a reason. Like, not to diss any of the suburban communities or to diss Springbank. You know,

if you live in Elbow Park or Mount Royal, your alternative is Springbank. There's a reason they're not living in Springbank, that they're living in the centre of the city.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much. I very much appreciate it. As I said, we really appreciate presentations from people who walk the streets, pound on the doors of these electoral divisions, so thank you.

Member Kayande: All right. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Our next presenter is Janet Eremenko.

Member Eremenko: Great. Good morning.

The Chair: Good morning.

Member Eremenko: This is kind of a nice convenience to be following Samir Kayande's presentation because our ridings are right up against each other, too. I am the MLA for Calgary-Currie, which is just off the west end of downtown. Thank you so much for having me, and I'll take this quick moment to thank you for your work as this commission. You are taking on a Herculean task. You will know every nook and cranny of this province in a way I'm sure you never really expected to do.

Very pleased to be able to give this little brief presentation on the wonderful riding of Calgary-Currie. Much of what MLA Kayande has already referenced in regard to Calgary-Elbow applies to Calgary-Currie, with the exception, however, that we have quite a bit of brownfield development that's occurring in Calgary that is going to be presenting significant population growth in the, you know, kind of mid- to long-term when it comes to the next 10 years.

Just a very brief overview of the nature of our neighbourhoods here. There is a somewhat surprisingly low rate, just 27 per cent, of the households that are single detached. Much like in MLA Kayande's riding of Calgary-Elbow a lot of them were in the 1960s, really, on the edge of town. These were suburban developments, largely, you know, big lots, bungalows, that kind of thing. Though they take up a lot of, literally, real estate, in fact, only 27 per cent of the households are single detached. North of a third are households that are in multi-unit that are five storeys or lower. Then row houses and semidetached homes are approximately 10 and 11 per cent respectively. I would expect that that latter category of row houses and townhomes are going to be increasing significantly, and that's largely the focus of my presentation today.

Households are almost exactly 50/50 owner and renter, a lot of that, of course, a lot of the rental properties occurring close to downtown in communities like Sunalta and Bankview and then more ownership in the single-unit houses further to the west towards Sarcee Trail. Seventy per cent of the homes were built prior to 1990 and many much earlier than 1960, about as old as Calgary itself in communities like Bankview and Sunalta and the very unique and special community of Scarboro.

By the time we reach our next redraw, Calgary-Currie is likely to look very different than it does now. The growth since the last boundary profile was generated has likely been at a rate very similar to what it has seen for several decades prior, but I expect we'll see a dramatic jump in the next decade on account of significant brownfield planning and developments and lot-specific densification, facilitated in part as a result of the changes to Calgary zoning bylaws, with the changes to blanket rezoning, that has facilitated significant growth and development in these communities.

Another bylaw that I think is worth noting is the transit-oriented development, which, you know, relaxes some of the planning

requirements, depending on the proximity to large public transit hubs. The west line of the C-Train runs right up through the middle of Calgary-Currie. We have four C-Train stations. Then we also have the new bus rapid transit route that runs down Crowchild Trail. That TOD development is helping to facilitate significant densification in and around those areas by quite a large area. You know, a kilometre or two from those C-Train stations is where we're allowed to have much greater building.

Density, density, density. As opposed to what's happening on the outskirts of the city when it comes to greenfield development and people necessarily being drawn to those areas, rather I think in Calgary-Currie it's a build-it-and-they-will-come phenomenon. As a result of blanket zoning, once a single-family house is going to be built on that lot, we could be looking at four titled properties plus four secondary suites. So where there was one household, there may now be up to eight. Corner lots may even have an additional four titled suites. The growth in population is going to be significant. The pressure isn't from an influx of people, as I said, but, rather, market demand in terms of people interested in living more inner city.

11:05

We know, specifically on a small stretch of Crowchild Trail, for example, that within the next 10 to 20 years we could see upwards of 2,000 new units. Those are plans that are literally on the books as we speak. Where the old Viscount Bennett school is situated on Crowchild Trail is slated to have north of 1,200 new units, 119 in phase 1, which is currently under way. And then, of course, we have down at the southern part, just west of Crowchild Trail there, Currie Barracks. That is owned by Canada Lands, and currently there are five parcels of public land open to submissions or in the review stage that will present a total of 675 housing units.

So, like I said, in just that lower half of Crowchild Trail in Calgary-Currie we're going to be looking at north of 2,000 units that are going to be in the pipe as we speak, and it's going to be construction season 12 months a year. A lot of significant growth, I think, is coming down the pipe. Certainly, secondary suites, basement suites, and then in all of the rest of the communities where that densification is going to be happening with row houses, townhouses facilitated in part as a result of TOD is going to be significant.

To my recommendations on what I hope you might consider in this challenge before you: one is that Calgary-Currie has been a contiguous riding, really, since its existence. My first recommendation, respectfully, is to keep communities together. There is a major thoroughfare to the west that is Sarcee Trail, Glenmore Trail roughly to the south, and then, of course, we have the river to the north. We all know how in Calgary we are deeply loyal about our quadrants, and I would not want to consider going north of the river. These are predictable and quite common-sense boundaries to the riding that help communities and voters organize themselves. To the east, of course, is a little bit of a different challenge, where we butt up against Calgary-Buffalo and Calgary-Elbow, and those have always been boundaries that have been tweaked and shifted over the years.

I think keeping change to a minimum as much as possible is important. Civic engagement is so incredibly critical, but it takes time and it takes practice. Building familiarity with a riding, not to mention municipal wards and federal districts can be a lot. I've spoken to a lot of people who say: I just started to know my district; what do you mean we're doing this redraw once more?

My second recommendation is to encourage a redraw that respects existing municipal boundaries. We know, of course, that that was a particular consideration that was removed from the

boundaries district act. I think that it is incredibly important that as we see just phenomenal growth happening, particularly in Calgary and Edmonton, the interests, the ability to represent in a just, fair, equitable way for the elected representatives can be an incredible challenge if we're looking at dealing with two entirely different sets of pressures, challenges, interests, and property, certainly.

Lastly, with the redraw from 87 ridings to 89 boundaries I really do hope that we will consider putting those two new ridings in Calgary and Edmonton, where the growth is significant, particularly northern Calgary, where we see, you know, deviations – sorry; excuse the pun – north of 40 per cent, 50 per cent in some of those ridings on the edges of the city, and certainly in south Edmonton as well, where they're experiencing significant pressure.

I do have some other recommendations in terms of if I were in your seat, but perhaps I'll stop there and I'll take any questions. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you. Have you reduced this to a written submission for the commission?

Member Eremenko: I have not submitted it yet, but I can very easily do so.

The Chair: Please do so.

Mr. Clark, any questions?

Mr. Clark: I'll ask a question that maybe is not specific to Calgary-Currie but more of a general question. I agree with you on the old Viscount Bennett site. The school is gone. They're scraping dirt. Like, it's an obvious transit oriented – it makes great sense. Plus I think a lot of the other characteristics of Calgary-Currie, it does make sense.

I could see a scenario where the growth outstrips the rest of the city and the province. Where is growth in Calgary not going down? It sounds a bit of a cheeky question, but I guess I'm kind of interested, right? You've talked about the inner city. I think we see a lot of growth, you know, on the new suburbs, the kind of greenfield. Do you have an opinion – and maybe this is not a fair question or you just simply don't know. What parts of the city perhaps, even if they grow in absolute terms, may grow less than and therefore grow at a slower rate in relative terms?

Member Eremenko: Yeah. I think it's a very good question. I would say the next ring out from Calgary-Currie, for example, west of Sarcee Trail, where there are still a high number of single-detached homes but whose value is still high enough that it's not going to be worth razing it to the ground and replacing with four infills. In some of these communities where the homes were originally built in the '50s and the '60s, you know, they're getting tired. They're at a price point where I think the market can bear being bought outright and torn down and being replaced with something like a fourplex.

I would probably suggest, Mr. Clark, that it would be in the next ring outside of this particular area. When I think about some of the kind of main thoroughfares, west of Sarcee Trail, south of Glenmore, south of Anderson – I don't know the east of the city quite as well, my apologies. When I think of west of Sarcee, south of those, in those kind of '90s, early 2000s communities, where they're still single-detached homes and it simply isn't palatable from a market perspective to tear those down and change the density per lot, I think they won't be seeing the same kind of growth.

I will note, just in case this doesn't get mentioned in some of these conversations, that there is significant planning developments on Tsuut'ina Nation. South of Glenmore and west of 37th all the

way down to highway 22 is Tsuut'ina Nation. This was largely facilitated with the completion of the ring road. You know, last I checked, it was about a \$6 billion development project, the largest Canada has ever seen on reserve by First Nations, and that area, particularly north of the Weaselhead, is going to be a mix of commercial and residential builds.

Though Calgary-Currie may not change much, although I completely recognize that it may, and I understand and fully accept your decisions on that front, of course, when we start to grow, that's then going to have compounding effects for every riding beyond it. I think that though Tsuut'ina Nation is not currently in my riding, changes to Calgary-Currie will in fact and may in fact include adjustments on some of those areas in the next kind of ring below. I think some of those unique projects that aren't simply on the edges of town we've got some brownfield, and I think Tsuut'ina is also somewhat exceptional to what we've been seeing thus far.

The Chair: Thank you.

Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you very much, and thank you. I want to come back to some of the particular growth pods that you had mentioned. One of the things we're keen to see as we tour the province is estimations of growth. Estimations of growth can be easily made, but we're particularly interested in things that are imminent and tangible, and you've given us some instances of those, which will, I think, bump the likely population of your riding significantly over the next two, three years. I wondered if there were others. You mentioned the old school, Currie Barracks, that portion that's being developed, and also several development pods on the books, which you estimated could be as many as 2,000 units. Do you also have – I bet you do – the development of basement suites as well?

Member Eremenko: I don't have that information with me, but I can certainly find it. Of course, we do have this challenge that I hope Calgary is slowly starting to overcome when it comes to registered versus non registered secondary suites. I would be happy to include that in my final submission if that would be helpful.

One other piece of land that I think is noteworthy, that the city recently bought back, is right at Westbrook Station. That was sitting fallow for a very long time. The city finally threw their hands up and took it back. And that will be up, so 2,000 units just between Curry Barracks and the old Viscount Bennett land. If the average household is currently 2.1 people per household in Calgary-Currie, then that will easily, I would expect, veer into 5,000 new residents pretty quickly. That is not within the next two to three years. In seven to ten years I bet we'd be about halfway there.

Dr. Martin: Yeah. We don't want to prognosticate the future very much, but it's irresistible when we hear figures like this.

Member Eremenko: Yup. Those are in the pipe.

Dr. Martin: We can anticipate that our successors will be saying: gosh, that Calgary-Currie is way over. At any rate, it's for us to wrestle with that. Thank you for the empirical information. Thanks.

11:15

Member Eremenko: My pleasure.

The Chair: Susan, comments or questions?

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. Thank you for coming out. Most interesting, the challenges in those ridings in the inner city. It's been a real eye-opener for me, so I will tackle the problem with your input. Thank you very much.

Mr. Evans: Janet, thank you. My question is that I just want to make sure that I understand the numbers we're talking about. You think there will be an increase in population by 5,000 people within 10 years, roughly?

Member Eremenko: Just on account of the new builds. You know, the rate of growth from the 2016 census to 2021 was not particularly noteworthy, Mr. Evans, I would say.

Mr. Evans: Yeah. It was 2.98 per cent.

Member Eremenko: Yeah. That's right.

Certainly, the 2024 figures have represented a higher population growth rate since the period prior, so I would expect that rate, that new rate of growth, to continue. But the net addition of 2,000 units is going to create a big surge, I would estimate, 5,000 exclusively, and I would imagine that's quite conservative, as a result of the new builds that are coming online.

Mr. Evans: The new build is in that part just above Richardson Way. Is that where it is?

Member Eremenko: That's right. That's Currie Barracks. Several hundred hectares of land are there. The five parcels that are currently under review or accepting applications are at the north end of the Currie Barracks, so just south of 33rd Avenue there. The other, where Viscount Bennett, the old high school, used to be is just north of the 33rd Avenue lettering there. You can see a bit of a larger space. That's going to eventually accommodate 1,250 units.

Mr. Evans: Eventually within the next 10 years.

Member Eremenko: I think they'd probably get about halfway there as well. Again, crystal balling here a little bit, of course, it totally depends on our local economy and how the market is doing and how the province is doing overall. I would say that I would expect that for both of those projects we would get about halfway there in 10 years.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you again for your presentation. Much appreciated. We look forward to the written submission when that's available.

Member Eremenko: Thank you.

The Chair: Our next presenter is Travis Imber, who is not here. Okay. That lightens up the schedule a bit.

Michael Doyle.

Mr. Doyle: Good morning.

The Chair: Good morning.

Mr. Doyle: My name is Michael Doyle. I'm a resident of Calgary-Acadia. I was born in Victoria, moved to Calgary in 1968. Except for some years of farming near Longview, Alberta, I've been a Calgary resident since the time of my move. My career has actually been in the international energy sector, and along the way I became a member of the ICD in 2009. In Calgary-Acadia I reside in a plus-55 community where my building has 281 residents, and it opened in 2022, which is long after the last electoral redistribution. My building is one of four in the complex, so one of these towers is 281 people. My story is also growth. It's not crystal ball growth; it's on-the-ground growth.

There are several other large rental apartments that have recently been completed within the same area – I would call it Kingsland – as part of Calgary-Acadia. It's clear that Calgary-Acadia has experienced a strong population growth.

I believe that this commission has an important role to play in shaping the democratic landscape for the next electoral cycle, and I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today. At the same time I don't bring any recommendations in terms of adding anything or even substantially changing anything subject to the constraints that you see that come out of the rest of your process.

What I really see right now is that we have an electoral district that I think does a fair job of representing what I would call a socioeconomic community. That really leaves me to say that I'd hate to see it broken apart. I say that recognizing that there's a number of realities that you as a commission have to face here. In a sense, my purpose in coming today is really to advocate for electoral boundaries that uphold democratic principles and ensure fair representation for all the citizens of Alberta, having kind of made my point, if you will, about what I think are the unique characteristics of our district.

I can go a step further and say that I took the time to look at section 14 of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act as recently revised. As you're well aware, it does list six factors that should be or, I guess, it's now may be taken into account. I was a little surprised at that revision to the act. "May" sounds kind of like: well, maybe; maybe not. If I look at those factors, I think ignoring any of them would be inappropriate. Otherwise, I think they should all be front of mind as you go through this process, and I don't think it's germane for me to list all of those. I'm sure you're well aware of them.

I think the one that applies most critically to the community that I'm part of is preservation of a community of interest. The Calgary-Acadia riding as currently defined, I think, as I've mentioned, does do a good job of gathering people that I think have like socioeconomic characteristics. The objective of maintaining an electoral district of reasonable size without unduly diluting our current community is, I think, going to be the key challenge that you have with respect to looking at our electoral riding. I think when you go through that, you're going to have to look at all of those other principles, which are things like continuity and not creating isolated islands or snake-shaped ridings and things of that nature.

Other than that, in conclusion, I'd say that my belief is that fair electoral boundaries are essential for a healthy democracy, and I think we're in your hands in that regard. I guess other than that, I'd really just want to wish you well in the process and say that I think that we've got in Calgary-Acadia what represents a fair community of common interest as it stands today, one that's seen some very rapid growth – I don't know the numbers – and put it to you as being your challenge to see if we can maintain our community without distributing it in a variety of directions.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Doyle.

Mr. Evans, any questions or comments?

Mr. Evans: Mr. Doyle, thank you for your submission. What I've understood you to tell the commission today is that you would consider there's been significant population growth within your community, within Calgary-Acadia?

Mr. Doyle: That's correct.

Mr. Evans: The numbers would say that your population growth has decreased by 2.1 per cent, so where's the development that's happening that's not being represented in the census data?

Mr. Doyle: Yeah. That's an interesting number, and I've got to admit that I was unaware of that.

Mr. Evans: From your perspective, you've got a sense that is different than the numbers, and I'm interested in knowing what that is and how you come by that. Where would you say the growth . . .

11:25

Mr. Doyle: Well, I'm in the northwest corner of the Heritage-Macleod intersection in a development that Trico completed in 2022. As I say, I'm in one of four towers, and my community, my tower just reached an occupancy of 281 people. They just told us that last week. I know that at the Glenmore and Macleod intersection two fairly large rental apartments have gone up. I know that two blocks north of me, north of 75th Avenue – but again, within Kingsland there's quite a large rental apartment complex that is being completed right now. It's not being occupied yet.

Yeah. I've got to admit that you've surprised me a little bit with that number that I didn't have an awareness of. Maybe I'm a little bit guilty of looking at what I see immediately adjacent to me.

Mr. Evans: That's valuable, though. You're seeing high-density development.

Mr. Doyle: Certainly, you know, I can only conjure up the possibility that those developments would actually remove people from the population roll while they're being developed. Really, mine, as I say, was completed in 2022. Two large ones at Glenmore-Macleod. One of them has yet to be fully occupied. The other one was put on stream about a year ago.

Yeah. That's an interesting statistic, and you're wiser than me here.

Mr. Evans: One last question, Mr. Doyle. Of all the locations you could have picked in Calgary, what drew you to your particular neighbourhood?

Mr. Doyle: Oh, gee, that's probably a story that doesn't have any real relevance here. I was living immediately adjacent to the downtown and was spending 50 per cent of my time outside of Calgary. When my children left home, I decided that I wanted to not own anything, so I moved into a plus-55 building. When I did my ICD program back in 2009, a fellow by the name of Wayne Chiu was in my class, and he at the time was chairman of Trico. I'm not sure if he still holds that role. He was a guy that I worked with in the class, and I heard he was building a plus-55 building. I felt very comfortable with the guy, so I committed to his project when it was still unoccupied and have lived there since 2022.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you so much. Appreciate that.

The Chair: Thank you.
Susan?

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for your presentation. I find it quite interesting. My daughter lives in Haysboro, and I drive into that area all the time. I agree with your observations. On the main transportation routes there are some high-rises going up, and that's where I see the growth in that area just from in the car. I agree with those comments. Thank you for that.

Mr. Doyle: Sure. Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Maybe I'll just ask almost a philosophical question. We've talked about the rapid population growth in Calgary over and over again. We've also, though, spent a lot of time on this panel in rural Alberta, and we'll spend some more here coming up later this week, and next week we head up north. We hear in Calgary and Edmonton a lot of talk about community of interest and just the rapid population growth, but the flip side of that is in rural Alberta they're dealing with just vast geography, and it's a real challenge. They have their own challenges.

I guess I'd just ask: do you have any thoughts? You know, if you don't, then feel free not to answer. If you were talking to someone from rural Alberta and they said, "Listen, we've got these huge, big, vast geographies to deal with; that needs to be a consideration as well," how do you balance out the population growth with just the challenge of representing such a large area with a sparse population?

Mr. Doyle: Yeah. I'm in kind of a unique place to maybe look at that in that I farmed in east Longview for about 20 years. Still a little bit active in that community, but not so much. You know, for the most part when I first moved there and bought my first farm in 1971, it was certainly pretty rural. It's changed a bit now. I guess the answer, in my view, would simply be that, you know, we're constitutionally obligated to try our best to do one person, one vote. I don't know if it answers your question, but it seems to me that an inevitable consequence of that constitutional obligation, right, however you want to see it, is that the cities are going to end up holding more electoral divisions than the rural areas. I think that's just a fact. I don't know if that answers your question.

Mr. Clark: It does. Yeah.

I mean, Justice Miller can give you a far more eloquent answer than this. Anyway, in Canada it's interesting. It's effective representation, so it really is two things. It is the relative voting power but also tempered a bit by: we do have this vast geography. So we do have an ability to weigh those a little bit, but I think your point is taken, that ultimately we need to make sure we're not going too far one way.

Mr. Doyle: Yeah. I guess the challenge is to see them as two separate communities. I think people do get alarmed if you start mixing rural and urban votes, and that kind of adds to the challenge if you want to preserve communities of interest yet try and allocate votes in the right way. I wish you well in that process.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Doyle. As you probably know or may not know, the electoral divisions in Alberta are numbered from 1 to 87. A little bit of trivia, Calgary-Acadia is number 1.

Mr. Doyle: I did not know that.

Mr. Clark: There you go.

Mr. Doyle: I did wonder who would handle the issue of how many ridings should one really have to have an effective Legislature because I know that in a business world a board of 89 people would be extraordinary.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Joan Stauffer. I believe we have three more – sorry; including you, ma'am – presenters before lunch.

Ms Stauffer: Well, mine won't last very long.

The Chair: That's what they all say, but we always keep you here.

Ms Stauffer: Well, I haven't spoke publicly like this for over 30 years, so this is a challenge for me.

Good morning. I was raised on a farm in the Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills constituency, and I've lived in Calgary-Acadia for seven years in the past, Calgary-Fish Creek for five years, and have been in Calgary-Glenmore for 32 years. My understanding is that Calgary-Glenmore has exactly the right number of people and we were at the right percentage. I may be a little bit off, but I think that's so.

Although I was marinated in political discussions and activism, I limited myself to being a dedicated voter, only participating in a couple of campaigns over many years. I now want to support and participate in the democratic process. I believe the redrawing of the constituency boundaries is a cornerstone of democratic process, so here I am.

I believe the homogeneous constituencies promote and support democracy and that hybrid constituencies do not. By homogeneous I think of suburbs, inner city, bedroom communities, farms, and small towns supported by the farming community. For example, Banff, Canmore, Lake Louise, and Jasper have more in common with each other than any one of them with a bedroom community or even a rural agricultural community, but they're often lumped together as rural, and they really aren't. By hybrid I think of constituencies with a mix of suburbs, city, farming, tourist destinations, and bedroom communities. I don't believe that large towns, especially booming bedroom communities, have common issues with our farming population, but there they are.

What I hope does not happen as you're redrawing the boundaries is that communities are being split. Why is that? Well, it can cause divisions within the communities and create the feeling of not being heard, especially if they're a minority of the constituency, and that contributes to lower voter turnout. It can cause confusion as to where to vote when there are new boundaries, resulting in voters not even bothering to vote, and there's an increased chance of more conflicting interests and focus and the probability of the needs of the minority groups not being recognized, and it dilutes and splits the elected representative's focus on the constituents' needs.

11:35

I also don't want to see a lot of artificial boundaries used. Examples of the artificial boundaries are minor streets and roads or any boundary going through an intact community. This is versus familiar community boundaries, such as historical boundaries, rivers, main transportation corridors, and cultural communities.

The problem with artificial boundaries is also, again, that it causes confusion of those excluded from their communities, creating a sense of alienation, with less interest in voting. Voting, as we know, is the mainstay of democracy. If it's perceived as gerrymandering, it will reduce trust in the government and in the democratic process and can reduce motivation to vote for anyone. Conflicting needs may be very high in hybrid constituencies, and elected representatives will be less able to represent the populations to the extent they want to and are elected to do.

Speaking from my historical background – and I'm going out of any expertise I have – I still believe that the representation and manageable size of the rural, as in farming, constituency is critical. You've spoken to this, and I'm glad that you're really struggling with that, because it is a big struggle. What farmers need from government is very complex and different from all other constituents and is not understood by people not involved in the agricultural industry. I think it's important to have real representation of the rural population. When they are a constituency minority, it's impossible for them to be fully represented.

In closing, the positive outcomes of homogeneous constituencies are that people have a greater chance of feeling they belong and thus participating, of being heard and speaking up, of being well represented in the government, of access to their representative; and the elected representative has a greater chance of being fully informed and able to act on the constituent's behalf.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today and for your part in this process. It is good that you've taken it on on our behalf.

The Chair: Thank you. Thank you very much.

Mr. Clark, any questions?

Mr. Clark: No questions in particular. I guess I'm hearing, if I look at Calgary-Glenmore – let me just look at Calgary-Glenmore. Yes. You're right. The growth seems to have lagged a bit. Sorry. You said you live in Calgary-Glenmore, correct?

Ms Stauffer: Yes.

Mr. Clark: So is that your experience? Are you finding that there's – you've obviously been around Calgary: lots of development, lots of places. Do you feel like there's a lot of infill or new builds happening in Calgary-Glenmore?

Ms Stauffer: Just starting.

Mr. Clark: Just starting. Okay.

Ms Stauffer: We're getting multifamily ones built. We're getting carriage houses. Yes. So it is growing.

Mr. Clark: Okay. Great. Thank you.

The Chair: Dr. Martin?

Dr. Martin: That really was my question. If Calgary-Glenmore is such an attractive part of the town, if I may say so, then people should be attracted to go there. In order to do that, we have to have infill; we have to have basement suites; we have to do a lot of the usual sorts of things. In your experience you see construction under way?

Ms Stauffer: Oh yes, and we see lots of houses are being sold, the older ones, and taken off for the countryside, I guess, and being replaced.

Dr. Martin: Right. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.
Susan?

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for coming out. I just have a question that I'm not sure if you would know the answer. At Glenmore reservoir, if you are going to the north, the Glenmore Trail jogs around a little neighbourhood that sits adjacent to Lakeview. Do you know why they cut that one out?

Ms Stauffer: Probably to put it in with the – what else? I don't know what it goes with.

Mrs. Samson: This is not the right map.

Mr. Evans: Are you talking the north community?

Mrs. Samson: Yeah. Why is that cut?

Mr. Evans: It's called the North Glenmore community association.

Ms Stauffer: It's just a tiny little – maybe because of Crowchild Trail. What have they put it with? They've put it with the one north of it, right?

Mrs. Samson: They put it with Acadia. Oh, sorry. Elbow. They put it with Elbow.

Ms Stauffer: Elbow.

Mrs. Samson: Yeah. They just cut it right off. The Glenmore Trail cuts it off. Well, no. It doesn't cut off. They just cut that one out.

Mr. Evans: Yeah. It's the North Glenmore Park community. Yeah. It's a bit of an odd artifact. Glenmore Trail hasn't always been there. The community was there before Glenmore.

Mrs. Samson: They want in. Okay. Got it. Thank you.

Ms Stauffer: That's a natural boundary, but we work together. We get each other's newsletters.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

Mr. Evans: It's a good test actually. Thank you.

Can you let me know, like, showing on the map, what part of Calgary-Glenmore. . .

The Chair: That's Calgary-Acadia.

Mr. Evans: Oh, sorry. I'm looking at the Calgary-Glenmore map here. If we can put up a Calgary-Glenmore map. I'm wondering where you're seeing the development. I've got an aerial view, and I don't see.

Ms Stauffer: It's sprinkled. It's sprinkled through.

Mr. Evans: Okay. They're infills. Is that what they are?

Ms Stauffer: Yeah. They're infills, and they're not all – you know, people are actually putting in new single homes, too. Huge single-family dwellings as well, so that prevents growth.

Mr. Evans: They're buying a house, razing it and then putting in a new house.

Ms Stauffer: I think somebody's putting in a new one. That's right.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms Stauffer: Thank you.

The Chair: Our next presenter is Ruben Nelson.

Mr. Nelson: Good morning.

The Chair: Good morning.

Mr. Nelson: Thank you for doing this. I know it's required by law, but each of you is expressing a commitment as citizens to Alberta. I was born here a while ago at the end of the Depression, lived in Ramsay, lived in Scarboro. I've lived in Varsity Acres as an adult when I was on the faculty at U of C. I'm now living in Lac des Arcs, which is in Banff-Kananaskis, so if you could show that. If you're interested, I'm one of the few Canadians who has actually lived a life as a professional futurist. So you want to ask questions about the future, we'll take a crack at it.

The Chair: You're our man.

Mr. Nelson: If you look at Banff-Kananaskis as it now exists, you'll see that it has kept intact something that is increasingly precious to those of us who live there. The first thing I want to say to you is that you are used to the fact, those of you who know Calgary at all, that weather forecasts here often start by looking to the mountains. Those mountains you see are Banff-Kananaskis. That's the range from north to south. It's the Bow River valley and the Bow River water system. You have the Bow River. On the north side you have the Ghost River flowing into the Bow. On the south side you have the Kananaskis River flowing into the Bow. You also have, of course, the Elbow.

What I want to point out doesn't appear in the newspapers. Particularly over the last 25 years, as our environmental consciousness has grown, people living in that area – and I'm thinking from ordinary people to folks in voluntary organizations, churches, and the local governments – are learning to work together and to treat that landscape as a landscape that has its own integrity.

Now, when the federal commission wandered through here about three years ago, they suggested that there was a division between Banff and Canmore, so that Banff would have been in one federal constituency and Canmore in the other. In other words, it would have divided that just about in the middle. People heard a lot about: don't do that. I'm not suggesting that you're going to suggest that, but you will have to look at all kinds of permutations and combinations to fit population into landscape.

So, the first thing and the most important thing this morning is to say: please respect the integrity of that upper Bow Valley landscape and keep it in the same riding so that the people who are there, who are slowly learning to work together and treat it as a single entity, so that – yes. Waiparous is up the Ghost River, and people who live in Waiparous may not know anybody who lives down in Kananaskis country. As you probably know, there aren't many down there.

11:45

But bit by bit we are learning to treat that landscape with greater respect, and if you chew it up into pieces, that's going to become impossible. Let me stop there on that point.

The second question, and obviously important to you, is the growth question. You probably know that Canmore is growing as fast as you can build it. If you've been there recently, you'll find that the amount of new building in Canmore is quite extraordinary. My earliest memories of Canmore go back to the mid-1940s, and I've never seen anything like it. The mayor 25 years ago developed a growth management strategy not to increase growth but to manage the growth that they had because it was becoming unmanageable, and they're back to that state now.

If the Three Sisters lands are allowed to follow the plans that the company has for them, it will double the size of Canmore from roughly 16,000 to 30,000, which means that you have a continuous town from what is now Dead Man's Flats all the way up to almost the park gates.

You may not be aware that there are people, many people, in the valley who don't want that to happen. There is an issue before the courts. That's a slim chance, but if it did happen, that the courts decide that the government of Alberta must engage in a new environmental impact assessment rather than go with the one that was done in 1993, because 1993 in these terms is lifetimes ago, the final population of Canmore, instead of adding 15,000, it may add fewer than 5,000. It's not at all clear how that will turn out, and it

won't all happen in 10 years, but the decision of the courts will happen during the time you're making this. One of the difficulties you have in this riding is the uncertainty, because you've got the uncertainty of that particular proposal and folks taking issues to the court.

You also have the uncertainty that the growth in the area is largely people in Alberta who have done better than average because the prices are – I mean, Canmore is now the most expensive town in Alberta to live in. It means it's increasingly pricey, and that's possible because Alberta, as we all know, over the last 50, 60 years has done better than Canada. Most of that is about the price of oil. And, as we know, the price of oil is not a magical number, but it sure is a number that is wispy. It's: now you see it, now you don't.

Again, I would just – we know that the price of oil now is lower than the estimate the province had for this time of year, and we also know that in the fight with the U.S. government about Canada's existence and its economy, the Prime Minister has said that if need be, he will tax exported oil to the United States.

Now, we all know that would make many people here unhappy, particularly the Premier, but I'm just saying that what you're into is – there are perfectly credible adjacent futures in which the growth in this area grinds to a halt. I can't tell you where to put your money. I know where the market is putting its money, and I know where the common conversation is putting its money, but, as Pierre Poilievre found in the last election, you can be prepared for a future that does not happen, and what you're faced with is a future you had not planned on, were not prepared for. And I'm just saying that when it comes to this riding, the uncertainties that you face are probably greater than any other riding in the province. End of story.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Nelson.

Questions or comments, Mr. Evans?

Mr. Evans: No. Thank you.

The Chair: Susan?

Mrs. Samson: Do you have an opinion on – previous commissions pulled Canmore out of that area. Do you believe that that's vital to that mountain area, that Canmore should stay within the Banff corridor?

Mr. Nelson: Oh, yes, and the federal commission did listen to us. Yellowknife is this long thing that runs through the mountains all the way up to Jasper. The people in the area have said, "We understand why they did it, and it's not entirely satisfactory just as a riding to get around," but are far happier with it so that, for example, when Jasper burned, people in Banff not only raised money for them, but it meant that people who were going to spend time in Jasper now spent it in Banff.

We're tied together deeply, historically through family ties, through business ties. So, yes, keep the Bow River system from what used to be Jimmy Simpson's lodge at Bow Lake down to the edge of Calgary if need be, which is where we are now. Keep that as an integral system with the Kananaskis River, with all the rivers I named, as they belong together ecologically. They'll be treated together in terms of tourist and other development, so we need a riding in which the MLA can exercise some responsibility and gather the people in order to make decisions together.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you very much for your presentation. I've got one – well, I have two questions. The first is: what about Lake Louise? Does anybody live there? It's on some maps but not on others, but I swear I've been there a lot. Lots of people.

Mr. Nelson: Well, as you probably know, once you're in the parks, there's no population growth; the only population growth is tourists. The national parks have marked an increasing number of roads within the parks that are now under control in the sense that you cannot drive your car there. You have to go by bus, or you can only go at certain times of the day, and that will get worse.

Dr. Martin: My follow-up question: is it not that the superintendent of the Banff national park is sort of a God; he or she controls everything? I know this from my experience of Jasper. I've spent a lot of time with superintendents there, where their opinion is the final opinion. Quite apart from the MLA, the representative for the park is the superintendent. Am I wrong?

Mr. Nelson: Not entirely. The superintendent reports to folks in Ottawa, and if you know anything about that, folks in Ottawa are of the view that they have the right to pass on laws and directives to the superintendent. So they don't see the superintendent as God; they see him as a public servant who is beholden to Him.

Dr. Martin: But my point, then, is . . .

Mr. Nelson: Well, if I just may, the other point I was going to say is that increasingly in the Banff area the Banff park superintendent and his staff are involved not just with Banff but with Canmore and other projects, that I mentioned, where we're learning to work together and see it as a whole, so there's much less sense today than may have been the case in the past that Banff lives unto itself. It's recognizing that it has a vested interest in what happens outside its borders and needs to learn to co-operate with this in a way that's absolutely mutual.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Just a quick question. You'd mentioned all the potential of new builds in Canmore, and there's obviously a lot of uncertainty at what's happening in Canmore. I'm curious. Do you have a thought or any data that tells us how many of those residences are permanent sort of first home versus weekend, recreation?

11:55

Mr. Nelson: I'm not giving you exact data. I was hired by the town of Canmore to do a citizen engagement process in 2005. At the time about 5 or 6 per cent of the homes in Canmore were weekenders. If you go back into the – I mean, Calgarians have been weekendening in Banff since the 1970s, when the mine closed at the end of the '70s, and then, of course, the Olympics came. Today it's almost 25 per cent, which is the reason that the town has put a tax on homes that are empty for six months of the year. I know people who, when they look down their street, can see two other neighbours on a street of 27 homes, and all the other 27 are owned by weekenders. So that's a concern.

It's not the kind of thing – the development within towns is, within limits, subject to the whims of the town and the decisions it makes, but a lot of it, of course, is set out in the Alberta municipal act and other acts. There are acts on the books that are known locally as the Canmore acts, which were acts put in place deliberately by the government of Alberta to say to the town of Canmore: "You cannot do what you just did. Every other town can

do that, but you've made a decision that we're unhappy with." If you think about it, the vested interests in Canmore at this point are pretty serious money. Much of that is Calgary money. Much of that is well connected to provincial governments in Alberta, and has been going back, I assume, to the Liberals in 1905. So this is not news, but it does mean that there are pressures in Canmore that reach Edmonton given the pressures of developers and serious money. There are things that the town of Canmore will not even consider because they know that if they consider them, the province will simply say, "You can't do that" and pass regulations to not allow it.

It's fraught in all kinds of ways. What I'm suggesting in terms of at least keeping the landscape together and the people on it, is to at least let those who are there now and will be there work out these things in some sense together, together with the park, together with the folks who live in Ranchland, up in the MD. It's a very interesting part of the province. I don't envy you, but I'm just saying: to the extent that you can, leave it intact. You may have to add to it for population reasons – I'll let you work that out – but don't decide to cut it in the middle and give half to somebody and another half to somebody else.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Nelson. Appreciate your submission.

Mr. Nelson: Thank you. You have been kind and patient.

The Chair: Thank you.

We've got one more presenter before lunch. Two? Since when? Okay. Sorry.

You know what? Julia Law, I missed you, so sorry. Can I have you present first, in fairness?

Ms Law: Yeah. Sure.

The Chair: I thought we only had one. That's why I was a little more relaxed with Mr. Nelson. Okay.

Ms Law: Thank you for having me and providing me with this opportunity. My name is Julia Law, and I am the vice-president external at the students' union for the University of Calgary. I'm also joined by my president, Naomie Bakana, also from the same organization.

My job is to promote the welfare of my fellow undergraduates, who elected me to carry out this work. In a way I'm accountable to my own electorate. My constituents are 30,000 undergraduates, most of whom study at the campus beside Crowchild Trail, next to the neighbourhood of Varsity. This being said, this places the University of Calgary and its students within the bounds of Calgary-Varsity, which is what I'm here to talk about today.

This electoral district includes the neighbourhoods of Banff Trail, University Heights, Brentwood, Dalhousie, Parkdale, Charleswood, Point McKay as well as Varsity itself. Analysis of almost 5,000 student voters in 2018 found that 48 per cent of the students I represent live in one of these areas. For more recent numbers we can look at the census in 2021. This census provided that 11.7 per cent of Calgarians were aged between 15 and 24. In Alberta most undergraduate or prospective undergraduate students are between these ages. As of the census this demographic made up more than 12 per cent of the respective populations of Varsity, Dalhousie, and Charleswood. They made

up 17 per cent of Banff Trail, 19 per cent of Brentwood, and 22 per cent of University Heights.

They were comparatively less represented in Parkdale and Point McKay, where they took up 6 per cent of each, but the census also found that these neighbourhoods contain a significant number of professionals in the field of education. In fact, the 2021 census tells us that in each neighbourhood represented by Calgary-Varsity, educational services appear in the top five professions held by the residents. Just as students live in these districts, so do university staff.

Students also play an important role in the economies of Calgary-Varsity. The SU oversees around 300 clubs, dozens of which carry out charitable and volunteer work in these neighbourhoods each year. One could say that in terms of size and organization students are a neighbourhood. To illustrate, we note that Calgary-Varsity had 45,000 residents in 2021, which is aligned with the commission's target population range. At that time the number of students enrolled at the University of Calgary, undergraduates and graduates, was 35,000. Not all of those students lived within Calgary-Varsity in 2021, but if they did, they would have comprised 80 per cent of the overall population within that district. We expect that in recent years students have only come to amount to more of Calgary-Varsity's population.

The government of Alberta estimates that Calgary's population has increased by 18 per cent since 2020. In this time, enrolment at the University of Calgary grew by 10 per cent. Our total student body is now 38,000 strong. As the student and city populations increase, it is important that the representation of the urban centre also increases. We'd like to bring attention back to the students outside of Calgary-Varsity, whether it be our own constituents or attendees of other institutions. These students are dispersed across the city, and it is important that their voices are amplified to the same extent as those living within the same boundary of the institutions they attend.

Of course, some students who live in Calgary-Varsity move there just to be closer to their campus. Still, even if they are just temporary residents, it takes an average of 4.5 years to complete a bachelor's degree, and pursuing a master's adds another 2.6. Students who won't call Calgary-Varsity home forever will be there long enough to understand the needs of the communities that welcome them during this transitional period. They'll be there long enough to be affected by the decisions of their MLA, and their student-focused voting patterns as well as political participation will set up success for students who come to live in their communities after them, which is highly likely. This is to say nothing of the staff who live in these areas, likely on a more permanent basis.

The university supports thousands of jobs in Calgary on and off campus. Voters with no personal involvement with the university also benefit from its continued health. One example is the millions of tourism dollars that the institution generates by hosting sports and other events. With an estimated annual economic impact of \$16.5 billion the University of Calgary is a key component of Calgary's economic health. Our city is the fastest growing in Canada. It will only come to rely even more on its mutually beneficial relationship with the university.

With this in mind, the commission should be aware that under the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act most districts should have populations of no more than 25 per cent above or below the average size, as we have mentioned earlier. CBC reports that of the nine districts in Alberta that currently exceed the guidance, five are in Calgary. These are Calgary-Buffalo, Calgary-Foothills, Calgary-North East, Calgary-South East, and Calgary-Shaw.

We know that the commission will have heard or will hear from Calgarians who believe the city is not appropriately represented, and we have to agree. The city that has allowed the university to flourish so successfully, to the billion-dollar benefit of Alberta as a whole, deserves more of a voice than it currently receives. We urge the commission to pay particular attention to the residents of these districts and whether or not they feel adequately represented. Proper representation within these districts ensures Calgary representation as a whole will increase but also ensures that the voices of students across the urban environment will be heard. For our part we strongly recommend that the Calgary-Varsity region is preserved as a provincial electoral district by the commission.

12:05

The campus community and the surrounding areas it supports deserve to have a consolidated voice that understands their unique needs in the areas of economic development, infrastructure, or support for education and research. We encourage the commission to look towards the success of Calgary-Varsity's current boundaries for other institutions and their surrounding communities around the city, ensuring that the student voice continues to be adequately heard and amplified. We therefore believe that the current boundaries of Calgary-Varsity are an appropriate recognition of the university and its affiliates as a community of interest in the spirit of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act.

Thank you again for your time and consideration.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your presentation and for your concise focus on this electoral division. My apologies for making you wait. It was handwritten in here, and I deferred to the typewritten. Sorry.

Ms Law: That's okay. No worries.

The Chair: Mr. Clark, any questions?

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Calgary-Varsity was just about exactly average previously and is now just a little below the average. I'm just curious if you felt there were some communities that you could add into Calgary-Varsity, in particular around its edges. Is there a spot you think we should or shouldn't consider?

Ms Law: I think that generally speaking, if we're talking about students residing in certain areas, it would definitely be around, say, the Foothills medical campus. That being said, there is development going into areas such as the university district that would slowly start to increase the population in Calgary-Varsity, so it is important to consider those developments.

Mr. Clark: Great. And the university district is currently inside Calgary-Varsity?

Ms Law: Yes.

Mr. Clark: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: On the south end.

Ms Law: Yes. It's at the edge.

Mr. Clark: Got it. Thank you.

The Chair: Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you. I'm very interested in your argument about the impact of students. I'm on the board of governors at the MacEwan University, which represents 25 per cent of the

commuter traffic in and out of Edmonton every day, so it and the points you raise about students are very much on my mind. You feel, from your studies, that quite a few of them are finding residences outside Calgary-Varsity, which is rather what one would expect, but do you continue to see growth of residences on the campus?

Ms Law: The university as a whole is trying to grow by 10,000 students, so it will be in their best interest to start to include more residences on campus. A lot of developments in the area include the university district, which might not be as student focused, just for particular students, but you can see families and then their children who are students living in those apartment complexes.

Dr. Martin: Great. Thank you very much.

Ms Law: Of course.

Mrs. Samson: No questions, but thank you for the presentation.

Ms Law: You're welcome.

Mr. Evans: No questions. Thank you.

The Chair: Well, thank you again. Did you submit what you just presented in written form at all?

Ms Law: We will be submitting.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

Gord Paynter. You were scheduled for 11:30. We're 40 minutes late. We're still faster than most emergency rooms, so don't complain.

Gordon Paynter: No problem at all. I budgeted for a slight overage. Not a problem. I'll read from my presentation, which has been submitted.

I am from the area of Calgary-Acadia, again, a political hotbed apparently for all the presentations you've received. I'm also active on the Willow Park community association, which is one of the communities in the area. Worse, I'm a professional engineer, recently retired, so I have an opinion about lots of things.

A quick consensus. I think I want to empathize with the job that's been assigned to the boundaries commission. Given the growth in Alberta in the last 10 years, from about 4.1 million to 5 million, to only increase by two seats does seem a bit restrictive. However, I did do a little bit of background reading, and I do see that Ontario, which has had growth equal to Alberta in many cases – certainly in the Toronto metropolitan area – has only 124 electoral districts for its 14 million people, which is about 100,000 per district. So I would conclude that Alberta continues to be well represented per elector even if we do see an increase in voters per electoral district.

I think the critical thing, as several people have pointed out, is really the effectiveness of that presentation. However, I do note that, like some of the other presentations, Calgary and Edmonton grew disproportionately compared to the rest of the province. Calgary and Edmonton metropolitan areas grew by 550,000 people in the last 10 years, which represented about 71 per cent of the total increase in the population. Calgary and Edmonton represent about 45 of Alberta's 87 ridings – about half of the ridings – but saw 71 per cent of the population increase.

There is a slide in my presentation, but I'll just briefly touch on it. Essentially, Calgary's share of the population provincially has grown from about 32 and a half per cent to 34 per cent, Edmonton

marginally decreased from 32 and a half per cent to 32, and the rest of Alberta, meaning everything outside of Calgary and Edmonton, decreased from about 35 per cent to 34 per cent. So there is an argument that Calgary continues to grow disproportionately over and above the other areas of the province.

When I look at the 2017 boundaries commission report, they did an excellent job allocating ridings. There were two electoral district exceptions in northern Alberta, which are completely justifiable. The 2017 final report of the Alberta boundaries commission did note that, you know, there are really only three options available to the councillors: increase the number of constituencies, which is out of your control; reduce the number of overall seats in rural areas; or create blended ridings.

Arguments can be made on both sides. I am an urban resident but have deep roots in rural Alberta. I am not opposed to leaving the number of rural seats unchanged. I think there are lots of arguments in Canada. We can only look at the examples of other provinces federally in Confederation. Prince Edward Island, for example, has 179,000 population, not voters. Obviously, voters will be less than that. They retained four seats federally, as they have since the beginning of Confederation. However, Canada has recognized that and continues to grow the number of seats in Parliament, and I think we're now up to 343. I see the same logic prevailing provincially. As I mentioned earlier, in Ontario the seats continue to be added in urban areas while the rural areas retain the representation that they've historically had. I think that that's probably what we are looking at here.

In short, I would advocate that given the increase in population across the province, Calgary certainly should look at receiving at least one more seat, likely in the periphery, where we see the largest growth in those new communities. MLA Eremenko referred to that as well.

Finally, I'll just talk about a success story for the previous boundary commission, which is Calgary-Acadia. In 2023 the MLA was elected by a very slim majority of seven seats. In fact, it was very similar in Glenmore as well. After the official recount it was 25 seats and after the judicial review was 22 seats. It's a well-designed riding – contiguous boundaries, roughly similar ages of communities built between 1950-52 and 1968, demographics are similar – but the important part was that that was not a safe seat. That election could have gone either way. Every vote counted, and it was up to voters to make that difference. So, in my books, that was a success story. That was a well-designed riding, where the previous boundary commission did a good job of making sure that voters' interests could be heard at the ballot box. Democracy worked in part because of the careful design of that riding.

Thank you.

12:15

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Evans, any questions or comments?

Mr. Evans: No. Thank you for your presentation.

The Chair: Mrs. Samson.

Mrs. Samson: I like that story about the voters. I did know that the MLA in Acadia only won by a few and that is quite – like, to tie it back to the boundaries, I hadn't thought about that. That's excellent.

Gordon Paynter: Yes, indeed. I'll also mention that I was there for the official recount. I watched all 23,000 votes get recounted, and it's a great exercise in democracy. There was absolutely no question that, even though it was a narrow victory, the right answer prevailed.

Mrs. Samson: Excellent. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Dr. Martin?

Dr. Martin: Nothing from me.

Mr. Clark: That's fabulous. Thank you. I just appreciate the good people of Acadia coming out and representing. So thank you.

Gordon Paynter: Yeah. It's very surprising.

I'll mention one other thing. I think MLA Eremenko mentioned transit-oriented development and pressures on growth. I think Calgary-Acadia will see average growth as we see across the city. There is a large transit-oriented development scheduled for Anderson LRT station area, but I'll note that it's mostly aspirational. It won't really come to fruition until after the green line is in place and parking pressure is reduced on Anderson station. It depends on the Tower Chrysler dealership basically being turned into apartment buildings and potentially part of south centre, neither of which is really going to happen in the next few years. So I think that can be safely postponed to the next electoral commission.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Paynter. Typical of an engineer, we finished perfectly at 10 minutes.

Gordon Paynter: Thank you, sir.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will adjourn until 1 p.m. for continuation of the hearings.

[The hearing adjourned at 12:17 p.m.]



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

Calgary

Tuesday, June 10, 2025
1:02 p.m.

Transcript No. 14

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission

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Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Calgary

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Angela Grace

Tala Abu Hayyaneh, President, Students' Association of Mount Royal University

Marty Heeg

Bernadett Maxwell

Lorraine Moulding

Daniel Nelles, Chair, City of Airdrie Library Board, and Secretary, Airdrie Arts and Culture Council

Michael Parker

Julie Pithers

Jim Ridley

Irfan Sabir, MLA, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall

Mariana Mejia Salazar, Vice-president External, Students' Association of Mount Royal University

1:02 p.m.

Tuesday, June 10, 2025

[Justice Miller in the chair]

The Chair: Well, good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to the second session, the afternoon session, of the Electoral Boundaries Commission hearing in Calgary. By way of background, you can see the commission members, and I urge you to go to the website to see the bios of each of us.

Our practice has been to allow for a block of time, 7 to 10 minutes, for presentation, depending on how long the list is, and then engage in conversation. Sometimes there's a lot of dialogue between the commission members.

Just as a reminder, the presentations are recorded, and they will be on the website of the Electoral Boundaries Commission shortly. The presentations are also transcribed in written form, and the *Hansard* version will be on the website as well.

I'm going to go quickly through the timeline here. I've noticed that sometimes my introduction takes up way too much time, so that's why I've directed you to the website.

A couple of the main issues that are pushing the commission to do its work are, number one, the government has passed legislation to expand the number of seats in the provincial Legislature from 87 to 89, so we have two new ridings to deal with. And we've got a huge population surge to respond to, in terms of our task.

Before we get to our task, I wanted to show you a bit of our timeline. Our timeline is outlined on the screen. The commission itself was appointed by the Speaker of the Legislature in late March. That starts the commission's clock running, and we have then 12 months within which to come up with a final report. In the interim the commission met a couple of times in April as a commission to talk about procedures and schedules, and we started the public hearings in late May. We're going throughout all of June and hearing from the public in presentations just like this. This is our third week. We will conclude the first round of public hearings in late June, and we will deliberate, taking into consideration in our deliberations the presentations we hear throughout the province, the population numbers that we have before us, and the existing boundaries and proposed changes that we hear.

We will issue a report, which has come to be known as an interim report, by late October. That report will be filed with the Speaker of the Legislature and will become public. If you've presented here and you want to follow our journey, you can look at that report. After that report is made public, we will have a second round of public hearings. After that round we will be obligated by the legislation to come up with a final report, and that must be filed in late March 2026 with the Speaker of the Legislature. The Legislature will then take that report and pass appropriate enabling legislation as they see fit.

As you know, Alberta currently is divided into 87 constituencies – we'll be 89 at the next election – and each constituency, or riding, or electoral division, elects one member of the Legislature.

To give everyone a bit of perspective, we look back to the last commission, which issued its report in 2017. At that time the commission dealt with a population that was just slightly over 4 million people. You'll see the numbers here shortly as to how they distributed the constituencies. Our situation is that we are dealing with a population, based on the last decennial census of 2021 and regularly updated by Statistics Canada and the Alberta Treasury Board Office of Statistics and Information, such that we're at a population level of 4.88 million now.

Last time the commission used this formula based on the population of 4,062,609, it gave a mean average of population per

electoral division of 46,697. There's a target range that surrounds that average number of minus 25 and plus 25, and you can see the figures for the last EBC in that slide. Our situation is obviously different because of the increased population, and the increase in number of electoral divisions brings us to an average of almost 55,000 population per riding. A differential of minus 25 to plus 25, you can see, ranges from 41,000-plus to almost 69,000.

Our job as a commission is to deal with the fact that the population increase hasn't been spread out evenly across the province. Our task is to come up with a set of boundaries for 89 different electoral divisions that provides effective representation across the province. In doing so, we consider several factors, and these are factors right out of the legislation. We deal with the relative sparsity and density of population throughout the province. We take into consideration and we hear a lot about common community interests in places like Calgary. Organizations, industry, culture: those are very important factors in terms of keeping electoral divisions together. We also consider geographic features – those are probably more common in the areas outside of Calgary and Edmonton – as well as communication and transportation lines across the province. Those are factors we consider.

Our task, our goal as a commission is to come up with ridings that fit the definition of effective representation and provide understandable and clear boundaries. Part of that task is that we recommend names of constituencies as well.

Finally, the legislation allows the commission to consider other appropriate factors that we deem are important in coming up with our report. Many of those factors we will hear in the public hearings.

We come to the stage now that we want to hear from Albertans. We've spent all morning, a very productive, busy morning, in this very same room hearing from Calgarians and people from outside of Calgary about what they would like to see done. Now we are here to hear from probably 15 people this afternoon. Thank you for coming, and we appreciate your interest. These last several weeks have convinced all of us that democracy is robust and it's an important consideration of Albertans, and we thank you for coming out.

In light of that introduction, could I have the first presenter come. You'll notice that I do look at my watch every once in a while because we try to limit presentations to seven minutes. I was wildly out of whack this morning; I let some people go on and had to cut others off. But I will try to keep the presentations running along in that category. We have a gadget that, as I understand it, will turn green. If you see it turn yellow, maybe you should stop; maybe you can get through. But red: the floorboard doesn't make you disappear, but close. Aaron Roth will be controlling that, and it makes my job a little easier.

1:10

Daniel Nelles, you're the first presenter. Please come up. I did say that they are recorded. Actually, it might be helpful if you just spelled your last name when you present it. Please proceed, sir.

Mr. Nelles: Sure. Thank you. Dan Nelles.

Good afternoon, members of the commission. I want to begin by thanking you for the opportunity to speak with you today and stress the importance of these public hearings. The public input process is absolutely critical in the commission effectively fulfilling their duty under the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act as it provides members of communities from across Alberta opportunities to offer insight into the relevant considerations outlined in section 14 of the act.

By way of background, I want to offer you some insight into why I've come before you today. My name is Dan Nelles, and I've been a resident of Airdrie since I was four years old. My family moved to the city around 1985, and other than a brief four-year sojourn to Lethbridge for university, I've been a resident of Airdrie since that time, so around about 40 years all told. I chose to raise my family in Airdrie. I have five children, ranging in age from 20 years old all the way down to three years old. One attends a postsecondary institution, one attends a public high school, two attend a Catholic elementary school, and one is enrolled in private daycare. My wife and I are members of Airdrie's Roman Catholic church community.

I'm the chair of Airdrie's public library board of trustees and a member of the board of the Airdrie Arts and Culture Council. I have a bachelor's degree in education as well as a master's degree in philanthropy and nonprofit leadership. I feel very in tune with the pulse of my community and very well connected to a variety of people in Airdrie both through my voluntary endeavours as well as the activities of my family members.

I felt compelled to speak with you today because I'm concerned that certain redistricting decisions could imperil the ability of Airdrie residents to have effective representation in our provincial Legislature. As you can probably guess by this point, my comments today will largely centre around the factors impacting the electoral districts of Airdrie-East and Airdrie-Cochrane. The previous redistricting left many of us feeling confused and disconnected. A third of our community was excluded from the district in which most residents live, and it's my hope that this redistricting process will remedy previous missteps and ensure that residents achieve sensible, understandable electoral boundaries that respect communities within the municipality.

One of the first considerations I must emphasize is that municipal boundaries need to be respected in that process. As noted, one-third of our community is currently situated within the riding of Airdrie-Cochrane. Many of my friends within that district feel isolated and that their issues, which are in many ways unique to Airdrie, aren't heard as clearly as they are in Airdrie-East.

Moreover, there are significant concerns over the use of geographic features to draw our boundaries. Highway 2 is the major east-west division for the residents of our city, and highway 567 and Yankee Valley Boulevard have been our traditional north-south divisions, although this has now been joined by 40th Avenue southwest with the recent completion of the 40th Avenue overpass spanning over highway 2. In looking at the current map, you can see that those more sensible dividing lines won't help address our issues of isolation, so we need to look at other factors.

Airdrie residents have a strong affinity for and connection to their neighbourhoods within the community. These neighbourhood or community boundaries would be strong candidates for use in the redrawing of any electoral boundary. Any division that would split a neighbourhood apart would not be received well. It would be enormously confusing to residents.

In looking at neighbourhood maps, one thing that must be attended to is population growth. Population growth in Airdrie has been absolutely exponential during my four decades in the city, and it's only going to be exacerbated. In 1984 our population was a mere 10,431 while today it now exceeds 90,000 people within the municipal limits. Projections put the total municipal population at well over 100,000 people by 2027, when our next provincial election is scheduled, and over 135,000 people by 2035, the latest that another boundaries commission must be convened. And I would note that this population projection is a conservative estimate given the demonstrated real rate of growth in Airdrie in recent years.

This means that considering Airdrie's municipal population alone, two electoral divisions that are equally divided, with no rural components, would actually serve populations of approximately 50,000 people each right now, kind of within your sweet spot, and 67,000 people each by the time another commission is appointed in about 10 years or so. Coincidentally, these numbers are close to the census total population for these districts just a few years ago. This rapid growth must be taken into consideration to ensure effective representation not just today but for residents in the years to come.

I should point out that population growth is clustered in several areas of the city. Referring to the lot inventory map from 2023 and the building permit heat map from also 2023, there are several communities and neighbourhoods that are contributing disproportionately to our growth, and redistricting should consider this when drawing new boundary lines such that the rapid growth in these communities is accommodated.

Clearly, I'm arguing here for two electoral districts for Airdrie set out in a manner that's not dissimilar to the current philosophy behind the boundaries for Lethbridge-East and Lethbridge-West, whose present populations are actually smaller than those in the hypothetical Airdrie-East and Airdrie-West or Airdrie-North and Airdrie-South districts. Concentrating the electoral map divisions largely to municipal lines in Airdrie provides a much fairer representation for our population growth but also creates a more cohesive representation situation for our residents.

The current divisions act is more of a grab bag or catchment area for surrounding rural zones, and this is really not appropriate. Residents within the municipal boundaries in Airdrie have far more in common with each other than they do with residents in, say, Keoma. I urge you to use this opportunity to bring the people of Airdrie back together and draw boundaries that reflect the municipal limits. Airdrie has a unique political identity and unique values, and although I have nothing against our friends in Cochrane, it's far more appropriate for us to have Airdrie electoral districts that don't make a third of our residents feel like an afterthought. Our municipal issues should not be diluted by those of other major municipalities like Cochrane, who deserve effective representation in their own right.

What must not happen is the continued dilution of Airdrie's interests by using our residents as balancing figures for rural populations. This very much feels like what was done with residents in the southwestern part of the city last time. Cochrane just needed a few more thousand people, so let's just pull them out of Airdrie. This cannot continue. Airdrie electoral districts that represent municipal boundaries should be the primary consideration, concentrating our issues and interests to the greatest extent possible and intensifying the ability of our elected members to the Legislature to more effectively advocate for our residents' needs.

I want to thank you very kindly for your time and consideration and for attending to the needs of the residents of Airdrie.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Nelles, for a rapid presentation.

Mr. Nelles: There was a time limit.

The Chair: I'm not sure if you've reduced it to writing and submitted it to the commission, but if you can, please see Mr. Roth here, and a written copy would be appreciated.

I'll start on this end. Mr. Evans, any questions or comments?

Mr. Evans: Are you advocating for Airdrie being its own constituency, its own ED, or two EDs?

Mr. Nelles: Well, I mean, you wouldn't want to do a single electoral district for Airdrie with currently 90,000 people. So given the target division of population, it would make more sense for two electoral districts for the municipality.

Mr. Evans: They would be below the number necessary. What's your idea in terms of growth projection?

Mr. Nelles: The city of Airdrie has released population growth projections for the coming 10 years, and the current municipal census, which is due out within basically three weeks to city council, seems to be targeting or estimating about 91,000 people currently within the municipal district or municipal boundary. That number is set to rise again fairly exponentially over the coming years, with more than 100,000 people by 2027, when our election is to be held. So two electoral districts representing the municipal city of Airdrie would put your target population at about 50,000 each currently and, as noted earlier in my statement, at about 67,000 by the time 2034 rolled around.

1:20

The Chair: Okay. Mrs. Samson, any questions?

Mrs. Samson: I have a thought I'd like your opinion on. Airdrie-East is bigger than Airdrie-West. What if the dividing line was not highway 2? What if it was Main Street or something like that, and Airdrie-East became its own riding and Airdrie-West, unfortunately, would be a hybrid of some sort?

The reason why I'm wrapping my head around this is that we only, as you know, received two ridings, and the growth in population is greater than even what's happening with you. So I don't have two ridings to give to Airdrie. Well, you have two ridings.

Mr. Nelles: Well, you can redraw.

Mrs. Samson: Yeah. What do you think of that, though, if the border was moved over?

Mr. Nelles: It might be possible. Again, what I would urge the commission to consider is that in the drawing of electoral boundaries, you would want to have something that would not split up a community, so Main Street might be one of those things. Indeed, if you look at the map, it's a little bit more of a curvy boundary than what we would have with 8th Street, which is right now the division line between east and west.

It might work. Obviously, trying to balance those population figures would be vital. Main Street might work just as well as 8th Street, but again you would want to try and arrange electoral districts that as much as possible have a 50-50 division of the population of the municipality. If that was the case, I'm not sure Main Street would necessarily be the right one because we kind of have a heavier concentration in some of our southern communities. Kings Heights is probably the most populous community right now, followed closely by Bayside and Cooper's Crossing. So there may need to be some consideration for a north-south rather than necessarily an east-west.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. That's good information.

The Chair: Dr. Martin?

Dr. Martin: Thank you very much for your presentation. I take it that these graphics are yours?

Mr. Nelles: These are drawn from the city of Airdrie website.

Dr. Martin: Oh. I wonder if you could arrange for copies of these to be given to Mr. Roth.

Mr. Nelles: Absolutely.

Dr. Martin: As always, these kinds of visual aids are very helpful.

I wanted to ask you as well about the two northern corners, northeast and northwest, that have colours on them. Am I to presume that these are within the current boundaries of the city of Airdrie?

Mr. Nelles: Yes. Sawgrass Park, Croxford Estates, Hamilton Greens: these are definitely within the municipal boundaries. Croxford Estates and Hamilton Greens are quite small from a population standpoint. They're more rural estates, if you wanted to style them that way. Same thing with Yankee Valley Estates, which is just cut in half by this particular graphic. You can see here the municipal boundaries are the purple, and we have all of those neighbourhood boundaries within that.

Dr. Martin: So you would anticipate, in your request, that all the municipal boundaries for this whole cordon sanitaire around the current neighbourhood, all of that would be held for one or two EDs, right? You're not going to abandon any of that? Your numbers are so high.

Mr. Nelles: Correct. We wouldn't want to hive off any of this. As I say, the focus would be on retaining the municipal boundaries as much as possible. In Airdrie, with its rapid growth, there are several new neighbourhoods coming every single year. Some of the ones that are brand new this year are Vantage Rise and Key Ranch. They're just brand new this year, but they're going to have a number of individuals moving in there very soon. Same thing with Southwinds. So there's lots of space to grow within the municipal limits. The electoral district should, hopefully, accommodate for that kind of growth and make sure that basically we stay together.

Dr. Martin: Can you move us to your heat map?

Mr. Nelles: Yes.

Mr. Clark: I've done a little quick googling, but I can't find this. Did you create this?

Mr. Nelles: This is drawn from the 2024 growth report by Airdrie Economic Development. I can also attach that for the committee.

Mr. Clark: That would be fabulous. Yeah, this is incredibly helpful. Thank you.

The Chair: So that's a feature in a report. It's not a computer program that you have access to.

Mr. Nelles: Right. It is a feature in a public report from the city of Airdrie.

The Chair: Okay.

Dr. Martin: If you could attach it, that would be very helpful.

The Chair: Mr. Clark, any questions?

Mr. Clark: I just found it, so I'll have a good look at that.

Part of what we talk about a lot on this panel is skating to where the puck is going to be. I think in the case of Airdrie the puck is a long way down the ice, and we need to skate pretty quick to catch up to it. The growth is fairly clustered but also quite clear. And

you're absolutely right, that even if that exponential curve flattens out a bit, it's still a lot and still big numbers.

Having said all that, if we were to take just the contiguous urban area of Airdrie and call it 90,000 roughly today, that still makes us two times 45,000, which is quite a ways below the 55,000. If we needed to make up some numbers in the short term, as in, for the purposes of this commission, the next couple of elections, are there specific areas in and around Airdrie that you feel we could logically include?

Mr. Nelles: As the chair of the library board I would note that there are some maps from the county of Rocky View that represent kind of where those residents receive library service. There's kind of a small rural doughnut around Airdrie that we see a lot of clients in the library from, that rural doughnut. So that would make sense in terms of retaining those community members into our population because they still receive service from the municipality.

Mr. Clark: That's great. That's helpful. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Nelles. Your presentation was very, very good and much appreciated for this niche area that we have to focus on.

Mr. Nelles: Thank you kindly for your time.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Lorraine Moulding. Excuse me, ma'am, do you mind sitting at that chair? If we have to have control of the PowerPoint, then that allows Mr. Roth to have access to that laptop.

Ms Moulding: Thank you, and thank you for the opportunity. I do want to follow up on the . . .

The Chair: Please introduce yourself and maybe spell your last name.

Ms Moulding: Oh, sorry. Lorraine Moulding.

Thank you for the opportunity. I just want to follow up on the gentleman from Airdrie because I think he has raised a really basic, fundamental principle of representation, which is that we need to be represented by our communities, and as much as possible that needs to be supported. I think people need to trust that politicians are working in their best interests and in the best interest of their communities, and I think having opportunities like that helps to ensure that.

I've been thinking a lot about the places and times I've lived and the difference that has made to me. I've spent the last 50 years in large urban areas, but before that, I grew up in a rural area. It's a very different environment, and I think it's really important that people's environments get represented.

1:30

I remember growing up in a rural area and there certainly was a lot of suspicion of urban interests not being in alignment with what was happening in rural areas and what people's needs were. I think we all have the same objectives in mind. We want our children and grandchildren to grow up with opportunities, to have health care, education, good transportation, all those kinds of things, and that's what we depend on our governments for. But how that happens is different in different areas, and it's different for different kinds of populations.

For me, that's a key fundamental value in terms of: how do I get represented? I know that you have a difficult job ahead of you. You know, the gentleman from Airdrie certainly outlined that. Maybe

dividing it into two doesn't quite get you at your magic numbers. But I think there's something really important about those principles that we do our democracy on. We think about infrastructure. It's different in urban areas, and it's different in rural areas, and if we start mixing up our ridings, how then does one lone person represent those voices? If I'm the MLA, how do I advocate for my rural needs and my urban needs if it's all that we're just sort of doing this as: how do we get these numbers lined up right? You have a hard job in front of you. I recognize that.

Then there are other differences. I graduated from high school in 1967, and I wanted to be an engineer. When I applied for engineering, they told me I had to take an extra year of study just to prove I wanted to be an engineer. I won't tell you what I said, but that's not what I did. There are those kind of differences as well that our MLAs have to represent.

I had some principles. I think these are things that you need to think about really hard when you're thinking about: how do we divide these things up? I think population is important. You know, we've had a tremendous population growth in Calgary. It's probably the largest population growth in the province, so that needs to be taken into consideration.

New seats should also represent both the current and future population growth. Municipalities should be kept intact as much as possible so that their unique needs are represented. Communities who have things in common, whether that's cultural, economic, geographic should be kept in intact. Those are things that I think are really important.

I'm done, if you have any questions.

The Chair: Okay. Sorry. I may have missed it in the beginning. Do you reside in Airdrie?

Ms Moulding: No, I reside in Calgary, but I'm just saying that I think he gave a really good representation of why municipalities need to be represented.

The Chair: What electoral division are you in?

Ms Moulding: I'm in Calgary-Klein, so I may or may not be affected by the boundary.

The Chair: We had a couple of presenters from Calgary-Klein, and I think their bottom line was, "Leave us alone; don't touch our boundaries," as I recall.

I'll let the other commissioners engage. Mr. Evans, any questions or comments or questions?

Mr. Evans: No, no questions. Thank you.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for coming. I don't have any questions.

Mr. Clark: I appreciate your comments, and I think you make a good and compelling case for not blending constituencies. While we're talking about Airdrie, I just happened to look at a note from this morning, a presenter from Cochrane: we like Airdrie; we don't like being part of Airdrie. It sort of builds on what you're talking about.

Anyway, thank you very much for coming.

Ms Moulding: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

That then takes us to Ross Lennox. Not here? Okay.
Jim Ridley.

Mr. Ridley: Thank you. Good afternoon.

The Chair: Good afternoon. Have a seat, and just spell your last name.

Mr. Ridley: Sure. It's Ridley. First name is Jim.

I reside in the Banff-Kananaskis constituency district. I was brought up in Calgary. I have three university degrees, one of which is a graduate degree. I worked for the province for a number of years as a park ranger out in the Kananaskis and served three terms on the Canmore town council. I'm not presently on that council.

Thank you for the opportunity to describe what I feel are unique aspects of the Banff-Kananaskis electoral district, which I will refer to as the riding. I begin by referring to dynamics of population change I've noticed, then present characteristics of that demographic, and last I would like to offer recommendations. Sources of my information are attached, and I can provide a copy of that.

It appears that your work is based largely on a reasonable and fair comparison of population numbers throughout the province. You're looking at the 2021 census of Canada, which under calculation established an average of roughly 55,000 constituents per riding. Banff-Kananaskis is currently just under that average. I would point out, however, that while we have observed reductions in rural populations elsewhere, our riding has, since '21, experienced an increase in residential development with concurrent increase in population numbers. The trend, looking at the 2016 census: the Banff-Kananaskis riding increased from 46,000-plus to 52,000-plus in the '21 census, or 11.5 per cent. While I cannot provide you with '25 riding population numbers, Canmore similarly increased 12 per cent from 2019 to 2024. Based on development approvals by various land-use authorities throughout the riding, I think it logical to extrapolate that, with future development, populations will continue to increase in the foreseeable future.

In addition to comparing numbers of constituents, you are charged with applying various regulations, guidelines, and other demographic considerations that may result in adjusting the legislative representation of each riding. Let us now look at characteristics of some select communities throughout the riding. Banff and Lake Louise utilize the need-to-reside clause under the federal parks act and regulations, resulting in limits to physical townsite growth and a stable permanent population. Banff's limit to permanent population is set at the current 10,000, resulting, as an aside, in over 600 adult workers commuting from Canmore to Banff daily.

The riding's largest municipality is the town of Canmore: in March of '25, a population count of 17,200 in 2024, and this is from the provincial Office of Statistics and Information of the Alberta Treasury Board and Finance. So in '24 Canmore had 17,200. A detailed report in the *Calgary Herald* explained the approved area structure plans on the Three Sisters development lands and was headlined as: New Developments will Double Canmore's Population in 20 Years. That would result in 34,400. In addition to the Three Sisters development, the areas of Silvertip and Palliser have received area structure plan approvals for resort development, the former, and affordable housing, the latter. In summary, although development takes time, it may be prudent to factor limited but certain growth into planning for what legislative representation is needed in this town, soon to be a city.

Other areas of the riding offer insights where we can and cannot expect growth. One, a sizeable and measurable number of property owners do not actually live in the Bow Valley, rather own holiday property there and vote elsewhere. This is a very unique situation in the province. Nonetheless, the MLA for the area is responsible to provide cost-effective services through provincial supports to

everyone in this community, whether they reside there permanently or not.

1:40

Two, 350 homeowners in the townsites of Redwood Meadows are located on Indigenous land through long-term leaseholds. No further development of this area is anticipated beyond the roughly 875 persons there now. Not governed under Municipal Government Act like other municipalities, this community still needs representation.

Three, the Springbank area structure plan in Rocky View county received final approval on March 25 of this year, planning a total of 20,145 persons in the Springbank area. Much of this will be accommodated through the subdivision of what is now farmland and/or acreages, and I do have a breakdown of that number based on who is there now, what is planned for infill development, and what is planned for new development, which is attached to my submission.

The Harmony community west of Springbank Airport is planned not under an ASP but rather an approved conceptual scheme and is only at 6 per cent build-out, expected to have approximately 4,480 residences. At 2.5 people per residence, that's roughly another 10,000 people.

Five, the Millarville area is split among two ridings, B-K and Highwood, and should be amalgamated in B-K.

Now, to understand the characteristics of some population numbers in the riding, I would like to highlight the following geographic and cultural factors. The families located in the eastern part of the riding – Morley, Harmony, Springbank, Redwood Meadows, Bragg Creek, Millarville, Tsuut'ina, and Priddis – possess a huge respect for the natural environment, many living adjacent to the wonderful Kananaskis Country park system and who prioritize natural environment protections. You may know that this 1,600-square-kilometre provincial park area is largely within the Banff-Kananaskis riding and is immediately adjacent to two provincial parks in B.C. plus adjoins to Banff and Jasper national parks, together comprising the largest contiguous protected parklands in the world. I would respectfully ask that the similar needs, interests, and lifestyles of these smaller eastern communities continue to be included in the Banff-Kananaskis electoral division.

My recommendations to the commission are as follows. One, anticipating change and indeed growth in this riding is an important determination to how the riding is structured. Planning for growth is, in my view, an important factor in assigning where boundaries ought to and ought not to be adjusted. The data from the next federal census is released with a two-year lag, meaning the results from the 2026 census will not be available to us till 2028, but the work of the commission will inform riding boundaries for the next scheduled election in 2027.

Two, the importance of this riding to the economic well-being of the province could be an important consideration in your determination of what legislative representation is needed in this riding. Currently 4 million visitors travel to the Bow Valley annually. The province of Alberta has forecasted and has goals to move this number to 10 million visitors within 10 years. While permanent populations need to be serviced everywhere, so do the countless numbers of visitors. It is now and will increasingly become a challenge for whoever the legislative representative is for Banff-Kananaskis to work hard to provide provincial government support to municipalities, residents, and visitors in terms of ancillary programs and services, i.e., hospitals, affordable housing, sustainable transportation, utility infrastructure, social services, recreation, policing, et cetera.

Three, and my final recommendation, the boundaries of the riding are, in my view, currently acceptable and, other than Millarville, should remain the same. It has only been since 2015 that Banff-Kananaskis existed as an ED, and legislative representatives since that time have tried to meld the interests and characteristics into a manageable whole. They have succeeded, I believe, and continue to not only respect the differences that citizens throughout the riding may exhibit but also find commonalities in the management of this all-important natural area we call Banff-Kananaskis.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, sir.

Mr. Clark, any questions?

Mr. Clark: Two things. If you could just reiterate your views on Millarville. You know, I was just looking it up and trying to find it on a map while you were talking about that, so if you can just tell me again. I know a previous presenter had indicated a sort of split.

Jim Ridley: Yes. They've used a highway road allowance to divide the boundary. There are some folks that live on the south side of that highway that are in the Highwood constituency. It's a very small area, very few number of people, but it would seem sensible to perhaps have a representative in Edmonton that's looking after the whole community.

Mr. Clark: And would you rather that in Banff-Kananaskis . . .

Jim Ridley: Yes.

Mr. Clark: . . . or Highwood? Okay.

And then you mentioned the Springbank ASP. Is that north or south of highway 1 or both?

Jim Ridley: Both.

Mr. Clark: Both. Okay.

Jim Ridley: Yeah. It's part of Rocky View county, of course, but they have done an area structure plan just for Springbank, and that received third reading and is in effect now. I can give you the numbers here briefly: 4,200 population in existing built-out areas – these are population, not residences – they plan to add 5,749 folks through infill residential, and 10,172 folks through new residential. That adds up to, as I mentioned earlier, a huge number of folks just in Springbank.

Mr. Clark: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you. You're absolutely right about how important this area is and just how much car traffic and tourist traffic comes through it, but you, in your presentation, walked us through a lot of other areas that are in the current district boundaries; you have rural country estates, you have a lot of the whole range of housing forms, it would seem to me. I want to ask you if they all get along together.

Jim Ridley: My sense is that they likely have specific interests for specific areas, but the commonality that I was speaking to is a respect for the natural environment, whether it's rangeland, whether it's recreational acreage properties, horse riding, the hiking, the fishing, the outdoor pursuits that folks find throughout the whole riding, whether it's a more rural residential setting or whether it's in a town in the mountains.

Dr. Martin: Do you also have some cattle ranching?

Jim Ridley: I don't personally, but there is some cattle ranching, yes, both on the Morley settlement . . .

Dr. Martin: The reason I'm pressing on this is that we have heard from time to time in our deliberations people say with horror, "Oh my, we couldn't have people with that kind of housing configuration because they don't share our community of interests." What do you say to that? Obviously, you're not as fierce as others about the presence of these many different forms of lifestyle.

Jim Ridley: I think we've come to accommodate the area as a more natural environment than you would find perhaps in the city of Calgary. If one is looking at expropriating rangeland or rural property into Calgary, I think it would be better to keep it as it is, as part of a more rural, geographically contiguous area.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

Jim Ridley: That answers your question?

Dr. Martin: It does.

The Chair: Mrs. Samson.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. Thank you for coming out today. Did you want to make any comments on the Indigenous population found in that riding? Do you see any growth changes, anything that would affect our decisions? Are the boundaries representing them and their needs adequately?

Jim Ridley: It's an interesting question because many of the policies that affect our Indigenous population are federal policies although some services, of course, are provided through the province and by the province.

It would seem that the inclusion of the two reserves in our riding right now are complementary. There are portions of the Morley area that are north of our riding that could be considered to be part for an administrative purpose from their perspective. I do know that the populations have increased in these settlements. I don't have the data on that, but there is a general growth, so it's not a reduction in numbers of constituents in both those areas that I am familiar with.

1:50

Mrs. Samson: Good. Thank you.

Mr. Evans: Can you give me the numbers of your projected growth again, your calculations on Canmore?

Jim Ridley: Well, we're at 17,200 right now. Now, I did see one report that suggested that there was a smaller number of nonresident property owners. Then when I was on council, the municipal census pointed to 25 per cent of the population being nonresident.

But they are speaking about, through the approved area structure plans right now, doubling that plus. The Three Sisters land has approval to double from roughly 18,000 or 17,000 to 34,000 plus the Silvertip area, which is to be and is a resort community, and the Palliser lands, which have been dedicated by both the province and the town for affordable housing, accommodating between a thousand and 2,000 individuals down on the valley bottom.

Mr. Evans: Okay.

And then you mentioned some projected growth for Springbank. What were those numbers?

Jim Ridley: Yes. That comes straight from their area structure plan of 20,145 at build-out.

Mr. Evans: That would be the increase.

Jim Ridley: No.

Mr. Evans: Total.

Jim Ridley: There is 4,233 in the Springbank area currently, so that would be adding another 16,000 population as approved.

Mr. Evans: Okay.

And then I think there was one more area.

Jim Ridley: Harmony.

Mr. Evans: And what was that one?

Jim Ridley: Sure. At build-out they were 4,480, and they're at 6 per cent build-out right now.

Mr. Evans: You said 4,480?

Jim Ridley: Yup. Residences.

Mr. Evans: And then we would multiply that by 2.5?

Jim Ridley: Yes.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Ridley, thank you very much for your very well-researched presentation.

Jim Ridley: Thank you. I'm sorry to run a little over time there.

The Chair: Oh, here. Our next presenter, Marty Heeg.

[interjection] Oh, okay. Is there any other presenter here that may be further down the list?

Dr. Martin: Do you want to make a presentation?

The Chair: Yeah, a commentary on the presentations made.

Miss Abu Hayyaneh: Can we speak?

The Chair: Sure can. Come forward.

Miss Abu Hayyaneh: Okay. We'll just sit while each of us is doing their presentation. We'll introduce ourselves, too. My name is Tala Abu Hayyaneh. I am the president of the students' association of Mount Royal University. I'm joined here with ...

Miss Mejia Salazar: Mariana Mejia Salazar, the vice-president external of the students' association of Mount Royal University.

Miss Abu Hayyaneh: We sent in a written submission before the deadline in May, but we just wanted to highlight a few more things today just to kind of go over where Mount Royal right now is situated. The students of Mount Royal are spread across the city, and they even live in other areas outside of the city like in Airdrie. As well, we have students that commute into Calgary from all over the place, even in Chestermere and Strathmore as well. Even Cochrane, too.

We will always like to highlight how important it is to consider where students are situated within the city and how Mount Royal at the moment is at the edge of a riding. If we were to be included more within a specific boundary, it would make more sense.

The Chair: Are you in Calgary-Currie right now?

Miss Abu Hayyaneh: I think we are. I don't know.

Miss Mejia Salazar: I thought we were Calgary-Elbow.

Miss Abu Hayyaneh: Calgary-Elbow. Sorry.

The Chair: Okay. The campus is in Calgary-Elbow.

Miss Abu Hayyaneh: Calgary-Elbow, yeah. But we are closer to the Currie area, and right now we are just at the edge of our riding. Thank you so much for pulling that up. Just right there by Sarcee and Richardson; we're just below that.

Yeah. A lot of our students live, actually, just above that area, like they live in Glamorgan, which is still within Elbow. They live above the area closer to Westbrook, the more affordable areas to live within.

Right now we are coupled in an area where there are a lot more affluent neighbourhoods that also sometimes underrepresent the interests of our students who live in that area as well. In the past it has prevented our campus from being reached by the Blue Line that was initially built in the city because the interests of folks that lived in the neighbourhood did not align with public transportation, you know, bringing down the value of their properties. We just want to make sure that our students no matter where they live in the city, whether it's around Elbow, whether it's around Currie and beyond, are considered in a lot of those decisions that make sense to them, especially when it comes to the municipal issues. I know there's a lot of crossover with that. Transit is always a municipal/provincial thing to consider.

I'll just pass on to Mariana for some more thoughts.

Miss Mejia Salazar: Yeah. As Tala was speaking on, we have neighbourhoods such as Bel-Aire and the Upper Mount Royal as part of our district, which have a median average of home prices being from \$2.5 million upwards to \$3 million, which is not something that students can afford. What we're truly asking is for the student body to be recognized as an entire community rather than just citizens of the area so that we can work on different things like transit and affordability for housing and other aspects for student life that, unfortunately, are just not things that we could currently work on with the mentioned neighbourhoods that we are a part of. Thinking maybe being part of the Currie electoral district would be something that would be greatly beneficial to all students, not just the Mount Royal students but other neighbourhoods around as well. There are various different institutions that are around that area that are not necessarily just postsecondary.

Miss Abu Hayyaneh: Yeah. We're happy to take any questions that you might have about the specific Mount Royal situation, and if there's any data, any more information that we can provide, then we can definitely submit that to you in addition to what we've already submitted.

The Chair: I'm curious to know – maybe it's public knowledge and I should know – what's the student population of Mount Royal?

Miss Abu Hayyaneh: Including credit and noncredit students, we have just above 15,000 students at the moment; 75 per cent of them are Calgary local residents, so that is a huge population that Mount Royal serves in the Calgary community in terms of supplying postsecondary to that community. We have local Calgarians that attend Mount Royal, 75 per cent of them. Then we expand beyond Calgary, so the outside community, and then within Alberta as well. Then our international student population is just under 5 per cent,

and then we have students that come from all across Canada as well in the other 25 per cent.

The Chair: You could be classified as the city's university.

Miss Abu Hayyaneh: You know, we are in the northwest, so we'll be respectful of our U of C folks.

The Chair: Okay.

Other questions or comments?

Dr. Martin: Well, thank you for that. As I told the presenter from the student union at the University of Calgary, I'm on the Board of Governors at MacEwan University, so I understand about the important effects on a town of having this population of students and the difficulty of finding adequate housing units.

I wanted, though, to ask you something about your assertion of the student numbers. Is that full-time learning equivalent numbers?

Miss Abu Hayyaneh: Yes. That is the data that we received from MRU. This is the most recent data that we received for 2024, but our population is constantly growing, so we can always come back with more updated numbers if need be.

I appreciate the context that you're providing for being at MacEwan. MacEwan is a very similar-sized institution to us, and similar-sized institutions in Alberta, like Mount Royal and MacEwan, sometimes tend to be overlooked compared to the other bigger universities in the province in terms of the funding that we receive, in terms of the community service that we provide.

We serve a larger population of Alberta residents as in comparison to bigger universities, and in terms of provincial representation when it comes to the Ministry of Advanced Education and how we are funded, we're actually not being funded adequately, and I think that is a big part of how we would want our electoral districts to really reflect the university situation as well in terms of grant funding.

2:00

Dr. Martin: Well, I won't comment on any of that, but I was startled by your remark about perhaps moving into Calgary-Currie. Is that a function of grand disappointment, or is the grass just greener over there?

Miss Abu Hayyaneh: We can always come back with that. We can always come back to you with more information about that. That is something that we started to look into, actually, after we submitted our document to you in May. We kind of started looking into more research in case we got more questions about our submission, but I can always come back to you with that.

Dr. Martin: Well, in practice you would have to come back to the commission more generally than to me in particular, but perhaps Mr. Roth would be able to give you the contact information you need. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: Just remind me, and apologies if it was in your written submission, more residences being developed on campus: is that something that you see happening?

Miss Abu Hayyaneh: I can't speak specifically to the Mount Royal situation, because as far as I know Mount Royal is still paying off the mortgage on the previous residence that was built 10 years ago for west residences. Until that is paid off and if we receive more funding, there could be a possibility, but right now MRU is . . .

Mr. Clark: There's nothing imminent to open.

Miss Abu Hayyaneh: Not at the moment. Yeah.

Mr. Clark: Okay. That's helpful. Thank you.

Miss Abu Hayyaneh: But our east residences are in need of reconstruction, and that is an opportunity for us to build more on-campus housing.

Mr. Clark: They certainly are. Yeah. Thank you.

The Chair: Mrs. Sampson.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for coming out and stepping up. I just wanted to let you know that, when we were in Edmonton, both Grant MacEwan and the University of Alberta made a presentation on behalf of the student population, so I must say that you are all jointly heard. Thank you for that.

Miss Abu Hayyaneh: Thank you. That's what we do.

The Chair: Mr. Evans?

Mr. Evans: Nothing. No questions. Thank you.

The Chair: Maybe you said it, and maybe it's in your written presentation, but any idea what the resident population is on MRU's campus?

Miss Abu Hayyaneh: I believe that our west residence has over 1,000 beds, so there is that student population that resides on campus, and we are actually at capacity with our residence every semester now, every year. For the last two years we've actually had a wait list of above 100 students also needing housing. We also do have Indigenous housing on campus that specifically supports Indigenous families and mature students. That is also a population to be considered.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you very much, and thank you for spontaneously coming up as we ask questions.

Miss Abu Hayyaneh: Thank you for your time, and we'll follow up with the other information that we've been requested.

Mrs. Samson: Perfect. Thank you.

The Chair: Marty Heeg? Please proceed.

Mr. Heeg: Okay. Well, thank you very much. As you know, my name is Marty Heeg. I'm from Calgary-Glenmore, live in the Lakeview neighbourhood in Calgary-Glenmore with my wife, Jane. I have three children, two stepkids and a daughter, and I've lived in Alberta for 45 years. I've been very fortunate to have a couple of good careers in Alberta. Initially, for the first 15 years of my professional life I was a sportscaster back in the heyday when Alberta won six Stanley Cups in seven years. That was primarily with CBC. Also, the last 30 years I've been a clinical social worker. The last 15 years a lot of my clinical social work hasn't been so much counselling but more in the areas of organizational development, leadership development, and a lot with universities, the University of Calgary and the University of Saskatchewan.

I give you this background because I think that it certainly impacts my lens as I share with you today about my perceptions of Calgary-Glenmore. I'm very interested in young people. That's another element of my discussion I think today.

With Calgary-Glenmore I would see it at this point in time as a very credible riding. It makes sense to me. There's a lot of connectedness among neighbourhoods. I have friends and acquaintances in Woodbine and in Oakridge and throughout our riding, you know, Haysboro. It's a riding I think where there's a lot of connectedness with needs and, at the same time, unique needs. I'm not an expert in electoral boundaries, but what I'm saying I guess is that it seems to be a credible way of having things put together.

What I observe is that there's a big difference between where I live and my experience and the friends I have in Springbank and the friends and family I have in rural Alberta. I guess this is kind of obvious, but in some sense I think that's a, you know, pretty basic fundamental consideration at this point in time. Again, I see unique needs. I see connectedness, and I see that we're different from other jurisdictions. To me, it seems like at this point in time our provincial electoral boundaries are kind of lined up as far as our riding goes with our municipal boundaries.

I think that the piece that I wanted to touch on with you folks today in some ways relates to credibility and the credibility of the Calgary-Glenmore riding. Really, what I come to you with today – and I know you folks understand this, and I say this very respectfully – is as a 69-year-old guy who's really concerned about young people. I guess, more than anything what I try to focus on in my discussions is supporting voter engagement and decisions that make sense, that create folks having interest. I think about my daughter and my niece and nephew, who are younger people, and: how do we keep them aligned with our process?

When I look at what we're dealing with today, I see that Calgary-Glenmore is credible. When I was a leadership trainer at university, the primary paradigm in the curriculum lots of times – and you folks have practised this or you wouldn't be as successful as you are – was credibility. Does it make sense? Am I believable? I think that also another key component today – and this kind of comes from my other career – is competitiveness. I think lots of times competitiveness really impacts credibility.

I talk about this stuff with my kids, and where I'm going with that is that I think that competition lots of times is very good for credibility. You know, we make our case, we see what happens, and the best case wins. I think that where things get difficult is when competition gets a little bit too intense, and there's temptation to push it too hard.

I go back to my sports life, and I'll give you a recent example. I think that the Canadian soccer program was very credible. I think that they lost some credibility last year before the Olympics because the temptation to win got to be too extreme, and we had that drone issue. My heart sank when that happened, and that's what I don't want to see my kids experience in the political system. I think that it already probably has to some degree. I know that you folks understand this, and I just say it respectfully, but I think that's, you know, the piece that I kind of have my eye on: credibility, competition. Is there a balance?

It's easy to rationalize, and I think the Oilers did a bit of this last night. You know, the other guys are doing it, right? I think that's a tricky point in all of this.

Really, I mean, I'm a person who worked as a leadership consultant and a therapist and challenged myself about my awareness and my blind spots, and this is what I just try to talk to people about today. No matter what their political stripe or no matter what the conversation is, if it's appropriate, I try to raise this idea of, you know: are we rationalizing? Are we being honest with ourselves? Are we trying to create a fair game?

2:10

I really thank you for your time and your efforts. I really respect your contribution here. Again, I'm, you know, grateful just to be with you today, so thank you.

On television I always came out on time. Seven minutes.

The Chair: And now we'll have the sports.

Thank you very much, Mr. Heeg.

Any questions, Mr. Evans, or comments?

Mr. Evans: I'm interested in looking at – when you look at the current electoral district, is there really connectivity within that electoral district with the northern part, which is on the other side of the Glenmore reservoir, as compared with those that are on the south side?

Mr. Heeg: Yeah. That's a great question. I mean, I haven't tried to develop any data to support that, but my sense is, knowing folks in those neighbourhoods, there seems to be a good connectiveness. As you point out, like, we're on the north side. We're in Lakeview there. I have a good friend in Oakridge. It seems like we have common things, unique needs. That's what it seems like to me.

Mr. Evans: Is there something that draws Lakeview south, that's on the south side of Glenmore, that you drive over there to shop, to go to church, whatever you do?

Mr. Heeg: Yeah. Well, I mean, we do those sorts of things over there, certainly, you know, shopping and visiting people and playing sports and that kind of thing. Other than that, in terms of natural connections, again it's more just my experience than anything else that informs me of that.

Mr. Evans: Isn't it difficult to drive there?

Mr. Heeg: Not particularly, no. It's interesting for me. My wife and I moved from Edgemont about three years ago. It's really interesting just how much time we spend in those southern areas now because it's fairly accessible. You know, it probably takes me, at the most, 12, 14 minutes to get to the very south part of our area there.

Mr. Evans: Thank you.

Mr. Heeg: Thank you.

The Chair: Ms Samson, any questions?

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

Thank you for the different approach of your presentation to us, and I really appreciate that.

Mr. Heeg: Thank you.

Mrs. Samson: All of us around the table here are new to this work. I believe that the boundaries – that is, the start, the grassroots – is really the foundation of democracy that we're going to build on and that we're going to showcase to the rest of Albertans. This is not a question. I can guarantee you that from myself. I will do the job, and when it does not align with the things I have heard here, it will be in the report. We're opening it up for a second look after we write it. I had no idea it was going to be this complex or difficult. We're going to please some of the people some of the time, and we're going to try really hard.

Mr. Heeg: Thank you very much. I really respect that.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

Dr. Martin: I'm struggling to find a way to exclude the Earl Grey golf course. He's a member. I don't think I'll succeed.

I'm really interested in your point of view as a clinical social worker. My mother was a medical social worker, so I understand the heroic work that gets involved. Do you feel that you have built out a robust infrastructure for children and youths to provide the opportunities and the training that goes along with soccer programs and swimming programs and whatever particular program is devised? Do you think your ED is rich in these kind of cultural infrastructure activities?

Mr. Heeg: What a great question. I think there's a tremendous amount of growth that could happen and building in those areas. I mean, I look at counselling and clinical social work in a very broad sense in that every opportunity is a learning opportunity, and there can be so much that could be built into sports in a more formal way where people can, you know, learn how to work through their feelings of failure or their feelings of grandiosity, in my case, those sorts of things where you can have a growth opportunity. I think that's a great idea, and I think there's a lot of potential for that. So the answer would be no, I don't think it's been really built up.

Dr. Martin: Okay. This was my way, actually, of trying to see if the areas south of the reservoir cohere.

Mr. Heeg: That's a good question. I mean, I'm just not that familiar at this point in my career with how things are connected there. I don't have any, you know, formal role in that way. Yeah.

Dr. Martin: All right. Thank you.

Mr. Heeg: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Thanks. One of the nice benefits we get in this job is that you get to go around the province and see different places. For my fellow commissioners: this feels a lot like Edmonton-Riverview to me, where you've got two sides, so a recognition. Go ahead and look at the map and you'll see it's similar; it's on two sides of the North Saskatchewan in Edmonton.

I think your point is right. You come out of Glenmore Trail, and you make a right-hand turn. You make a right-hand turn on 14th Street, and you're down to the shopping areas down there. So, yeah, I can see how this all hangs together.

I did want to ask a bigger or kind of general question based on one of your opening comments. Maybe you can kind of bring it back full circle to that. You talked about: Calgary-Glenmore, Springbank, and rural Alberta are all kind of different things. Can you maybe quantify that or just speak to what that means and what that looks like to you?

Mr. Heeg: Well, I mean, I think that a lot of it is based on kind of a vibe. You know, when I talk to people about their needs, their interests, some of it is observable. When I'm out in Oyen, visiting with my cousin, it's obviously different. I think it's structurally different in terms of the residences. I'm sure there's lots of socioeconomic data.

You know, I grew up in Saskatchewan, and I had a keen sense of community there. I went to school in one little community and I played ball and hockey over here at another community, that were 20 miles apart, and it was just different. It was just a gut feeling. Now, I know now that if I were to go back and look at the data, that was mixed farming. They didn't have the kind of quality of land

that we had over here, and they were just different. I mean, I think those are the kinds of things that we are trying to represent because there's a unique need, and I think the same thing would be happening between Springbank and what's happening in Calgary-Glenmore.

Mr. Clark: All right. That's helpful. Thank you very much.

Mr. Heeg: Thank you.

The Chair: What part of Saskatchewan did you grow up in?

Mr. Heeg: A farming area just east of Rosetown.

The Chair: Okay. I'm from Saskatchewan as well. Thanks for the shout-out there.

Mr. Heeg: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Heeg. You're excused.

I believe that takes care of all of the presenters before our break, so why not make use of the time. We'll have our break now. There's no one else in the room that is scheduled to present that hasn't presented, I assume. Okay. We'll take our 10-minute break now, and then when we return at about 2:35 – I'll be generous, for 10 minutes – then hopefully we can continue the list.

[The hearing adjourned from 2:20 p.m. to 2:44 p.m.]

The Chair: Our first presenter is Ms Bernadett Maxwell. Normally we have seven minutes for presentation. Then we have three or four minutes for questions and dialogue from the commissioners. Please proceed.

Ms Maxwell: Okay. I haven't done this before. Anyways, good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Bernadett Maxwell. I live in South Calgary. I'm here to respectfully request adjustments to the Calgary-Elbow electoral district to ensure fair representation and help address what I and many residents see as a case of modern gerrymandering in this electoral district. The current boundaries carve up some of the communities in ways that dilute their voice and misalign with the realities of how people live, work, and connect.

First, I urge the commission to include the community of Richmond-Knob Hill within the Calgary-Elbow electoral area. The Richmond-Knob Hill community is closely aligned with the other Marda Loop communities of Altadore, River park, Garrison Woods in South Calgary, which are all part of the Marda Loop Communities Association. These neighbourhoods are tightly knit, with shared schools, parks, and the Marda Loop business district. These two community associations also work together on various development and planning matters with the city related to the development in Marda Loop. I'll go back to the map in a minute.

Second, I propose that the Lakeview community in its entirety be included in Calgary-Elbow. It makes no sense to split part of a community across multiple electoral districts. Glamorgan could be removed and Lakeview included, which also fits more naturally within the Calgary-Elbow district as it lies directly south of existing Calgary-Elbow communities and shares similar demographic, economic, and social characteristics. In contrast, Glamorgan is much further west, with a distinct community profile, and should be grouped accordingly.

Third, I recommend removing Lower Mount Royal from Calgary-Elbow and including it in Calgary-Buffalo. Lower Mount Royal is a highly urban neighbourhood very near the 17th avenue

entertainment area with very different needs and priorities than the largely residential, mixed-density communities to the south and west of it. Its inclusion in Calgary-Elbow skews representation and doesn't reflect community cohesion.

Fourth, when considering the amount of development and growth within the Marda Loop area communities projected to add 3,000 new residents in the next two years, it may be necessary to shift Lincoln Park to Calgary-Currie to get the correct projected numbers within each area. I don't know what number targets you're working at, but I have some numbers on growth and development that we're projecting in Marda Loop.

In summary, the boundaries for Calgary-Elbow should more naturally include the communities between Macleod Trail and Crowchild Trail from east to west and between Glenmore Trail and 26th Avenue, Prospect Avenue from south to north, and if additional numbers are still needed in the district once you consider the expected growth, then you might want to look at a couple of communities west of Crowchild Trail towards 37th Street like Rutland Park and Lincoln Park, which are currently included. This grouping would better respect the historical, social, and geographic realities and strengthen democratic representation.

Thank you for your time and your efforts to ensure Alberta's electoral map is fair, functional, and community focused. I'm just going to take a minute and kind of point out on the map what I'm saying.

The Chair: Please. Yeah, step forward and do that.

Ms Maxwell: Okay. Basically, what I'm saying is that I think this area here is good. I'm not sure why Lakeview is split. Half of Lakeview is here and half of Lakeview is there, so I'm saying that rather than having Glamorgan included, you should include Lakeview. Then I'm also saying – up here is Richmond, and we live in south Calgary. We work closely with the Richmond community association. There's a lot of development in Marda Loop, so the community associations are working together. That's why I was saying that should be included as well. Lower Mount Royal, so up here in that area: you could split that off on Prospect Avenue because, again, that's more urban; that's more downtown. Then this would kind of just create this nice little square.

What I'm not sure of is your numbers. You may want to include these two communities of Rutland Park and Lincoln Park, but I've got some numbers that I can give you. I'm on the development committee for the Marda Loop Communities Association, and we did kind of a presentation on the growth that we're experiencing in Marda Loop. Basically, there are 1,894 residential units between development stage, recently completed, under construction development, rezoning, or coming soon, so about 2,000 units.

The Chair: In Marda Loop alone?

Ms Maxwell: In Marda Loop. Yeah. That's the communities of Altadore, Garrison Woods, and South Calgary. They're projected somewhere either between low, medium, or high. You know, the medium amount is about 3,000 new residents in the next two years, so you need to consider that when you're looking at the boundaries as well because otherwise your numbers will be out very quickly.

Mr. Evans: Did you say 3,000?

Ms Maxwell: Three thousand. Yeah.
That's all I've got.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, and you're in the amber zone. Thank you. Did you say you've never done this before?

Ms Maxwell: No.

The Chair: Well, you're a pro by all appearances.

I'm sure there will be some questions. Mr. Clark?

2:50

Mr. Clark: Yeah. I'm just looking back here. I've gone back as far as 2003, so Calgary-Elbow, at least dated to 2003 – I'm just frantically flipping to 1996, but Calgary-Elbow has fundamentally looked the same since at least 2003. Like I say, I'm trying to find the maps from 1996 so I can kind of get back to that. It hasn't changed a lot. It's sort of been a little bit – that little bottom bit there, I agree, is a bit odd. Glenmore Trail is obviously your natural boundary. We've looked at this. It's technically North Glenmore Park. That's where the community hall is. Glenmore Trail has historically been the boundary.

Part of our struggle is that we've got constituencies that are about average on number, Calgary-Elbow being one of them. It has basically tracked the average. We're trying to not have changes that are going to cascade. So is Calgary-Currie, and kind of so are the adjacent constituencies.

I don't really know if I necessarily have a question. More just in response to some of your submission, I think part of the rationale for why it is what it is is the population. I would really be interested in if you have that development data and details.

Ms Maxwell: I do.

Mr. Clark: If you can give that to Aaron, that would be fantastic. We'll get that uploaded to our portal. That's really helpful.

Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Julian, any questions?

Dr. Martin: Yes. Thank you. We had the MLA in earlier this morning.

Ms Maxwell: Oh, okay.

Dr. Martin: He suggested, yes, growth but very incremental. He characterized it largely as basement suites going legal and things of that sort. Do you see that kind of activity in the neighbourhoods you have been speaking of this afternoon?

Ms Maxwell: There is some of that, but I'm on the development committee for Marda Loop. You know, they're proposing two 19-storey towers on 33rd. They're proposing an 18-storey on 34th, and all along 33rd everything is going six storeys. There are two or three land-use amendments coming up on 33rd for six-storey, 50-unit buildings, I think three of them.

In the information that I passed out, we were kind of looking at, you know, trying to understand how much – there's a lot of housing development, and there's no green space. That's kind of the analysis that we were doing to come up with it. That's where we came up with the 3,000 people. That's a 25 per cent increase of what Marda Loop is right now. Again, just those three communities, South Calgary, Garrison, and Altadore. That 25 per cent in two years is based on the development permits that are under way or in progress.

Dr. Martin: Well, thank you for that. You know, people do talk to us about growth in very general terms, and who can deny that that is happening in a general sort of way? But for our purposes it's valuable to know that there is growth that's imminent and tangible. They've scraped the dirt. They're starting to put in the girders. I call it the Tyvek test. We can't project too far in the future, can we?

What you've suggested, then, is that you are convinced that the planning permits and permissions that have been given out signalled the beginning of construction.

Ms Maxwell: Yes. Yes. It's kind of detailed more on those slides. There were five categories: recently completed, they've applied for land use, they've applied for development permits, they're in progress. But those are pretty imminent stages. Like, within a couple of years even the ones that are in planning will be under development if not completed.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

Mrs. Samson: I was just going to say that the number we're working at for our purposes is 55,000 approximately, plus or minus 25 per cent. That doesn't mean that Calgary-Elbow is sitting perfect – there is always room for change – but that's the number we're going to work around.

Ms Maxwell: Okay. That's good. Yeah. I'm not sure, again, what the numbers are in Glamorgan versus Lakeview. I was just basically trying to draw a more or less perfect square so it doesn't look quite as gerrymandered as it does right now.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Evans?

Mr. Evans: No questions. Thank you.

Ms Maxwell: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Ms Maxwell. You're excused.

Okay. Julie Pithers. Good afternoon.

Ms Pithers: Good afternoon. Sorry. I was hoping to hear more people before I came up. I haven't done this before. Thank you for the opportunity. Let's see. I guess I'll just fire away.

The Chair: Yeah. Just introduce yourself. Tell us what electoral division you're from.

Ms Pithers: All right. Julie Pithers. I'm from Banff-Kananaskis.

Well, as you have just found out, I'm from what would be considered a rural riding. We have lots of small towns in it. It's a big, big riding and goes all the way up to Jasper. But I don't feel that I'm owed any more of a vote than anybody in the city here. I have the feeling that – and I should have looked this up beforehand. Certainly, the vast majority of our population is in the cities, but I would imagine the second most is surrounding the cities. I, like most of those people, will commute into the city, will use the city's many, many services and products and not pay the municipal taxes that the people in the city pay. I pay lower taxes than people who have the same kind of house that I have and the same amount of property I have. I believe that is my benefit of living in the country, where I also get peace and quiet. Yes, I don't have a library right beside me, but we live in 2025, so I can download library books all day long and phone Cochrane and update my library card should I need to.

I think that having large cities is important, and I think people who live in large cities put up with an awful lot that I don't have to put up with between sirens and road closures and everything else that, you know, often benefits me. I might be the one in the ambulance with the siren going. They shouldn't have a lesser vote than I have. I don't know too much about my own district, if I have

1.5 votes or 1 to 1 almost, but I do know that lots of rural ridings have – each person's vote is worth much more than somebody who lives downtown here.

I've been reading some stories about people who believe that they should have more of a say in government because they live in an area where raw materials are brought to bear given, you know, royalties and so on to our province, and it's worth a lot. Sure. But that's saying that people who are rich should have more of a vote than people who are poor, and money and business shouldn't have anything to do with democracy. To that logic, are we saying that the lumber producer brings more value than the construction company; therefore, the lumber person should have more say in what goes on every single day of our lives?

One of the other things was that somebody said that it was really important for them to see their MLA face to face, and they have to drive hundreds of kilometres to see them. Well, I've seen my MLA once, and she came pretty close to my house, and I went out and saw her, and it was no big deal. Again, we live in 2025. We can phone or Facetime or Zoom or whatever we want with our MLA.

But if we were going to do something for this province, it would be massive broadband for everybody in the rural ridings as well, that would allow them to have this face to face that is so valuable.

3:00

Finally, I think, just for the sake of making things straightforward, our democracy of just counting people, where your vote is worth this much and your vote is worth this much, is the easiest way for us to be a proper democracy and not have many, many people condensed into one place where they don't have as much say over something that's so important to us all and they're putting up with an awful lot that we in the country don't have to put up with.

My feeling about this is that it should be 1 to 1 as much as possible and more ridings should be in the big cities because a big part of the power of this province is there.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Well, thank you, Ms Pithers. The commissioners will have, I'm sure, some questions starting with Mr. Evans.

Mr. Evans: No questions, but thank you for your submission.

The Chair: Mrs. Samson?

Mrs. Samson: Thanks. No. That was good, but I don't have any questions.

Ms Pithers: Thank you.

The Chair: Can I ask you what part of B-K do you live in?

Ms Pithers: I'm Elbow Valley, so just out of highway 8, almost on the border of the city these days, especially with the Stoney Trail.

The Chair: Okay. Dr. Martin?

Dr. Martin: No, but thank you.

Mr. Clark: I will just thank you very much for your presentation. That was great.

Ms Pithers: All right. Well, thank you very much for the opportunity.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

The Chair: And just so you know, Banff-Cochrane has been fairly represented today. It must be some tourism thing.

Mr. Clark: Exactly.

Ms Pithers: I grew up in the area, too. I came from Springbank, so Cochrane is my arch enemy.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Ms Pithers: Thank you.

The Chair: Michael Parker.

Mr. Parker: Yeah, you don't need to change the map.

Thanks. My name is Mike Parker. I appreciate the time to talk to you today. I'm very fortunate to live in the summer village of Waiparous, which is actually in the riding of Banff-Kananaskis.

I do think it is a unique riding. It is a blend of First Nations, tourism, agriculture, and ranching. As far as my personal experience, I've worked in the oil and gas industry for 40 years; also currently a member of our volunteer fire department. Of the last 23 years most of them have been in Alberta. I've lived 10 years in Calgary before. In 2016 I moved out to Waiparous, which is in the Ghost River valley. I think that gives me a unique perspective on kind of the differences of what – as the prior speaker said, there definitely is a difference of what's important to people living in the city. I lived in the inner city of Calgary, and what was important to me then is definitely different than what's important to me now living in the Ghost valley.

I've got about four key requests that I'd like to ask the commission to consider as you move forward with your work. I'll summarize them, and then I'll go over a little bit more detail.

First is that the ridings be fair and logical. I'll get to that more in a minute. I think communities within an area that have the same issues, same concerns should be grouped within a riding. I also think, because the ridings are going to be in effect for 10 years, that not only the current population but the future population, any growth, should be considered when you're looking at the boundaries. And then the last one is, for a couple of reasons I'll point out, that Banff-Kananaskis probably should stay close. The boundaries should not be changed much.

As far as a fair and logical riding – as you probably noticed from my accent, I'm not originally from Canada. Up until 2002 I lived in the U.S. One of the things I noticed when I moved to Canada was that the ridings actually kind of looked very logical. The ones within the cities were within the cities. You know, they had kind of a logical shape, and it appeared that most of the communities that were in the riding had similar likes, interests, and stuff. This is very different than I was used to in the States, where due to gerrymandering a lot of the ridings look completely ridiculous, all for the explicit purpose of trying to marginalize one party's votes.

Like I said, I think Alberta has done a great job up to now. I just ask that you continue that policy of coming up with logical ridings. Communities with similar interests being in the same riding kind of ties back to my first point. I think that as much as possible, to allow the MLA to accurately and effectively represent their riding, it helps if most of the people within the communities have similar interests, likes, concerns, you know, economic issues, geographic commonalities.

If you look at Banff-Kananaskis, we've got Lake Louise, Banff, Canmore, Bow Valley, the Ghost River valley. Then on the west side we do have several. We have a community, Springbank, west side of Calgary. We have Springbank, Bragg Creek, and while at first glance there are definitely differences between them, one of the things that is common within our riding is that the environment, tourism, wildlife preservation is very important to those that live in the riding. I can say that as someone that has lived both in Calgary

and in the Ghost River valley, our issues are definitely different than people that live in Cochrane or Calgary, and I think it would be a disservice to both groups to lump them together or to mix them. I think we both need MLAs that can represent our concerns.

Next one. As far as future growth I think my understanding is that the current population is 52,000. Actually, I think we are close to 1 to 1. So we're a little bit below the average. I know that you all are shooting for the 55,000. However, Banff-Kananaskis has shown significant growth in the last few years, unlike other rural ridings. Actually, because of the recent approval of several development projects in Canmore, within the next 10 years Canmore is going to be probably adding about 14,000, almost doubling in size due to the new housing developments. That in itself, without considering the other growth happening in Bragg Creek and up where I live, would add probably almost 30 per cent to the riding.

Again, you know, I know you all are based on your numbers today, but I do think there will be – by the time you come around the next time, there will be significant growth. So I think it would be better if we're close to that 55,000 now and not up around that plus 25 per cent that you all are allowed.

Then the last item. You know, as far as my reasoning for why Banff-Kananaskis boundaries shouldn't be changed, besides the reason I just said, it's actually only been a riding since 2015. In the last redraw it used to be that Cochrane was in with Banff. Significant redraw on the last time, and it is growing, continues to grow. I think, while it is a diverse riding, we do have a commonality of love of the environment and love for the place we live. So I think our desire would be for the most part – I understand there will be tweaks – to try to keep the riding as it is just because it is fairly new.

With that, I'd just like to close by saying that, again, you know, I think Banff-Kananaskis is unique and also because of tourism and other things offers a lot to the Alberta economy and just ask that you consider my request in your work as you move forward.

The Chair: Thank you very much, sir.

Mr. Clark, any questions?

3:10

Mr. Clark: Yeah. First, thank you very much for your presentation. The context you've provided and your unique background, having chosen to move to Canada and having had that experience in the U.S., is really not something that we've heard yet, and I find that really compelling.

Also, a reminder that part of our role here is about clear and understandable boundaries. What I've heard is that you've talked about a couple of aspects of that, just the natural communities of interest, but also that it's only been around for a couple of elections. The numbers are sort of right around the midpoint, and you've got some predictable growth. Sort of a bunch of things I'm hearing, that are fairly compelling to say, you know, that probably this is one, at least in my estimation, that may not be worth, that we want to be careful, I guess, about. In some of the previous presentations I've talked about putting the Stoney Nakoda nations perhaps together, adding on pieces, which wouldn't have a massive impact kind of population-wise. I guess maybe I would ask: if we do need to make some of those sorts of tweaks, are there particular parts of the constituency that you feel don't fit in terms of like with like?

Mr. Parker: I would say that the one that doesn't fit is Elbow Valley.

Mr. Clark: Okay.

Mr. Parker: Unlike Springbank, most of – I mean they are close to town. They do use it. But it's more acreages typically in Springbank.

I mean, Elbow Valley, for the most part, is a subdivision. It just happens to be outside of the city limits of Calgary.

Mr. Clark: Right.

Mr. Parker: That would be my one.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. That's helpful. Thank you.

The Chair: Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: I've got to ask: what part of the U.S. did you come from?

Mr. Parker: Texas. Yeah. My wife and I are both graduates from UT.

Dr. Martin: We're bonded.

I wanted to press you further on your growth assertions, which I've heard about from other people today who are in your riding, so I'm not disputing the fact. I just want, first of all, to get the number again. You had suggested that in the coming decade, as the various known development permits convert themselves into buildings . . .

Mr. Parker: Right.

Dr. Martin: . . . that you might have as many as 20,000 added. Was that the number?

Mr. Parker: Fourteen thousand is one number that I've seen just for the Three Sisters development.

Dr. Martin: Yeah.

Mr. Parker: I think there are a couple other smaller developments. I think Silver Creek is adding some, and there's another that I've seen up to 17,000 potential. But, yeah, I was quoting the Three Sisters, which is the one that had been in – I'm expecting it's going to go very fast because it's the one that's been planned for 20 years. It's been in dispute and then, finally, just this last year, was approved. I think, yeah, it's going to be, I would expect, fairly quick that they start building on it. Now, the 14,000 would be, obviously, over a long period of time.

Dr. Martin: Okay. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Correct me if I'm wrong though, sir. Isn't that Three Sisters still in litigation?

Mr. Parker: No.

The Chair: It's been concluded?

Mr. Parker: It's been concluded, yes.

The Chair: Okay. So it is not a contingent.

Mr. Parker: No. It has been approved. I think last summer, if I remember right, or late in the year.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Parker: Yeah.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. We had other people present on Banff-Kananaskis, and it was brought to our attention that for things

coming in, we should look at Eden Valley and the Bighorn reserve, and we should take Millarville out because Millarville is split. Do you have any comments on those? Or are you familiar with those areas where they are residing?

Mr. Parker: Millarville, I am. The other two, the Bighorn . . .

Mrs. Samson: Bighorn reserve and Eden Valley. They're both Indigenous areas.

The Chair: In other districts right now.

Mrs. Samson: They're not in, but they're all part of the same.

Mr. Parker: Okay. Yeah. I would say that bringing them in probably would make sense then. Like you said, I think, if it is the First Nations, you know, it would make sense to pull them together.

Millarville. I would say that, unlike Elbow Valley that's very distinct, Millarville is not much different than Priddis or even – you know, we have ranchers and agriculture up where I am in the Ghost valley. So there's not a reason, I would say, to particularly move it out. However, if Millarville is split, then I would say yeah. I mean, I think moving it out would probably make sense. If I was Millarville, I would not want to be split.

It is also very, if you look at it – as the prior speaker mentioned, she had met with her MLA, and that's because our MLA actually goes around every month because our riding is so big, actually has sessions, like, all over the county.

Mrs. Samson: All the communities. Nice.

Mr. Parker: Yeah. Basically, to get to Millarville, she's doing an hour and a half drive to get down to Millarville, so it is on the far end of the riding. I mean, I think that would be an area, if it was split, that would logically stay.

Mrs. Samson: Okay. And just for clarification, you said that it would be a better fit with Elbow Valley out? Did I understand you correctly?

Mr. Parker: Yeah. Whereas Millarville, I wouldn't say there's a reason to move it except for if it's split; then I understand. Elbow Valley: I would say that if you look at it, the people there are people that are working in Calgary. I think it is a different – it is a neighbourhood. There's really nothing different about Elbow Valley other than, you know, a subdivision in Calgary.

Mrs. Samson: Okay. Great. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Evans, any questions?

Mr. Evans: Yeah. You live in the summer village of . . .

Mr. Parker: Waiparous.

Mr. Evans: Okay. And if I've got it right, it's about 50 people.

Mr. Parker: Yeah. I think there are 70 homes. It was initially developed in the early '60s as a summer village, and I think about 50 per cent of the houses now are full-time residents. So, yeah, that 50 sounds right.

Mr. Evans: Actually, it says 64, and then Ghost Lake is 75. How close are the two together?

Mr. Parker: Ghost is about, as the crow flies, 10 kilometres. Driving, it's about a 25-minute drive.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Parker: If I can point it out, this is Ghost Lake. Actually, that little white area you can see right between the lake and the reserve: that's Ghost Lake right there.

Mr. Evans: Oh, okay.

Mr. Parker: This is highway 40. This is Waiparous Creek, this is Ghost River, and the summer village of Waiparous is right there at the intersection.

Mr. Evans: So how far are you from Canmore?

Mr. Parker: Thirty kilometres. We go to Canmore for groceries and stuff.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Parker. Much appreciated. Your insights are valuable. I'll excuse you, but feel free to stay and hear the rest of the presentations.

Mr. Parker: Yeah. Thanks a lot.

The Chair: Our next two don't appear to be here, so Kathleen Ganley, half an hour early.

Ms Ganley: That's exciting. Okay. Well, thank you very much, and thanks for having me early. I'll wait till the riding is up. Oh, there it is.

Good afternoon. Thanks for having me here. I'm Kathleen Ganley. I'm the MLA for Calgary-Mountain View, and I've had the incredible privilege of serving in that role since 2019. I was first elected to the Legislative Assembly in 2015, representing Calgary-Buffalo. I served as the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General for four years and the minister of then aboriginal relations, now Indigenous Relations, for eight months. I'm here today to make representations for the people in my community but also to speak to the larger issues of maintaining a fair system that respects the votes of Albertans and maintains faith in our institutions.

I'd like to thank the commission, to begin with, for your service. I think the work you're here today to do is incredibly important, and it'll affect the right to representation of the people of this province. I'm partisan, obviously, but I'm also a big believer in democracy, and the work you do today will set the process for institutions. That is more important than the aims of any political party.

Calgary-Mountain View is an inner-city riding. Many of the communities I represent have been around for half a century and many for considerably more than that. They're amazing places. One of both the main stresses and opportunities in our communities is growth. Many neighbourhoods are revitalizing and densifying. There's a tension between those who want to preserve the communities they love as they always have been and those who need more housing supply in order to afford to live there.

3:20

Community schools are bursting at the seams, including the elementary school my own daughter attends, which is currently a K to 5 school instead of K to 6, to accommodate so many students. The communities in Calgary-Mountain View, I would say, share a lot in common with the immediate adjoining communities. There is a natural boundary, as you can see, on the south there. That is the Bow River that lies between Mountain View and Buffalo, but in terms of the other divisions, like, the communities are similar to one

another, but they're also similar, I would say, to the immediately adjoining communities in some ways. I would say that, you know, those immediately adjoining communities all sort of share a certain community of interest.

What I would say are probably the top concerns: shortage of housing supply, high costs, stagnating wages, overcrowded schools and hospitals are some of the most common concerns in the communities I represent but also, I would say, in the immediately adjoining communities. These inner-city communities I do think need to be kept together because they share a commonality of interest, but I'm not going to argue for sort of specific boundaries one way or the other, because those inner-city neighbourhoods tend to share quite a lot in common and, because my riding is in the middle of all of them in the north, there's a lot of commonality.

What is relevant, I think, is that these concerns differ from concerns in rural areas, and I'd like to highlight some of the ways in which they do so. For instance, schools in Calgary are overutilized. Libraries and gym stages have been used as classrooms. By contrast, communities where schools are underutilized in rural areas struggle to cover the basic costs associated with infrastructure. While students in Calgary may struggle due to overcrowded classrooms, in rural communities fewer students means that there may not be enough teachers to have specialists in different subject areas such as computer science or even physics.

My constituents in Calgary generally face hospitals bursting at the seams while those in rural Alberta face closed ERs. Both are significant challenges, but they're different. Calgary is a community that is growing rapidly, putting strain on services. That presents different challenges than communities that are shrinking or struggling to stay afloat as a result.

Those concerns deserve to be represented – all of them – but they're different, and it's the job of this commission to recognize that and to keep those communities of interest together per section 14 of the act. I believe the municipalities are communities of interest. This seems like an obvious point, but I think it's also critical. Municipalities have historically been communities of interest, and that has been respected by this commission, with very limited exceptions. And I would argue that this should continue to be the case. Those who argue otherwise, in my opinion, bear the onus of proving it. The burden of proof should rest with them, because they are the ones arguing for a change, and I truly struggle to see how they could possibly prove that diluting different interests would better represent anyone.

The point of representative democracy is for communities to have their different interests represented. This is still reflected in the act today. Section 14(b) references "communities of interest, including municipalities, regional and rural communities, Indian reserves and Metis settlements." In addition, section 14(e) references the desirability of clear boundaries, and municipalities represent a clear boundary. Calgarians identify as just that, Calgarians.

Calgary is growing rapidly, as are many mid-sized cities and their surrounding areas. Section 14(a) deals with sparsity, density, and the rate of population growth, and section 15 explicitly deals with limiting variance in size. I would argue this strongly argues for more ridings in Calgary, particularly in areas that are growing rapidly. This is also reflected in our constitution, the Supreme Court's interpretation of it.

I would add that rapid growth should not be used to argue that municipal boundaries shouldn't be respected. In fact, keeping those communities of interest together and ensuring representation is precisely what the Supreme Court relied on in allowing variance in size in the 1991 Saskatchewan provincial boundaries case. The

commission will determine rules that are critical to preserving our democracy.

We find ourselves, I would say, in very interesting times. Faith in our basic institutions, our system of justice, our democracy are waning. I could write an entire novel on why, but the critical point is that we must do everything we can to keep these institutions just and to preserve public confidence.

Growing cynicism about democracy is a problem we should all address, and this commission can do that by ensuring that we are empowering people to choose for themselves, not to try to choose for them by forcing different interests together.

I come before this committee to argue for the obvious, that rural communities, mid-size cities, and large urban centres all deserve a voice. I think I've outlined the specific concerns in sufficient detail in terms of the differences between my city and the rural areas. I think to maintain faith in democracy, we should respect those boundaries and ensure that all of those voices are heard, and this commission has the power to do so.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Ganley.

Mr. Evans, any questions or comments?

Mr. Evans: Yeah. You premise your argument on the fact that you have defined Calgary-Mountain View to be a community of interest, but in looking at the legislation, you'll agree with me that it doesn't have its own municipal boundary. It doesn't have a regional or rural community. It's not an Indian reserve, and it's not a Métis settlement. So explain to me how that's a community of interest. That's part one. Part two is: what is the connection with everything above 16th Avenue N.W. to what's below it?

Ms Ganley: Yeah. Absolutely. Just to be clear, what I'm arguing is that inner-city Calgary communities generally have a community of interest.

Mr. Evans: What are they, though? What is it? Define it for me.

Ms Ganley: Sure. It's really what I was outlining, that the people in those communities are experiencing similar things. Growth pressures in neighbourhoods are creating a tension between those who want more development and those who would like to keep their communities as they always were. There's significant pressure on things like schools and hospitals because of the growth. There's also pressure on the infrastructure in the inner city generated both by people living in sort of more suburban communities and by those kind of driving in.

I'm not saying that you need to maintain these boundaries specifically; I want to be very clear about that. I think that these communities mostly share a community of interest with each other, but they also share that community of interest with, say, Calgary-Klein, which is immediately to the north or Calgary-Varsity, which is immediately to the west.

Inner-city communities in Calgary are very similar. I think they should be kept together as much as possible, but I'm not arguing for any specific line on this map. I do know that community associations generally prefer to be in one riding if that can be accommodated.

Mr. Evans: That's my next question. How many community associations are within this group? Because I think those could be characterized as communities of interest.

Ms Ganley: Oh, gosh. How many community associations? West Hillhurst, Hillhurst, Sunnyside, Bridgeland, Crescent Heights – I'm going to say like fewer than 10. There's actually one in the west end there . . .

Mr. Evans: Are there any that are split by the boundaries?

Ms Ganley: Yes. Parkdale is split between Calgary-Mountain View and Calgary-Varsity. Do you want me to show you?

Mr. Evans: If you wouldn't mind, if we have time.

Ms Ganley: Right over here on the far end of the riding, this is a community that's split. Generally they actually just get two MLAs that show up to their events. I haven't heard any sort of specific complaints, but, yes, communities do generally, in my experience, prefer to be kept together.

Over here communities tend to work together. You have kind of Capitol Hill working with Banff Trail community centre. They're very close. They often work together. But I think the challenge that this commission faces, in my opinion, is that a lot of those communities sort of work together with one another, right?

3:30

Arguably, depending on the sort of size of the population, which is, I guess, somewhat over what you would expect, it used to be – the previous changes were to kind of grow it north of 16th Avenue, if you will, so that those communities could go back to where they were before. I mean, you could carve it in several ways. Other than the Bow River sort of there to the south and Deerfoot Trail to the east, there are no really obvious natural boundaries, I would say, which, I guess, makes your work difficult and easy.

Mr. Evans: The 16th doesn't work as a boundary.

Ms Ganley: The 16th could absolutely be seen as a natural boundary. Most of the communities themselves sort of divide off there north and south of 16th. Like, honestly, the commonality, the sort of services relied on in terms of school districts, in terms of people shopping for their groceries, just the stuff of everyday life often crosses 16th Avenue one way or the other.

Mr. Evans: Thank you.

The Chair: Mrs. Samson.

Mrs. Samson: I have a question for you. Did you have a robust discussion in the Legislature about why only two ridings were required for the change, like, going from 87 to 89?

Ms Ganley: I'll admit that I wasn't in there every moment. We do tend to come and go in shifts. There was some discussion, but it was the proposal that came in with the government's legislation. This was done when we were in government in 2017. We kept the same number of seats because we don't really feel like additional MLAs are necessarily a net benefit. I don't know how else to say it. It doesn't seem like more representation is necessarily needed; it keeps the costs down for the people of Alberta. So that was the decision we made at the time.

Two isn't a huge increase. My recollection from the last time we did this exercise is that some of the northern ridings are significantly under in population but they're really, really big, so obviously there's going to need to be more ridings in the city to sort of keep within that 25 per cent variance, right? I imagine that was done in order to protect those from getting too big,

although, honestly, with the advancement of technology, the size of a riding actually isn't, I would say, as relevant as it was even 10 years ago. Right? I guess that's me speculating. Sorry.

Mrs. Samson: Okay. No, that's good. Thanks.

The Chair: You had mentioned that definitely Calgary should get more electoral divisions. How many?

Ms Ganley: Oh. You know, I hadn't contemplated the specific numbers. I would need to see the math. I know my riding is a little bit over, but some of my colleagues, particularly in the northeast: their ridings are massively over the normal number. At a certain point it does become quite difficult to represent those communities, because you're trying to be in so many places at once. Right? It makes it a little bit harder to be there for everyone. I'd have to run the math, but my suggestion would be – the committee has suggested a number that would sort of divide the province up roughly equally. I would suggest that you divide the number of folks in Calgary by that and that's the number of ridings that need to go in.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you. Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you. One of the things that we have found by being on this commission – well, several of them. First, we have people thanking us in sort of a sorrowful fashion, like: what's coming at us? But, you know, your riding is over. You're an inner-city riding. I understand the kind of issues that animate discussions among the community. I expect as well that there are going to be infill and basements that are going legal, and there'll be lots of pressure to increase the number of housing units by one means or another. I fully expect that you'll have more housing, and you will have more population. Your characterization of your riding suggests that you're very much like some of the ridings on the inner south side of the river, so we can expect that the population will continue to grow for some time.

Here's our problem, obviously. We're a 62,000, and you're a 62,500. Our mean is 55,000. There's some variation that we can play with, but you're too big, and you're growing. We're going to have to decide how best to alter ridings that have these kinds of features, and instantly we have ripple effects all across the city. To make a crude example, if I took everything north of 16th Ave., instantly there would be a tidal wave moving north. So we have a lot of balls to juggle.

But if I could get down to brass tacks: if you had to shrink it – can you clarify what you did at the map? – would you try to nibble at the western end?

Ms Ganley: You could nibble at the western edge. You could also – previously it ended at 16th Avenue, which is also a possibility. Those neighbourhoods were in Calgary-Klein in the 2015 election. So if you're carving off on the west, it goes into Calgary-Varsity, on the north, it probably goes into Calgary-Klein. Both of those ridings: most of the communities they have share a pretty significant amount in common with Calgary-Mountain View. I don't think people would find themselves ill-represented by either of those moves, if that helps you at all.

Dr. Martin: Well, I think it does because we are concerned about effective representation and about the relationship between the population and the MLA. If you feel that that could be accommodated, we'll probably look at those kinds of scenarios pretty closely.

Ms Ganley: Yeah. I mean, because of the way Calgary-Klein kind of sticks down on the south side of Deerfoot Trail there, you could also look at the eastern edge.

Honestly, like, that's why it's difficult for me to make a recommendation to you, because they all share a community of interest but also with those immediately around them. There are a lot of different number scenarios. I don't want to – how to put it? – suggest how you have to do it because I don't think that any of those are super bad options.

Dr. Martin: Okay. I don't want to press you. You love all your people.

Ms Ganley: I do. I love all my constituents.

Dr. Martin: You can see from where we sit, you think: "Oh; 65,000. Yeah. How's the growth pattern going to go? I think we're bumping up on our ceiling." The next thing you do is think: where can we nibble?

Ms Ganley: Yeah. That's totally legitimate.

Dr. Martin: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Mr. Clark?

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Thank you. Yes, and *Hansard* is forever, so you have to be careful what you say in terms of which community you might recommend.

Well, I wanted to come back to the beginning of your presentation. I found it quite compelling, your discussion around what anchors us as a commission: section 3 of the Constitution, the Supreme Court reference cases, the act. Now here we are. Maybe I'll just sort of ask you to kind of complete that thought in just maybe 90 seconds or less. What aspects of the constitutional/legal framework do you feel it's important for us to remember?

Ms Ganley: Yeah. I would say that probably the most important thing is to work to keep those communities of interest together and to make sure that people feel represented. I think we have seen south of the border – admittedly that was sort of spun up, shall we say? – what can happen if people don't feel appropriately represented. I think we do see an erosion of faith in our institutions. My concern is that we respect natural boundaries, and municipal boundaries are in my view such natural boundaries. I think allowing those interests to have a representative is critical.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

3:40

The Chair: Well, thank you, Ms Ganley. All presenters are equal, but we are particularly gratified when an MLA comes and talks to us because we know that you know your riding very well.

I have one more question.

Ms Ganley: Absolutely.

The Chair: Because I'm the chair, I can go over time.

You have the unique position of having served two electoral divisions in Calgary. Any comments, in 30 seconds or less, about Calgary-Buffer?

Ms Ganley: Oh, boy. Yeah. Calgary-Buffer is a fantastic riding. It's much more urban. It has, again, a natural sort of boundary, I would say, to the north on it. It's got a similar thing on the southern

portion, sort of where Deerfoot comes through and Blackfoot comes through, some more clear, natural boundaries, and then it abuts – I actually always felt like the lines between Calgary-Elbow and Calgary-Buffalo were in interesting places, much like the lines between Calgary-Mountain View and Calgary-Varsity are. Those communities share a lot in common, I would say, in terms of their kind of densification and general experience of life.

The Chair: Yeah. Okay. Well, thank you very much. You're excused, but please stay if you can to hear the rest of the presentations.

Ms Ganley: Excellent. Well, thanks so much.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: Is Dr. Angela Grace present? Please come forward and have a seat.

Dr. Grace: Thank you. Thanks for the opportunity to share my perspective on the upcoming changes to Alberta's electoral boundaries. I will not be as well spoken as a two-time MLA, but I'm happy to share my experiences and perspective.

I do have a unique Albertan perspective having lived and worked in various rural and urban communities in Alberta. I had the privilege of growing up on a farm in the Drumheller-Stettler electoral division and have since lived in Red Deer-South, Lethbridge-West, Taber-Warner, Brooks-Medicine Hat, and now Calgary-Varsity. I've had the opportunity to experience the unique identity and pride of each community and how the elected officials interact with the community and represent us in the Legislature.

Even though I now live in the largest city in Alberta, I can't help but keep my rural roots of wanting to know and trust my elected representative, shopping locally, and honestly not wanting to drive more than 20 minutes for any of my services. Community pride is one of the core values of each community I've lived and worked in. Each rural community I lived in prided itself on its unique identity, ranging from their unique geographical landmarks, from the rolling wheat fields of the Alberta prairies to the trees in Cypress Hills and the big bridge and of course the wind in Lethbridge. Each community I lived in shows their own distinguishing landmarks, ranging from the world's largest teepee in the city of Medicine Hat, to the world's largest poppy in the village of Veteran, Alberta. There's a seasonal flow of community events in rural Alberta with high school graduations, rodeos, and curling bonspiels. The sense of community pride is strong.

The urban communities I have lived in have prided themselves on educational excellence, Red Deer College, the University of Lethbridge, the University of Calgary. Although there is a different seasonal flow in the urban areas with community events, the identity of each community is still unique. For example, Calgary-Varsity has a different sense of community than Calgary-North and Calgary-North East due to their unique and expanding population characteristics based on the history of the community, age, culture, and socioeconomic factors.

Unfortunately, I have also experienced how this sense of individual community identity and pride has also led to distrust in other communities. We have to acknowledge that the rural-urban divide in Alberta is strong and seems to be increasing with community identity, individualism, and partisanship placing itself over shared human values and collaboration.

Unfortunately, this rural-urban divide and increasing partisanship has increased tensions and shaken Albertans' sense of democracy. I contend that the recreation of electoral boundaries is

a nonpartisan opportunity to re-establish shared human values and strengthen a sense of democracy across our province. You, as a committee appointed to work on required changes to electoral boundaries, have an obligation to all Albertans to be nonpartisan and to respect community boundaries, pride, identity, and the foundations of democracy in your upcoming proposed changes. There needs to be a clear intention to focus on collaboration and fair representation rather than risk fostering increasing rural-urban division and mistrust. I contend that the nonpartisan and interactive process of maintaining respect for geography, community identity, and population changes be the foundation for electoral boundary decision-making.

Arbitrarily breaking up communities to change electoral boundaries does not make sense. It also does not make sense to shift electoral boundaries to a pie-shaped inclusion of both rural and urban in each electoral district, as I understood has been proposed. From my perspective combining rural and urban in the same electoral district would instigate increased confusion and mistrust within already established geographical boundaries, decrease a sense of community identity, increase a sense of disenfranchisement, and significantly muddy the waters for effective community representation. With distinct rural and urban electoral districts there's a clear sense of representation for each of the needs of each area. Within mixed districts it would be unclear whose needs and voices the elected official would actually represent in the community.

First, I firmly believe it is important that geography be preserved as its existing foundation for deciding on changes to electoral boundaries. Existing geographical boundaries provide a sense of identity based on the land in which people live. It only makes sense to maintain as much as possible already established geographical boundaries as a first step in examining the need to change the electoral boundaries. That being said, of course, there are population shifts within each of these boundaries.

Second, I believe that community identity needs to be preserved as the second priority in the upcoming changes to electoral boundaries. It makes logical sense to keep like-minded and like-experience communities together for identity, ease, efficiency, and local representation. There's a shared sense of identity, culture, and infrastructure needs that need to be respected and preserved. Within these geographical boundaries are already established rural and urban and cultural and socioeconomic communities with their own characteristics, needs, and sense of community pride. For example, in the rural Drumheller-Stettler district, where I grew up, it makes sense to maintain the rural identity with local representation. In the same sense, it makes sense to maintain current urban district identities, with a focus on already established community boundaries set by urban planning and new community development. It is important that elected officials understand and seek to represent their unique characteristics.

Third, I believe that once already established geographical boundaries and communities have been identified, it then makes sense to look at Alberta's population data to make decisions about expanding, shrinking, or adding new electoral districts. This is where you have the responsibility to make logical, nonpartisan decisions. Based on current and future population growth to me it makes the most sense to add north Calgary and south Edmonton as new electoral districts.

Thank you so much.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you. Thank you for the punch line.

Mr. Clark, any questions?

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Dr. Grace. I'll just say thank you for your thoughtful presentation. You clearly put some time into that, and it is really very helpful. Thank you so much.

Dr. Grace: You're so welcome.

Dr. Martin: I'll echo my colleague's thought. Thank you again.

The Chair: Susan.

Mrs. Samson: I do, too. Thank you for coming out.

The Chair: Mr. Evans.

Mr. Evans: Now all the pressure. Like, we've got to have one question.

The Chair: I have one in reserve.

Mr. Evans: Oh, thank goodness. Okay. Well, then, we'll defer to the commissioner.

The Chair: You touched on an issue that could be described as philosophical but intensely practical and pragmatic as well. I think I quoted you directly.

Dr. Grace: That's exactly how I strive to be.

The Chair: Okay. Well, it came through loud and clear.

But I want to put to you another case. You said that the rural/urban divide is as strong as it's ever been in Alberta. Now, we have heard from presenters already that say, "you know what," and I'm paraphrasing, "the way to address the divide is to lump some people together so they learn how to get along." After all, our federal cousins, whoever the members of parliament are, many of them, maybe even 50 per cent of them, have mixed urban/rural ridings, and they get by. What do you say to that?

3:50

Dr. Grace: Well, first, lumping people together and seeing how they get along isn't a great way to increase collaboration. Like, there's got to be some structure for that.

The Chair: Outside of parenting, it doesn't work? Is that what you're saying?

Dr. Grace: Yeah, and outside of teaching grade 1 it doesn't work so well, you know.

Mr. Evans: Outside of multiculturalism, the foundation of our country.

Dr. Grace: I do think that, in these very challenging political times, people need a reprieve. They need a rest, and they need to know that they're going to be really represented. As people are bringing up their concerns to their elected representative, they need to be able to trust that things aren't going to change so much that it causes so much disruption. It's been in my observation and experience that when you lump people together, it actually increases a sense of mistrust. It increases a sense of butting heads, and there's not enough listening, so if people are able to stay within their own geographical and like-minded boundaries with, of course, you know, some political, philosophical changes on how to have that representation, it's going to make people feel safer and calmer and more relaxed that they actually are being heard.

The Chair: Okay. Anything arising out of that question I posed?

Mrs. Samson: Good answer.

Mr. Evans: Philosophically, isn't there an incongruence with the concept of multiculturalism and everything that we espouse to be beneficial in that regard? Yet, at the same time, you're talking about – well, it almost seems a bit xenophobic to me in terms of the, "keep like with like." Explain to me the incongruence.

Dr. Grace: Well, the incongruence is – if we go down to the roots of what a lot of the divide is, we have to talk about racism, and until the issue of racism and people's willingness to address their internalized sense of racism and white supremacy in this province, it's going to be really hard for people to collaborate on these very differences in each of the geographical and community areas that we need to address.

Mr. Evans: Well, let's assume that premise is correct – okay? – for argument's sake. How is what you've proposed in terms of your philosophy in solving this problem and, you know, the guidance you provided the commission, how does any of what you've said today ameliorate that concern? It doesn't. You actually have talked about separating.

Dr. Grace: You're right. It doesn't address that concern.

Mr. Evans: Okay. I just want to make sure I understood.

Dr. Grace: But what it does do is that it can help settle people down that there's not going to be so many drastic changes and political changes all at once. It says: "Okay. We're going to take a very logical, nonpartisan, sensible way of addressing the population changes and the geographical changes." Well, not so much geographical, but population changes like rural communities shrinking, urban communities growing: we're going to try to make it as even as possible so that people can have the representation that they need. That's all it's doing is saying: let's slow things down and be really logical about it.

Mr. Evans: Would it be correct that the proper way to solve this would be to identify and group communities of interest based on race and culture? Is that what you're suggesting?

Dr. Grace: No, I'm not. Well, I'm saying they've already – my observation and understanding is a lot of these communities are grouping themselves.

Mr. Evans: Okay. I think that's a fair comment.

Dr. Grace: Like, we don't need to group them; they're grouping themselves.

Mr. Evans: And if we look at Calgary-Varsity, what we've talked about, is any of that applicable to this particular electoral district in terms of: are there portions here where you could say, "well, this neighbourhood, for example, they're like-minded in many different ways" and be able to identify that as compared to, say, another neighbourhood within that ED?

Dr. Grace: I mean, I liked what Kathleen said and you guys alluded to as well on communities working together. In my area there's Charleswood, Triwood, Varsity that tend to work together. Then there's the other side of Crowchild with Varsity over there, Varsity Estates.

Mr. Evans: Right. Dalhousie, Brentwood.

Dr. Grace: Yeah. Dalhousie. There are the different communities that tend to lump themselves together. I would contend that the university district is a special district on its own because of the more transient, ever-changing student population that's there. So there are unique characteristics, but I would say that as a whole that area has high education as one of its foundations.

Mr. Evans: Thank you very much. Appreciate our fulsome discussion.

Dr. Grace: Yeah. Thanks for putting me on the spot. That was fun.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Dr. Grace. Much appreciated.

Mr. Evans: Will make for great *Hansard* reading later on.

The Chair: Okay, our next presenter and, I believe, our final presenter of the afternoon is Mr. Irfan Sabir.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, and good afternoon.

The Chair: Now, I've said that we limit people to seven minutes with three minutes of questions. Well, we're a little bit flexible. You're the last presenter of the day, so please proceed. Identify yourself and what electoral division you're from.

Mr. Sabir: Well, thank you and good afternoon. I'm Irfan Sabir, and I'm the MLA for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall. It's an electoral district in the northeast quadrant of Calgary that I have the honour of representing since 2015. It has changed since, but that's the name. I would add that I'm also a long-term resident of northeast Calgary, moved there first in 2007. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to you this afternoon.

I want to start by thanking all of you for your commitment to this important work. Certainly it's a challenging task to create a map that is fair and acceptable for all communities while ensuring effective representation for all Albertans as guaranteed by the Charter and elaborated upon by the Supreme Court of Canada's jurisprudence. I'm confident that you will take this task very seriously and do your best, and my best wishes are with all of you.

Last year, the government introduced Bill 31, Justice Statutes Amendment Act, which amended the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act, and I want to speak specifically to those changes. One change was that the legislation added two new electoral divisions, and I'm very pleased to see that since Alberta's population has grown significantly since the last review of electoral boundaries.

Personally, there has been a huge growth in the constituency in the quadrant I represent. My riding stands around 28 per cent above the average population of current electoral districts. It's also the case for other neighbouring northeast ridings in northeast Calgary. Based on this, I would strongly urge the commission to consider allocating one of the new electoral division in northeast Calgary to accommodate the growing population and to ensure effective representation for all residents.

Secondly, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act also amended section 14 of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act, which sets out the relevant considerations for the commission while creating a new electoral map.

4:00

I note that prior to this change, among other things, the commission was required to take into account common community interests and community organizations and keep existing communities and municipal boundaries intact wherever possible.

With this change, while similar criteria exist, it is now in the discretion of the commission to consider this.

Having said that, I would submit that how the commission exercises its discretion will have a huge impact on what the future electoral map of Alberta looks like. It will also have huge implications for people's right to effective and fair representation and for the institution of democracy as a whole. It's against this backdrop that I would urge the commission to make sure that common interests of communities are represented and respected and existing municipal boundaries are respected as much as possible.

For instance, in northeast Calgary it's a community of its own. It has people from many different backgrounds, cultures who have come together for decades to create their own organizations, community halls, ethnic restaurants, prayer places, and so much more. It took them decades, as I said. Their lives revolve around their communities. For example, annexing any northeast community with the neighbouring towns of Airdrie or Chestermere may not make any sense at all.

Over the last few months I have had the opportunity to talk to northeast Calgary residents, their organizations and with my colleagues across the province about this boundary review, and I can say that they would very much want their communities to be kept together. These communities have a significant racialized population, and it's also important from the standpoint of fair representation for racialized communities. As I said earlier, people come from many different backgrounds and talents, and many of them are first-generation or second-generation immigrants. They have issues that are fairly unique to their communities, they have issues that are common with all Albertans, but any future map must ensure that they are able to maintain effective representation of their interests and their communities.

Lastly, I want to submit that the communities that have more things in common need to be kept intact. For instance, in the last boundaries review my riding was created in a way that surrounds a community hub there called Genesis Centre. It's one of the hubs in the northeast along with the leisure centre and Vivo Centre. In the case of Calgary-Bhullar-McCall Genesis as a go-to place in a riding change works well. However, the neighbouring riding of Calgary-North East was divided in a way that one-half of its population is on the east side of the Deerfoot, and the other half is on the west side of the Deerfoot. Based on my observations people on the east side of the Deerfoot have more things in common with my riding – Genesis Centre, prayer places, restaurants, and all those things – than on the other side of the Deerfoot while people on the other side of the Deerfoot will have their own community which will use and utilize the Vivo Centre, for instance, way more than people on the east side of the Deerfoot will use it.

So I think that's also an opportunity to learn from the previous review and make amends that will work for our communities. I'm sure that my colleagues and many other Albertans will make submissions that will help guide the commission's important work.

With that, I thank you for your time, and I'm happy to take any questions.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Sabir. Just a clarification question in terms of the history of your representation. You were first elected in 2015?

Mr. Sabir: Yes.

The Chair: Is this constituency largely what you represented that first term? The name has changed, I believe.

Mr. Sabir: Yes and no. In 2015 it included the neighbourhoods of Falconridge and Castleridge and also . . .

The Chair: Which are south. Are they?

Mr. Sabir: They are on the south side.

On the north side it included Skyview and those neighbourhoods. Since then the north side has grown exponentially. Like, there are so many other new neighbourhoods, Redstone, Cityscape. Even on the north side of my riding there's a new neighbourhood, Savanna, in Saddle Ridge. In 2019 it only had maybe 600, 700 people; now it's a fully grown neighbourhood.

The Chair: Okay. Mr. Evans, any questions, comments?

Mr. Evans: We see a large chunk of your riding is the airport, but it would appear that where the people are living, it's incredibly dense and growing quickly. The numbers are currently 70,000, a 28.6 per cent growth. But what's more interesting are Calgary-North East, Calgary-Falconridge, Calgary-Cross. Those are all growing at an extremely rapid rate. Calgary-North East is a 55 per cent increase; Calgary-Falconridge, 18 per cent; and Calgary-Cross, 11 per cent.

Have you hit saturation here, or are there still – I can see some areas that could be developed when I look at an aerial map. Are there more developments going on in your particular riding?

Mr. Sabir: I think that for the most part the room for new development is that Savanna area.

Mr. Evans: So above Airport Trail northeast?

Mr. Sabir: Yeah. Right by Airport Trail. It will be on the south side of Airport Trail.

Mr. Evans: Okay. There's still some open ground there.

Mr. Sabir: There is still some open ground. Saddle Ridge has very little space on the east side. I think Saddle Ridge, in that sense, doesn't have much room. This other area has a lot of businesses, but there is no residential population in this; hence, my suggestion that this area has grown significantly and the population is very dense and that the commission consider adding one of the new ridings.

Mr. Evans: I'm more interested to know: is there more significant growth that's going to happen within that electoral district, or are we moving towards a point of saturation? Is there more growth, from your perspective, that's going to happen in Calgary-Falconridge and Calgary-Cross, for example, or is it going to be north of Airport Trail northeast?

Mr. Sabir: Calgary-Falconridge and Calgary-Cross consist of more mature neighbourhoods, in my opinion. They do have their own representatives that could make those presentations. But I would say that there's not much room in Calgary-Falconridge or Calgary-Cross as they exist now. In Calgary-Bhullar-McCall the only room will be around Savanna, and most of the development is on the north of the Airport Trail, so it's in Calgary-North East.

Mr. Evans: Okay. You heard the discussion with the last presenter in terms of the community interest. If we're going to go into, you know, the communities of interest in your riding, what would they be?

Mr. Sabir: I think they have their own organizations. They have their own community halls or community-based organizations. They have the Genesis Centre, which is more a community hub which has a soccer field, which has event places, which has a library and all that. In those areas people also have their, as I mentioned, restaurants, for instance. People do tend to stick together in these areas.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you so much. Appreciate that.

Mrs. Samson: Your riding of Calgary-Bhullar-McCall is well over the variance, and I wonder if you could give us some suggestions about those districts that are all humped together to the east, if there is something that would fit nicely with the neighbouring riding or anything like that. If you could advise us since I don't know that neighbourhood.

4:10

Mr. Sabir: I think, as was mentioned by the chair, once you move one riding, that starts the effect that the next riding will have an issue.

Mrs. Samson: Like, the Calgary airport area: am I looking at that correctly in that there is minimal residential in that on the left-hand side of the riding?

Mr. Sabir: At the airport there is no residential.

Mrs. Samson: No residential. It just falls really in those four quarters.

Mr. Sabir: Yeah. I'm digressing a bit, but the last time – I think Greg will remember – when they were changing and reviewing it, they tried to name this riding as Calgary-Airport, so I hope the commission doesn't take that route.

Mr. Clark: Do you want us to right that wrong?

Mr. Sabir: No.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you. You are squished in behind the airport, and it leads to me asking: are there many airport workers who live in this riding?

Mr. Sabir: Yes, there are, but at the same time it's the airport for Calgary, so people from all over Calgary do work there. There are many businesses in this area that people in the northeast quadrant own and run.

Dr. Martin: Where I'm going with this is about housing types. Do you anticipate three- or four-storey apartment units?

Mr. Sabir: There are some zoning restrictions as well, because of the vicinity of the airport, on what can be built and what cannot be built. For instance, if you are building – literally, along Metis Trail you need special permissions. In some cases, depending on which zone you are in, the city has to have a resolution, and then cabinet has to give the approval to build something that is . . .

The Chair: More than four storeys probably.

Mr. Sabir: Four storeys or something. Yeah.

Also, there are issues with the noise as well, so what can go there. For instance, in '16-17 there was a proposal for a school, and there

were a lot of issues with respect to how high it can go and how they will manage the noise, so that project didn't go ahead. But there are restrictions.

Dr. Martin: So what you're suggesting, then, is that the area between Metis Trail and 52nd Street is going to stay very low density.

Mr. Sabir: This area is likely to stay low density, the one that surrounds the airport.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

The Chair: I drive through there to get to the airport a lot. It just struck me now that there are very few high-rises there, which the rest of the city has lots of.

Sorry. Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: You know, it's so important for us to hear from MLAs and local community representatives. You just live in the community, right? These sorts of things. I keep talking about it, but skating to where the puck is going to be. A lot of the growth we've seen: clearly, in the northeast. But it's really helpful to get some context on, specifically, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

Let me ask you about community associations. You mentioned Genesis Centre as a centre of gravity. How important are those actual community associations, you know, Martindale, Taradale, those sorts of places, if an electoral boundary had to cut one in half, for example, to make up numbers? There's some significant density, and it can be a challenge to get the numbers exactly right. Just give me your thoughts on: is that a viable option, or is that a terrible idea?

Mr. Sabir: Since there is huge diversity within those ridings, there are people who will associate themselves very strongly with that neighbourhood association. They will volunteer for years for the same association, fund raise to put a skating rink there. At the same time, there will be, for instance, in any community a Pakistan community association or Council of Sikh Organizations, Kashmir community association. Those are associations that may use those facilities, but they do have their own structure as well, and for their bigger events they may go to either Falconridge Castleridge Community Association hall or to Genesis Centre. There are a lot of intersections within those communities. I don't know that I can fully answer this question.

Mr. Clark: What I'm hearing is: try really hard not to, but if it's sort of an absolutely kind of no other choice – part of the grand challenge is that especially in northeast Calgary, even with an extra constituency or two, there's still a lot of deliberation and consideration in terms of how we're going to square this circle. You know, in fact, I was working on it last night, and I didn't realize that, oh, Deerfoot Trail is the boundary, obviously, of Calgary-North East. No. Oh, wait a minute. There are 40,000 people in Calgary-North East plus on the west side of Deerfoot Trail. That's almost a constituency all to itself, but then you start to cascade out, and it just all gets to be a little bit challenging and messy.

We want to do our best to respect those boundaries as best they can, but if it absolutely comes down to it, it would not – I mean, "Are you going to come back in January and yell at us?" I guess is the real question.

Mr. Sabir: I think I will talk to my constituents, and if they want me to yell at you, I won't hesitate.

Mr. Clark: Good answer. And we'll deserve it.

The Chair: Spoken like a true MLA.

Mr. Clark: That's helpful. I'm asking a difficult question, because it is also deeply hypothetical. It depends on which community, what line, how many people. There are too many what-ifs, I understand, to get a definitive answer, but I think I've got what I need. Yeah. It's a real pickle, but thank you. That's really helpful.

The Chair: You've got four quarters that make up the whole. Let's just do the rough math. That's 17,000 people per quarter if it's 70,000 now; 17,500, probably. It would be really hard to take a quarter out of your electoral division, wouldn't it?

Mr. Sabir: Mainly there are three neighbourhoods.

The Chair: Oh, okay. I look at it geographically to see four quarters.

Mr. Sabir: Yeah, four quarters but three neighbourhoods. The top two quarters . . .

The Chair: Do you want to go up to the map and show us where the neighbourhoods meet? Take the microphone with you.

Mr. Sabir: These top two quarters: that's all Saddle Ridge. It even comes down to this area as well. Savanna is included in Saddle Ridge. It's a new development, like, very recent, in the last, you can say, four or five years. The sign at Savanna will say: Savanna in Saddle Ridge. It's a broader part of that same Saddle Ridge range. That's in Saddle Ridge.

And then Taradale is fairly saturated. There is not much room for development in Taradale.

The Chair: That's the bottom right quarter.

Mr. Sabir: Yeah. That would be closer to the Stoney Trail on the east side. I don't know how this map is laid.

And then Martindale is among the, I guess, oldest neighbourhoods in this area. This one is a bit smaller than Taradale and Saddle Ridge; Saddle Ridge being the biggest, then Taradale, then Martindale.

The Chair: Okay. Well, that's helpful. It doesn't make it easier, but it's helpful.

Mr. Clark: No, it makes it no easier at all.

One last question. Sorry. Cityscape, I guess, the one just north of Airport Trail: it's not in your constituency. Is Airport Trail a really big natural boundary, or is there some cross-pollination there between those neighbourhoods?

4:20

Mr. Sabir: Like I said, there are no walkways that people use to get into the other side towards Cityscape or Skyview. Airport Trail is a fairly busy and big artery that connects Stoney with the airport. Although it's not in your mandate, they should put another land there.

Mr. Clark: Okay. That was good. Thank you.

The Chair: Yeah. Talk to us about schools in your constituency.

Mr. Sabir: In Calgary-Bhullar-McCall there is one high school. That's the Nelson Mandela high school. On the outskirts in Falconridge there's Bishop McNally. All the schools are at capacity and kids are being bused to different quadrants, like 45

minutes, in some cases one hour – a huge, huge issue – because of the population growth. On the other side towards the north – Cityscape, Redstone, Skyview – like, all these neighbourhoods are still looking for new schools, in particular a high school.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you very much. As Mr. Clark has said, it's always beneficial to hear from individuals who take to heart the people that live day in, day out. Your job is to represent them in the Legislature, and, yeah, your contributions are very

much appreciated. I'm not sure that our job is any easier after this, but thank you so much.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you so much. Again, I do understand that it's a very difficult job. Thank you for your commitment.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. We'll adjourn the hearing now till 6:30.

[The hearing adjourned at 4:22 p.m.]



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

Calgary

Tuesday, June 10, 2025
6:28 p.m.

Transcript No. 15

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission

Justice Dallas K. Miller, Chair

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Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Calgary

Public Participants

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Jaret Hargreaves
Jeremy Hexham
Mike Horembala
Jayne Martin

6:28 p.m.

Tuesday, June 10, 2025

[Justice Miller in the chair]

The Chair: Good evening, and welcome to our evening session for the Electoral Boundaries Commission public hearing in Calgary.

First of all, I'd like to introduce the commission. My name is Justice Dallas Miller. I'm the chairman of the commission, and I also serve as a justice of the Court of King's Bench. By the way, you can see our full profiles on the EBC website, abebc.ca.

To my left is Susan Samson, a long-time resident of Sylvan Lake and an experienced municipal politician who has served a four-year term as mayor of Sylvan Lake. Her volunteer activity has been recognized by the community by way of receiving the citizen of the year award and the Queen Elizabeth II diamond jubilee award for volunteer service.

To her left is Mr. John Evans, KC, a lawyer with the province-wide firm known as Stringam, and he works out of their Lethbridge office. John conducts trials across the province. His legal ability has been recognized by way of receiving the King's Counsel, or KC, designation. John also volunteers as a member of the Alberta Judicial Nominating Committee.

To my right is Dr. Julian Martin, a retired history professor from the University of Alberta with advanced degrees from Cambridge University. Julian has volunteered on many committees throughout the years in Edmonton and in Sherwood Park and serves on the provincial Surface Rights Board and Land Compensation Board.

At the far end of the table is Mr. Greg Clark from Calgary. Greg is an entrepreneur and consultant focusing on information and knowledge management. Greg brings to this commission a real advantage in that he served as a member of the Legislative Assembly representing Calgary-Elbow a few years ago. Greg also serves as the chair of the Balancing Pool of Alberta and consults widely with organizations relative to proper governance.

We are your Electoral Boundaries Commission. This is our third session in Calgary: a full morning this morning, all afternoon, and this evening. We're going to be in another location tomorrow in Calgary. This is our third week of touring the province. We started in Pincher Creek and Lethbridge week one, and then last week we were in Edmonton and some northern smaller communities around Edmonton. We were in Drumheller on Monday. Next week we see the far north, Fort McMurray and Grande Prairie and other locations. We've had the privilege of seeing a good chunk of the province, and we have learned so much every session about the community that people represent or live in and lots of suggestions and ideas.

We are as an Electoral Boundaries Commission an independent body that has been appointed by the Speaker of the Legislature on behalf of the Legislative Assembly. Our task is to come up with a set of boundaries for the province, and two huge factors will determine our work. Number one, the Legislature has expanded the Legislative Assembly from 87 seats to 89, so we have to incorporate two new seats, and the legislation that we work under tells us that we have to take into consideration the population gains. As you're aware, Alberta has experienced a huge population growth, so that's a factor that we must consider.

It's of assistance, I think, to give people an idea of what our timeline is like as a commission. We are under very strict timelines. We were appointed in late March by the Speaker, and in April we met as a commission a couple of times. We started our deliberations in late May and will go to the end of June. Based on the information we receive in the public hearings and on the population data that we'll be studying and the written submissions that we receive, we will come up with an interim report.

That interim report will be filed with the Speaker of the Legislature by late October. That will then become a public document, and individual Albertans will be able to respond to that, and we'll have another round of public hearings throughout December, January, and February. Then in late March we're obligated to come up with a final report that we will file with the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, and then the government and the opposition will deal with our report and enact enabling legislation based on what we say.

As you know, each electoral division or riding or constituency, has one member of the Legislature that is elected by the voters in that constituency. I'm pretty good at my presentation, but when the PowerPoint doesn't work, I can't remember what the next line is. We operate under the guidelines of the legislation, that tells us several things which we must consider. Our ultimate goal, of course, is effective representation, to come up with a map and boundaries that ensure effective representation for all Albertans.

Population. For comparative purposes, if we go back to the last electoral boundary commission in 2017, they based their report on a population of just slightly over 4 million people. Right now we're dealing with a population of 4.88 million people across the province. To give you some comparative perspective, the 2017 commission had a formula that determined the mean average of people in each electoral division and the target population to keep it safe as a riding of minus 25 to plus 25. In other words, the total population divided by 87 constituencies reveals a mean average of 46,697. The target, then, is minus 25 of that figure or plus 25. That was 2017. This time around, for the population that we are dealing with of 4.8 million divided by 89 ridings, the mean average is 54,929. You can see the range of minus 25 being just over 41,000 and plus 25 being almost 69,000.

6:35

The challenge is that the population growth has not been consistent and evenly divided or spread across the province, so we have to come up with electoral divisions that take into account that population growth in the two largest centres and that yield effective representation. Effective representation is the standard under Canadian electoral law, not one person, one vote.

How do we come up with effective representation? We can consider several factors from the legislation. One of them is the relative sparsity and density of population. The next is common community interests and organizations. Next is geographic features, more applicable, I think, to areas outside of Calgary and Edmonton but also applicable within the cities. Communication and transportation lines across the province. When we consider all those factors from the legislation, our task is to then come up with what is described as understandable and clear electoral boundaries. That's our challenge, and that's where we look forward to hearing from folks like you at our public hearings.

Finally, we want to hear from you. What I'm showing you right now is a current electoral map of Alberta, considering 87 electoral districts. After we're finished our project, it'll be slightly different, showing 89 electoral divisions.

Based on that introduction, we're happy to provide any clarification to questions if you have any as you present, but I'm happy to call up Jayne Martin to be our first presenter.

Mrs. Martin: Thank you. Do I sit here and speak into the mic?

The Chair: Yes. Have a seat right there.

Mrs. Martin: I thought somebody else would be before me, so I thought: then I'll find out what they do.

The Chair: Oh, one other thing. Everything that goes on in the public hearing is recorded and will be available in audio form on our website in a matter of a day or two, and it's also transcribed by the people that operate *Hansard*, and the written transcript will be on the website as well.

Mrs. Martin: Thank you very much. Good evening. I'm Jayne Martin. The riding I currently live in is Calgary-Glenmore, where I have resided for the past five years. Although I was born in Calgary, after two years we moved to Jumping Pound, and I lived there for five years. For grades 1 and 2 I attended the Springbank Community Hall because there was no elementary school. This is now where Calaway Park is located. Then we moved to Pincher Creek for two years.

The summer before I started grade 5, we moved back to Calgary, and I still remember it being a huge adjustment moving to the big city from a small town and sticking out like a sore thumb. I recall overhearing my mom telling my dad that she was worried about me because I spoke like a country hick. At the time I wasn't sure what she was talking about, but I did find that I had a difficult time fitting in and that I had less in common with my new city peers.

From my personal experience, life definitely differs in rural, small-town, and city ridings. I had different needs when I lived in Jumping Pound versus Pincher Creek and then Calgary. MLAs need to be able to represent their riding to the best of their ability. It would not be fair to the MLA or to the constituents to stretch a municipal riding beyond its municipal boundaries. I would encourage drawing up a fair map that keeps cities together.

Calgary-Glenmore is the perfect example of a riding sharing geographic commonality, bordered by the Glenmore reservoir, Glenmore parks, and Fish Creek provincial park. I think it is important to keep provincial boundaries aligned with municipal boundaries. This is critical to ensure ridings do not lump disparate communities together. I recommend adding a seat to north Calgary and to south Edmonton to reflect current and future population growth.

There is a substantial Jewish population residing in Calgary-Glenmore, which is home to three synagogues, a Jewish seniors' residence, Jewish recreation centre, Jewish Learning Institute, Calgary Jewish Federation, and Calgary Jewish Academy. Many seniors also reside in Calgary-Glenmore, with access to three nursing homes, two long-term care facilities, two medical centres, a hospice, and a hospital. The demographics are changing with more families now residing in Calgary-Glenmore.

Located within Calgary-Glenmore are 15 public schools, including a junior high for gifted children and William Roper Hull school for students with behavioural, emotional, social, and mental health challenges. There are also three separate schools and two charter schools, including a girls-only school. Calgary-Glenmore also has four child care centres and an orphanage. There are numerous playgrounds and green spaces, soccer fields, baseball diamonds, rinks, basketball courts, a skateboard park, an athletic park and sports field, and the Southland Leisure Centre.

For the most part, regardless of their age, our constituents tend to be more active and have chosen to live in Calgary-Glenmore due to its close proximity to the Glenmore reservoir, Glenmore parks, and Fish Creek provincial park, where they can take part in water sports and have access to an extensive pathway system where they can walk, jog, or cycle. In addition, Calgary-Glenmore has two golf courses, tennis, and pickleball courts, a racket club, and off-leash dog parks.

As part of the boundary commission I respect that you have an important role to play in our democratic process to not manipulate the boundaries, to keep our communities intact, and prevent

gerrymandering through a fair and democratic process. I thank you for your time tonight.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Martin.
Mr. Evans, any comments or questions?

Mr. Evans: No gerrymandering, right?

Mrs. Martin: No.

The Chair: No. Okay.
Susan.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for coming out tonight.

Mrs. Martin: You're welcome.

Mrs. Samson: You should know that we've had a lot of people from Calgary-Glenmore come out this afternoon and this morning, and they are passionate about that community.

Mrs. Martin: Thank you. I called them all and got them to come out.

Mrs. Samson: You weren't supposed to say that. Anyways, it's really refreshing.

Mrs. Martin: When I was the only one here, I thought: uh-oh.

Mrs. Samson: No. You're well represented.

Mrs. Martin: Good. I'm glad to hear that.

Mrs. Samson: I've asked the questions, so don't read into that. We've asked a ton of questions.

Mrs. Martin: Sure.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you very much.

Mrs. Martin: Thank you.

The Chair: Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Well, yes, thank you. Yes, we have asked a ton of questions about Calgary-Glenmore. I'm just thinking: when do I get to move here? It seems pretty full. You're a little low but not much. Do you experience infill?

Mrs. Martin: No, we haven't really as of yet. We're not quite inner city yet. You're talking about, like, infills as far as buildings?

Dr. Martin: That's right. And, you know, basement suites and that sort of thing.

Mrs. Martin: Not as much, no. I think we're more of an established neighbourhood, so we're not seeing that as much in our areas. It hasn't quite reached us yet.

Dr. Martin: So you're not experiencing the growth that seems to characterize much of Calgary.

Mrs. Martin: Exactly.

Dr. Martin: Interesting. You mentioned Jewish communities and Jewish infrastructure.

Mrs. Martin: Yes.

Dr. Martin: Is that in this district as well?

Mrs. Martin: Yes, it is.

Dr. Martin: Okay. Thank you very much.

Mrs. Martin: You're so welcome.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much for being here. We have heard a fair bit about Calgary-Glenmore. I guess I'll ask: if there were neighbourhoods in Calgary-Glenmore that if we needed to make some changes, even just little tweaks one way or the other, what's important to keep together? Where do you feel like it would be natural, if we were to add a little bit from the edges of Calgary-Glenmore into Calgary-Glenmore, if we had to?

Mrs. Martin: Certainly. North Glenmore Park. I believe part of it is in Calgary-Glenmore, and the other part is in maybe your old riding perhaps, Calgary-Elbow. Is that correct?

Mr. Clark: You know what? There's that cut-out at the very top there, strangely enough. North Glenmore Park is actually altogether in Elbow, but that one little top part is south of Glenmore Trail. Technically the North Glenmore Park Community Association is altogether in Calgary-Elbow, but that one little odd bit is south of Glenmore Trail and sort of feels a little bit like it's more Lakeview.

6:45

Mrs. Martin: Okay. And then my old neighbourhood was Kingsland. I could see Kingsland because it's across the street from Chinook Park in Kelvin Grove, so I could see that if you were adding a neighbourhood. I think Kingsland was part of Calgary-Glenmore at one time.

Mr. Clark: Okay. And that would be where it is, in the top right-hand corner there: Glenmore Trail, Elbow Drive, just punching Elbow Drive, that boundary, out east a bit to Macleod Trail. That's Kingsland.

Okay. That's helpful. Thank you.

Mrs. Martin: You're welcome.

The Chair: We have some time, so I'm going to exercise my right to ask a question.

Mrs. Martin: Certainly.

The Chair: Being from Calgary-Glenmore, you expressed some concern at the beginning about mixing small towns and cities. You're one of the last ridings that would ever be – it's almost impossible to do that.

Mrs. Martin: Well, there's Tsuut'ina, right? So possibly.

The Chair: Oh, okay. That's what your concern was.

Mrs. Martin: Well, that could, you know, possibly be. Yeah. I'm not sure.

The Chair: Sorry. I was thinking south.

Mrs. Martin: No. That would be right, right?

Mrs. Samson: Yeah. You are.

The Chair: Okay. Good. Well, thank you very much.

Mrs. Martin: You're so welcome.

The Chair: You're excused, and please stay for the rest of the deliberations.

Mrs. Martin: I appreciate that. Thank you.

The Chair: Jaret.

Mr. Hargreaves: I'm glad I didn't show up late.

The Chair: Yeah. We don't mark people late, and you get no bonuses for being early.

Mr. Hargreaves: I will apologize in advance. This is the first time I've spoken at a meeting of this sort, and I'm not nearly as well prepared or as well researched as Jayne was, so I will probably take less time.

My name is Jaret Hargreaves, and I'm a resident of Calgary-Buffalo. My personal and family story is a fairly common Alberta story. Both of my parents were born and raised on the farm in the Red Deer area. They met in Innisfail, and they married in Red Deer, and then they moved to Calgary to raise a family here. My personal story. I was born in the Holy Cross. I grew up in Brentwood in what is now Calgary-Varsity. I attended the University of Calgary and have lived in Beltline with my wife now for about 15 years. I live one and a half kilometres from the location where I was born.

I've lived and worked in Calgary-Buffalo for about 15 years, working downtown in Inglewood and Ramsay and elsewhere. The biggest change I think I've seen is the one that we've talked about a couple of times here already today, which is population growth and, disproportionately, urban population growth. I think the second map from the end here that's been prepared with the population overlays is a great demonstration of that and how much more quickly some urban ridings have been growing or constituencies have been growing.

Understanding, you know, the foregoing and not having understood previously the technical definition of effective representation, I think it would probably be the expectation of Albertan electors and voters, generally speaking, that their voice has similar weight to other Albertans. I think that is probably the expectation most electors or voters would have.

With the population growing and growing disproportionately in urban ridings, I give an example of my parents, growing up in Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, very familiar territory for some, and now living in Calgary-Varsity. Calgary-Varsity has seen population growth that is about 30 per cent quicker, 30 per cent greater than in Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. If you were to check out the second map on the right, you would see five or six ridings where the population has actually marginally decreased since the last count on the map there. This is not just my immediate family; you know, across the seven siblings between my mom and dad's families five of the seven have moved to urban ridings over their life, whether in Calgary or Red Deer or elsewhere.

Again, notwithstanding the definition of effective representation I think most Albertans have the expectation that their vote would have a similar weight and also that they see themselves in their community so that they feel they're effectively represented when they feel that the ridings are drawn in such a way that they're in like communities.

I think, as was previously stated, urban and rural voters, urban and rural communities see themselves differently. They see themselves as having a different identity and different interests. Keeping in mind not only that the urban ridings have grown more quickly than the rural ridings but also that they will continue to grow more quickly and that the recommendations that are made in

the report of this commission will stand for eight or 10 years following this, that should be taken into account.

I would go a little bit further than the previous speaker to say that if it is the case that the average number of voters in each of these ridings is going to increase that much, that just adding a riding to each of Calgary and Edmonton would not feel fundamentally fair to most Albertans. I think that I would go further to say that urban ridings should be better represented or have fewer electors per riding as a general principle, and like a previous speaker, say that municipal boundaries ought to be respected. To already answer one of the previous questions: no; I don't expect that that will affect Calgary-Buffer in any substantive way. But there have been massive population increases in the riding I live in.

Thank you, all, for being here. I do appreciate your time and appreciate your preparation for this.

The Chair: Well, thank you. I think, unless I'm misremembering, you're the first person that's here on behalf of Calgary-Buffer.

Greg, any questions?

Mr. Clark: I do have questions. Yeah. I think you flagged it bang on. With a lot of the growth in other parts of the world, maybe, or other sort of large urban centres, the centre hollows out, and perhaps people have a bit of a flight to the suburbs, not the opposite. There is significant growth around the edges of Calgary, but there's also growth, substantial growth, as you point out, in Calgary-Buffer. That presents a real conundrum for us because right now the math doesn't work. We are well over the 25 per cent threshold in Calgary-Buffer. Every time I drive through downtown Calgary, there seems to be another big hole in the ground, which is going to be 30 more storeys of residential and office conversions and all of that, which I imagine probably resonates and lands with your experience as well.

Given that, if we need to break this up – we do need to reduce the size and the population – do you have any opinion or perspective on what belongs with what and where? What decisions we may want to be making on that?

The Chair: Feel free to grab the mic and go to the map if you want to show us.

Mr. Hargreaves: I think I can speak to it.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Hargreaves: You're saying with respect to Calgary-Buffer.

Mr. Clark: Buffer specifically. Yeah. What would you, if you were sitting on this side of the table and you had to make that choice, try to keep together, and where would you maybe carve off?

Mr. Hargreaves: Yeah. I mean, generally speaking, the Bow River provides a very natural geographic barrier, one that's understandable to people. I wouldn't have said 10 or 15 years ago that I felt a kinship with Ramsay and Inglewood in the way I do now. I would say that actually as a member of the Beltline it feels very contiguous. You know, culturally, population-density-wise. I would say that if you had to decrease the size of the riding due to the density, it might be south of 17th Avenue. The section in Cliff Bungalow and – what is the other community, whose name is escaping me?

Mr. Clark: Mission.

The Chair: Use 17th as the border?

Mr. Hargreaves: Yeah. As the south border over to effectively where Macleod is, just north of the Elbow River. I think the rest of the riding – I would have to see what that meant for the numbers, but I think generally speaking.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

The Chair: Julian.

Dr. Martin: No. As my colleague alluded to, we have been talking a lot about Calgary-Buffer because of the size. You know, this is for the most part the most urban riding in the city. I think we do have to do something with it, but quite a lot of the usual rules don't seem to apply because it's not a land of bungalow neighbourhoods, is it? It's rather hard to decide where the residential growth is coming. Crudely put, we need to reassign 20,000 people.

Mr. Hargreaves: Yeah. I would say that the single family that does exist is in that area south of 17th Avenue.

Dr. Martin: Yeah. That's a very great point. But what about Inglewood and Ramsay and whatnot?

Mr. Hargreaves: Yeah. There is some single family there as well. I would just say that I've seen increasing densification right down almost to the edge of the riding as it's drawn here. Where the 17th Avenue east flyover is into International Avenue, there are large, multi-unit buildings that have been placed there as well. It's a possibility, but it feels more contiguous to my mind.

6:55

The Chair: Thank you.

Susan.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for your presentation. I just more or less would like to make a comment. We are tasked to do the redraw with only two extra boundaries, so it became really apparent when we look at Calgary and a riding like Calgary-Buffer that once the changes are made to get Calgary-Buffer closer to the mean with room for growth, it's going to affect everything around it. Don't be overly surprised that a riding that you've come to be near and dear to is not going to look like that.

Mr. Hargreaves: I think I'm close enough to the centre that I'll be ...

Mrs. Samson: Yes. You will be fine.

Mr. Clark: It may no longer actually look like a buffalo.

Mr. Hargreaves: Yeah. Fair.

Mrs. Samson: Yes. Good point. I didn't see that.

The Chair: Mr. Evans.

Mr. Evans: Yeah. I've got a question for you kind of along the lines of what Greg asked you about, where you would make a new boundary, you know, east to west. As I look at the map, I'm wondering: what happens on 11th Street southeast if the boundary is there?

Mr. Hargreaves: Oh, I see. It's 11th there. I think it's 12th further north.

Mr. Evans: Okay. I'm wondering if you could identify for me as well in terms of looking at this where this substantial growth is coming in this particular electoral district. I want to settle my mind

as to whether or not we have a situation where we've had a bunch of growth but we're satiated now and we're not going to have a bunch of growth or we're going to have less growth. If that's the case, then I think the solution is much easier than it could be. If you can tell me where you are identifying most of the growth to be coming from and if it's on one side or the other, I think there might be a solution.

Mr. Hargreaves: I would say that I've not seen a lot of new buildings, again, south of 17th Avenue in the Mission area. There are some. In Inglewood as you leave eastbound on 9th Avenue, you know, there was some fairly strong community opposition, but there are now three- and four- and five-storey buildings there in places where there weren't previously. I still think there's a lot of room for growth in Inglewood in particular.

Mr. Evans: What could you tell me about the conversion of commercial space downtown into residential space? Is that something that's going to increase? Any sense of that?

Mr. Hargreaves: My understanding is that people intend for that to be the case, but it's proving significantly costly. The idea that a building that sits empty as a business or in a commercial space can be easily converted to residential is not proving out, and all of those projects are in cost overrun. I think it is a good idea in principle; I don't think the growth is going to be there in the way that people had hoped it might.

When you're looking at 30 per cent, you know, the highest reported numbers – and it may well have been higher than that at a certain point for commercial real estate vacancies – it's a very attractive idea. I do think the downtown needs revitalization, but I'm not sure that it's going to proceed at the same pace that people had hoped.

Mr. Evans: Thank you very much. Appreciate your answers.

The Chair: Mr. Hargreaves, just for interest, I'm going to read the last paragraph of the 2017 electoral boundaries report on Calgary-Buffalo.

The level of positive variance in the population created is justified, in the view of the majority, by the likelihood that population growth will fall below provincial average, given the character of this central area. As a result, it is expected that population levels will likely be at or below provincial average population by the time of the next electoral boundaries [commission] review.

Mr. Hargreaves: Without understanding all of the thought that went into that, it would be, I think, fair to say that there are some who support densification and some who do not. I would say that the facts of the matter are that Calgary-Buffalo's population has increased and will continue to at the same rate.

The Chair: Oh yeah; no question. I don't cite this as a criticism of the previous commission either.

Mr. Hargreaves: As a historical note, it's kind of interesting.

The Chair: The best laid plans of mice and men go aft agley.

Mr. Hargreaves: For sure.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you very much for coming and presenting and for your thoughtful comments.

Mr. Hargreaves: Thank you.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: Marcia Cormier.

Good evening.

Ms Cormier: Thank you for this opportunity. I heard about it, and I thought it was important for as much participation as possible, given that you're providing the opportunity. I'm another resident of Calgary-Glenmore. Jayne did not call me. I'm here on my own.

Mr. Evans: Plausible deniability.

Ms Cormier: Yeah. I'm kind of pleased to hear that there's been a lot of people representing our communities. I think it's reflective of the communities and the enthusiasm that we have around all of the communities that are currently in the riding.

Obviously, you've gotten a lot of details about the area and the neighbourhoods, so I won't be too long. I've lived in Calgary-Glenmore for almost 20 years now. I've been in Calgary for almost 35 years. I'm a now retired health care worker. Obviously, I have stayed in the area for 20 years because of the area, so I feel pretty enthusiastic about the area, and I think that is why you've maybe had people from the neighbourhoods.

I think that there is a lot of diversity in the neighbourhoods that currently make up Calgary-Glenmore, like some economic diversity, but the things we have in common are probably more important than some of the diversity. I think there's diversity, probably, in all ridings and that adds to it, but I think that, really, we have more things in common than we have differences, particularly the geographic area in terms of the southwest around the Glenmore reservoir, all of the natural spaces, the reservoir, Fish Creek, the Weaselhead. I think people are pretty devoted and enthused about those natural areas; for sure we are. That gives us common purpose, common goals, common problems, sometimes.

I feel quite strongly that I would like the boundaries. The boundaries make sense right now for me. I would like them to stay similar at least, if not the same, because I think we have similar needs and similar concerns. I think all communities have unique needs and that all communities need MLAs that will represent those needs effectively. I think it would make it harder for the MLAs as well as the residents if there was too much potential mix, like a rural or bedroom community mixed with urbans.

Our communities are a mix of business people, nature lovers, and, as Jayne mentioned, a lot of seniors, but what we've noticed is also a lot of influx of younger families. Particularly, when we moved in 20 years ago, it was quite senior in our particular neighbourhood anyway, and now it's shifting quite dramatically to a lot of young families.

7:05

In conversations that we've had with people in communities, that I've had, I think most of them share my opinion, anyway, that either adding or subtracting too much to what we currently have, particularly if anything went outside of city limits: people would be probably not too happy about that. I think that would be detrimental in many ways. You know, we have common concerns about traffic flow and services and keeping our recreation and all those natural spaces as much as possible. I think in any area it would make the job of an MLA more challenging to represent really diverse needs and concerns.

Given that you've obviously heard a lot about that area, the other concern that people have probably expressed – I heard Jayne express a little bit – is that it's important that Albertans everywhere – Calgary, rural, urban, whatever – have confidence in a fair and

democratic election process. We have such shaky times right now in terms of confidence in politics and government processes, and I hope that we can, you know, strive to not add to those and make them worse. Even perceptions of unfairness or gerrymandering can, I mean, just make things even worse in lots of ways. We all, I think, expect a fair and democratic process, but perceptions are important.

So I hope that in terms of my riding it sort of is kept more or less intact. I can't really speak to – I mean, I've worked downtown. I've worked in different areas of the city and obviously been in different areas of the city, but I'm just really speaking to my district because that's where I'm most familiar and passionate about.

Thank you again for your time and listening and this process.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Evans, any questions or comments?

Mr. Evans: No, no questions. Thank you.

Mrs. Samson: No questions, but thank you for your time tonight. I appreciate it.

Dr. Martin: I want to come back to your remark about young families moving in, which is always a good thing, because I'd like to think that that is a positive sign for growth, population growth, filling the schools out and so on. So is it your experience that the schools are stable in their populations?

Ms Cormier: Well, my children – I shouldn't say both of them, but one of them did go to both elementary and high schools in the area, but he's older now. So I have no recent experience with the schools, but I haven't heard they aren't. I can't really speak a lot to how stable, overcrowded, undercrowded, or whatever.

Dr. Martin: Because you are seeing young families move in.

Ms Cormier: Yeah.

Dr. Martin: I'm very pleased to hear it, because, as I say, you're slightly under, but I don't feel motivated to do too much about it because it may look after itself.

Ms Cormier: Yeah. I mean, it does seem like there's a shift at least in the particular area right around me. You know, like, it seems quite dramatic. When we moved in, there was not a little kid running around the street. We're fairly close to a dog park and the Weaselhead, so there are always bikers and joggers and whatever, but there were no kids on the streets. Now there are kids running all over the place, so it is shifting for sure.

Dr. Martin: That's good. Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Good. I don't know if I have any more questions I could possibly think of for Calgary-Glenmore. There's a Facebook group or – I don't know – like, a bat signal or something, but clearly you guys got yourselves organized, so message heard loud and clear on Glenmore.

Ms Cormier: Okay.

The Chair: Let me, because we have some time. We've heard "gerrymander" used twice this evening. Let me just pose a hypothetical for you and look at the west end of your constituency. You said that it would be very, very detrimental – very detrimental – if outside areas were brought in.

Ms Cormier: I mean outside city limits.

The Chair: Right, so let's look at the west boundary. Now, I don't think this is the case based on my knowledge of that part of the city, but let's assume there are a few clusters of acreages there and we needed a couple of thousand people just to bring your numbers up. How damaging would that be if we brought them into Calgary-Glenmore? You talk about traffic patterns, and that's an area of growth. I mean, that's a big concern. It's going to be a big concern. If there were acreages out there, why would that be so detrimental?

Ms Cormier: Well, I think that there are just vastly different issues and problems or concerns that those kinds of areas would not share with the urban areas. Like, we have all these natural spaces, but we're also quite urban, you know, and we're quite – we're not downtown, but in terms of the geographic size of the whole of Calgary we're pretty urban. I know that, and I lived in Okotoks for a while, for example, so I have some experience with outside city limits and some of the more rural acreage kinds of places, and I just think the concerns are quite different. For both those kinds of populations I think it would be detrimental.

The Chair: In terms of board governance diversity is key to success, so a little bit of diversity may not be that damaging if you had a few acreages in your constituency.

Ms Cormier: Yes. I mean, we have little bits of diversity within what we have currently.

The Chair: Right, but if we needed the numbers, there would be no big problem with that, would there be?

Ms Cormier: Yeah. I mean, I don't know for sure, but I would be concerned about it. I would be concerned also about the perceptions of why that was happening.

The Chair: Numbers. As I said, numbers. Like, if we had to get you up and there were 2,000 people there, that would be – because they can't go anywhere else.

Ms Cormier: Well, so where would they be currently? I don't know. Like, where are they currently?

The Chair: Well, I realize it's hypothetical, but in order to give you numbers right next door, right across the line, I guess I'm just asking: how damaging would that be to Calgary-Glenmore?

Ms Cormier: I don't know how damaging it would be. I'm just concerned that people with sort of similar issues, similar shared geography, similar issues around services and transportation and – we've had some issues in the neighbourhood with development and stuff. I would be concerned that there are different concerns on both sides that would make it difficult not just for the residents but for whoever ends up representing and trying to – you know, even though they may be close in miles, they may be quite different in terms of needs and concerns.

7:15

The Chair: Yeah. Okay. Thank you. You're excused, ma'am. You can return.

Anybody else here to present that I haven't called on? Yes, sir.

Mr. Horembala: I was going to register, but I'm brand new to this process.

The Chair: Well, if you want to present, come forward. We won't charge you extra at all.

Mr. Horembala: I'm a learner in this process, a lifelong learner as an educator. My name is Mike Horembala, a recently I'd like to say retired but I'm going to have to say rewired administrator. Mike is fine or Mr. H.

I came to the University of Alberta in 1987 from Vancouver. I was at UBC and transferred into the Faculty of Education, and I never left. I still kind of weirdly consider my home to be in Vancouver, but I've been here teaching in the Rocky Mountain House area for 22-plus years, and I've been a teacher, vice-principal, and administrator in that area. I've been at Lindsay Thurber in Red Deer. In 2014 I came down and became vice-principal at Highwood high school and was recently, just at the beginning of the pandemic, transferred to Oilfields, about a block and a half from my house. I've been there since, and my wife and I have taken big routes. She's from Calgary. She was hoping to make it tonight but wasn't feeling well.

My riding, I guess, is Highwood, of course, and there wasn't really specific – I knew you guys weren't coming down to Diamond Valley to see us. This has been very eye opening for me. Just kind of my understanding of this process has grown quite a bit. But even hearing that, especially in this area here and some of the concerns I've heard in our area as well, we're not sure, if there were to be realignment, how our riding would end up possibly going. Would it be a little east? Would it be a little west, snaking around the edge of the mountains?

The Chair: We want to hear from you. Okay. The map is up now for Highwood.

Mr. Horembala: Sure. Yeah.

I've heard all kinds of different things in the coffee shops, you know, about where it might be going. But one of the elements is that, speaking about a lot of my personal values, having grown up in an urban environment, sometimes I'll speak a little closer to what Calgary values, a lot of more urban people would. We call our place even, like – I don't know if you guys heard this, but it's new to me – rurban, that sort of in between.

Mrs. Samson: Yes. We've heard.

Mr. Horembala: I know that where I am in Diamond Valley, again, a lot of the values are still a strong agricultural-based community, and our students at Highwood – like, I've subbed there probably 70 per cent of the school year. My phone is vibrating right now because they're short guest teachers and needing us to keep coming back in. But I know that the values definitely are very different. It's interesting. You brought up the idea of how impactful would it be if some acreages – I call them the sort of estate acreages – that are out in that area extending out from the Spruce Meadows or along through those edges through there, how that would be. I'm sort of coming more from the perspective that the values where we are, I think, would be very different.

I would feel odd voting in an election if that went that far, and I don't know if that is even a consideration. The further you get sort of south and west from that area and from the Calgary-Glenmore-type riding, it would be very different for us. I think that our alignment from values – I know diversity. I know what you're saying, too, because of my whole life of teaching diversity and explaining it. We need that to have a quality environment and community as citizens, but there are also just some very big divides in how people look at things.

I'm just wondering. Can I ask a question? Is that all right? Forgive me; it's part of my learning process here. The considerations, for example, that have gone on with Calgary and

moving perhaps parts and pieces: is it a common practice to pull rurban or through rural into more urban environments, like, in this process?

The Chair: Is it a common practice?

Mr. Horembala: Yeah.

The Chair: It's a good question. You know, we haven't done anything yet in terms of this commission, and the last commission: I'm not sure. No. In fact, the last commission I don't think did.

Mr. Horembala: Yeah. People were curious in our community, just wanting to know if that is a consideration, say, whether it's new or ongoing or so on. Again, that term that I heard brought up twice previously: I'm just wondering about how to – you know, wanting to make sure that it's a clean, democratic process. The values are quite a bit different, I would say, the further – it's almost like a bull's eye; the further you move away from the centre, then the values are changing quite considerably in how people want to see the government formed in that process.

Yeah. Even though Diamond Valley, too, just from a demographic perspective – in the last couple of years even I've noticed it. We don't have a ski hill, so we do not grow at the rate that Canmore does. If we did, I think we would grow more. But we are finding that it's becoming more of a bedroom community and more people are buying up places. Homes are getting not, like, below asking price; they're now starting to get above asking price. A part of that was the ring road being completed. Our demographic is for sure changing in that way. I know there's a professor at Mount Royal who drives from south of us, and I work quite a bit for the University of Calgary in the outdoor centre, so I'm coming here quite often to work, and the ring work has been a big piece in that. So there is definitely a demographic change, but at this point it's been slow, in my observation of it, and I think it'll be a while before, like I say, the values within that community in Calgary will be closer. They'll never be exactly the same, and we don't want them to be.

Anyway, I think that's all I kind of wanted to say and share. I appreciate you taking my question and helping me with my learning journey here. Part of being retired, too – you know, I've immersed myself so far in my job and coaching and sports. I'm finally becoming a citizen again and getting involved in other areas and volunteering. Anyways, thank you very much for your time. I appreciate it.

The Chair: I've got to ask. How did people adjust to Diamond Valley?

Mr. Horembala: It was interesting. We had to actually move our mail addresses back to Black Diamond because mail wasn't coming through to us because people weren't recognizing it. Like, the mayor – I work with his wife, and I've taught his kids. It was one of those things. Somebody in Diamond Valley would say "Turner Valley," and you got spit on the side there. I think the dust has finally settled. There are still a few municipal things of departments that are working their way out, but it has finally become a thing, and I can say it now almost without thinking.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Evans, any questions or comments?

Mr. Evans: No. Thank you.

The Chair: Mrs. Samson.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. Thank you for your presentation. The one thing that had come up in previous presentations is that Millarville, which is sitting in that little dip, is sitting in the Banff-Kananaskis riding, and in discussions I think that's something we're going to look at because it appears from the presentations that it's better suited to the ranching country that's represented by your riding. That's not a big population base or anything, but that was one thing that we've certainly made note of.

You know, the other thing, too, that we haven't asked much today because they've been mostly Calgary people, is: how about the name of your riding? We've also been tasked to change riding names if appropriate to do so or for whatever reason. You being in Highwood: what do you think of that?

Mr. Horembala: That's actually a pretty good question. I mean, I taught in High River, and for me that was sort of the face of that area. As a school district that's where the offices are. Provincial offices are in High River as well. You can't overlook the famous show as well in there. Yeah. Definitely, it's different representation there, I would say. It's on the far, far edge out. Highwood is not part of, like, geographically in the past and everything else. I think it would be something that would be possibly considered.

Mrs. Samson: Yeah. Sometimes they pick the largest centre. Like, you know, you could be called Okotoks-Something, because Okotoks is not a stand-alone piece. If you came up with something, let us know.

Mr. Horembala: Honestly, the two most central pieces of this document are, obviously, the population. Okotoks is geographically centre but also Okotoks-Sheep. The Sheep River, as you can see, comes through the heart of Diamond Valley, through the heart of Okotoks, and it just catches the Highwood off there. I mean, along that Okotoks-Sheep or over there is the middle or part of our – our veins go through there although it's looking right now more like Sheep Creek.

7:25

The Chair: Is that where the blueberry plant is? Isn't there a blueberry farm?

Mr. Horembala: I'm not sure.

The Chair: Close to Okotoks?

Mr. Horembala: Yeah, they've got a number in there. The saskatoon berry farm ...

The Chair: Oh, sorry.

Mr. Horembala: Yeah, saskatoons, which are prevalent. The dog park is – all through those areas everybody is starting to get excited about the picking season.

The Chair: So Okotoks-Saskatoon wouldn't be that helpful, then.

Mr. Horembala: Everybody in this constituency eats them.

The Chair: Okay. Julian, any questions?

Dr. Martin: Well, no, not really. I've heard it said, but I don't think it can be the case, so I'm going to ask you: what about the connectivity between Okotoks and High River? Could you ever conceive of them being in the same riding?

Mr. Horembala: Okotoks is central. For example, from the school district perspective I've taught now in most of the schools in the

district, and probably the number one bedroom community for Foothills school division is Okotoks. The run between those two is nonstop. We have a lot of south Calgary people coming out to work but not anywhere near – like, I was surprised when I found out how many of our staff are from Okotoks. Very few live locally in our area. They just go out in all directions and to all the schools throughout the district. So it is a bit more – but I would see that that would be an extension potentially of that riding.

Dr. Martin: I'm not suggesting that I'm in favour of it, but whenever we see two towns and plausible adjacency, we just need to ask if you're friendly.

Mr. Horembala: Yeah. Well, as far as I know, there's no spitting when they're mentioned.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

The Chair: Greg?

Mr. Clark: Yeah. I think Susan asked my question about Millarville. It's always interesting just to know what the kind of trading area is. I guess, you know, you talked earlier about building on Ms Cormier's comments on sort of like with like. I guess the part I reflect on is not so much that we want everyone in a constituency to be homogeneous and totally the same, but I think that what we want to try to avoid – and I'm trying to phrase this as a question as opposed to sort of a statement.

I guess if there was a scenario – and I can't think of a logical or reasonable one around Diamond Valley – where you, just to make up the numbers, have a relatively small group of people who really don't necessarily fit, so they are perhaps rural or rural whereas the dominant group would be city, and then you've got 55,000 people in city neighbourhoods, and then you've got 5,000 people in a rural area, if I were to put that to you and you were one of those people in the rural area where that was the scenario presented, how would you feel about that?

Mr. Horembala: It would be different. I mean, for example, the challenge was brought up around an MLA properly representing somebody from outside of us. Where our school district goes, Millarville, obviously, is within our catchment area, but I was shocked to find out – I was driving to Bragg Creek one day to teach out west, seeing school buses that were almost in Bragg Creek that had Foothills school division on them. That area and, again, the demographic: I think it would be challenging for an MLA to have to actually be able to represent such broad, diverse views.

I mean, Glenmore is a long-established community. A lot of tradition in it, but it's a different ranching community. Like, our kids: it still shocks me how many kids wear Roper boots in phys ed. They're out playing football in shorts and T-shirts and Roper boots. You would never find that sort of representation. Yeah, I'm kidding a little bit, but at the same time that's also the demographic of the population. It's very, very different out there. It's got a very strong western flavour, the Millarville Farmers' Market. Everything out there is very different.

Mr. Clark: That's great. Thank you.

I think you have to go with Diamond Valley because Turner-Black sounded too much like a country singer.

Mr. Horembala: It did. It very much did.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much. That was great. We appreciate you coming out.

The Chair: Well, thank you for being dragged up here.

Mr. Horembala: Oh, no. I would say that it's part of my commitment to moving forward into my semireirement here. I just wanted to be a bit more involved. When I have questions, instead of just sitting in my house, I want to come out and ask them. Thank you very much for having me.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Yes, Sir, do you want to present?

Dr. Hexham: I wouldn't mind.

The Chair: Well, come forward. Again, we won't charge you extra for not registering. Please identify yourself, and tell us which riding you live in.

Dr. Hexham: Dr. Jeremy Hexham, and I live in Calgary-Varsity. I've been listening to these presentations all day, and I'm going to bring up a bit of a different perspective on things, I hope. I live in Silver Springs. I've been in Silver Springs since 2005. When I moved into Silver Springs, I was part of Calgary-Bow. In 2008 I was actually the elections clerk for Calgary-Bow, so I know the riding very well. Very large riding. Very glad it was slowed down. It took me about 45 minutes to drive to the different polling stations. In 2011 we became part of Calgary-Hawkwood. In 2015 I was the returning officer for Calgary-Hawkwood. In 2019 we became Calgary-Varsity. So in the years I've lived there, I've been part of three different ridings for it. We get moved around a lot. In fact, in 2019 I had no idea that Calgary-Hawkwood had been eliminated and we were part of Calgary-Varsity.

What I would ask is: for certain communities like mine can we have some stability? Can we have one riding permanently that doesn't move around constantly so that people actually know where we are? Nobody knows who our MLAs are or where we are. You know, Silver Springs was in fact named best community in Calgary with a CBC poll a couple of years ago, so I think we should just call it, the new riding, Silver Springs or Springs or even, if we have to, bring back Calgary-Hawkwood.

Mr. Clark: That's fascinating. I'm looking just at the map right here, and Nose Hill Drive and Crowchild Trail are four constituencies on that. I can completely understand how previous folks who sat around the table like we did would look at major roads and go, "Ah," as my colleague Dr. Martin likes to say, "we all would nip and tuck a little bit of this here and there." I'm glad you mentioned that to us because, should it come down to it, that's actually a very relevant consideration. If you have bounced around a bunch and we can avoid it, we certainly will endeavour to do so. That's very helpful. Thank you.

The Chair: Julian?

Dr. Martin: Well, my perennial question, really, is: do you anticipate significant new residential growth?

Dr. Hexham: No, I do not. Not for Silver Springs because there's just nothing going on. I mean, the biggest thing we had happen recently was that a Habitat for Humanity complex went in, but there's nowhere, really, that you can do massive growth in Silver Springs. Now, other areas maybe but not Silver Springs per se.

Dr. Martin: But in the whole of Calgary-Varsity?

Dr. Hexham: I don't know. I'm thinking more of my own community. I'm being very selfish here.

Dr. Martin: Well, that's fair.

The Chair: Susan.

Mrs. Samson: Excellent point on boundaries. That's why you got moved all over the place. The act clearly says to us that one of our tasks is to consider clear and understandable boundaries and keep the chaos to a minimum. So I appreciate you hammering that point home. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Evans, any comments?

Mr. Evans: Yeah. I'm interested in that you seem very attuned to your community and tuned out to the rest of Calgary-Varsity. That's important to me because I don't think you're alone. That wasn't a negative comment; that was an observation. I don't think you're alone. I want to know why you're so in tune to Silver Springs but, perhaps more importantly, what other communities surrounding Silver Springs you're more in tune with and why than you are with the balance of Calgary-Varsity. Does that make sense? I want to hear your connectivity.

Dr. Hexham: Yeah. I think, in one perspective, I do very little in Calgary-Varsity or any of the other communities. I mean, other than doing my PhD in 2010 to 2017, I didn't really go anywhere in that area other than the University of Calgary. I do my shopping at the Crowfoot shopping centre, which is just above – so if you look at Crowchild Trail, it's just up and to the left. My parents live in Hawkwood. You know, when we were Calgary-Hawkwood, I thought we were much closer, connected, going up with what we did. Calgary-Hawkwood was Silver Springs, Ranchlands, Hawkwood, Arbour Lake, Citadel.

7:35

Mr. Evans: So you moved north and west, where you . . .

Dr. Hexham: That's what Calgary-Hawkwood was.

Mr. Evans: If I was stalking you, that's where I would hang out.

Dr. Hexham: Yeah. And downtown.

Mr. Evans: And downtown. Well, that makes it complicated.

Dr. Hexham: Yeah, I know.

That's basically the area that we were in. Calgary-Varsity: you know, I don't think I've been down to 18th Street northwest, at the far end of the riding, ever. Maybe I have. I mean, I don't go down that far. I'm not connected to that part of it whereas I'm more connected to Hawkwood, Ranchlands, the Crowfoot shopping centre, Arbour Lake, that sort of area.

Mr. Evans: Are you part of any community associations?

Dr. Hexham: No, I'm not.

Mr. Evans: Do you know other people in your community that are like minded, like you, that sort of gravitate to the same parts of the city, or are you a lone wolf?

Dr. Hexham: I'm a lone wolf. I'm unique in my own – I mean, I don't really think we do. I have a lot of neighbours who go down to Bowness because Bowness is where they have a good library down there. They have an arts school. They have an art supply place. I think people do that area of Bowness for some of the activities. But I don't know: would my neighbours go elsewhere? I stand alone, and I'm quite unique when it comes to my neighbours.

Mr. Evans: Is it easy to get to Bowness from . . .

Dr. Hexham: Not as easy. To go down to Bowness park, you just go down Nose Hill and then – yeah, I mean, it's quite easy. It's just one street to go down. We're sort of – it's out of the way, but we're there. It's not that hard. For Baker park, which is there, you have to go down Nose Hill and I think to – Nose Hill goes across Sarcee, and then I think it's 85th Street that gets you into Bowness.

It's easier to get into Bowness and other areas. But, I mean, Bowness, again, is a unique area unto itself. Should it be part of Calgary-Bow? I don't know. I would put Bowness, Montgomery, Westmount, all that area together if it was me. But, yeah, I just know Silver Springs and what we are.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you. I appreciate those answers.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much, Dr. Hexham. You did kind of portray it as a bit of a negative going back and forth. It could be construed as a positive. Everybody wants Silver Springs. Everybody wants that in their constituency.

Mr. Clark: Community of the year.

Dr. Hexham: No, I agree with you on that perspective. But, I mean, when you've moved around a lot, people sort of get confused about voting. I remember Calgary-Bow in 2008. Part of Calgary-Bow is part of Silver Springs. There's a little part of it that was part of Calgary-Varsity. The amount of phone calls that we took from people who went to the one school to vote and weren't allowed to vote and were calling the media outlet saying, "I wasn't allowed to vote at this school because it was part of Calgary-Varsity, not Calgary-Bow," was a headache I still remember. So from that perspective, yes, but from another it'd be nice to have some consistency. Let's keep one riding so we're not bouncing like a ball all over the place.

The Chair: Well, that little corner problem has, I think, turned the lights on for the commission to be cognizant of. Thank you very much.

I think I pretty well cornered everybody in the room to make a presentation.

Mrs. Samson: You have. You have.

[The commission deliberated]

[The hearing adjourned at 8 p.m.]



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

Calgary

Wednesday, June 11, 2025
9:10 a.m.

Transcript No. 16

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission

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Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Calgary

Public Participants

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Gurinder Brar, MLA, Calgary-North East
Deborah Dean
Anita McDonald
Keith Purdy
Lizette Tejada, MLA, Calgary-Klein

9:10 a.m.

Wednesday, June 11, 2025

[Justice Miller in the chair]

The Chair: Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the second day of our Electoral Boundaries Commission public hearing in the city of Calgary.

First of all, I'd like to introduce the commission. My name is Justice Dallas Miller. I'm the chairman of the commission.

To my immediate left is Susan Samson. Susan hails from Sylvan Lake, Alberta, and is an experienced municipal politician and served a full term as mayor of Sylvan Lake. Susan volunteers in the community, and she and her husband ran a business in Sylvan Lake. Her volunteer efforts have been recognized by way of being awarded the citizen of the year, and she is a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II diamond jubilee medal.

To her left is Mr. John Evans, KC. John is a lawyer with a province-wide firm known as Stringam, and he works out of the Lethbridge, Alberta office. John conducts trials throughout the province, and his legal ability has been recognized by being awarded the King's Counsel, or KC, designation. John also volunteers as a member of the Alberta Judicial Nominating Committee.

To my right is Dr. Julian Martin. Dr. Martin is a retired history professor from the University of Alberta. His advanced degrees are from Cambridge University. Dr. Martin has volunteered on many committees in Edmonton and now in Sherwood Park, where he resides. He serves on provincial tribunals such as the Surface Rights Board and the Land Compensation Board.

At the far end of the table is Mr. Greg Clark. Mr. Clark is an entrepreneur and a consultant focusing on information and knowledge management. We have the benefit of his experience in that he has served one term as a member of the Legislature of Alberta, representing Calgary-Elbow. Greg, too, is a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II platinum jubilee medal. Currently he serves as chairman of the Balancing Pool of Alberta and consults and advises organizations relative to board governance.

We are your Electoral Boundaries Commission, and if you go to the website, you can see a more fulsome description of the commissioners.

A couple of things to remember. Everything is audio-recorded here and will ultimately be placed on the commission website for the public to have access to. Also, everything that is said is being transcribed by the good folks at *Hansard*. That transcript will also be on the EBC website in due course.

I'd like to introduce a very important person at the front of the room, Aaron Roth, if he could just wave. He's the individual who organizes everything and keeps the trains running on time, so to speak. If you have any written material or anything you want to leave with us, please give it to Aaron.

Typically we have 10 minutes allotted for each presenter, and that means seven minutes for the public presentation and about a three-minute time period for exchange and conversation with the commissioners. Because of the fluidity of people coming in or people not showing up and lateness, we're flexible on the time from time to time.

We are an independent body established by the Legislature of Alberta, and our task is to come up with a report as required by law. The Electoral Boundaries Commission Act requires that every eight to 10 years a commission be established to take a look at Alberta's electoral boundaries; in other words, where the 87, now this time around 89, boundaries for each electoral division should be placed. We have in some ways the privilege of having two extra ridings, so that makes our job a little bit easier.

We must adhere to a fairly strict timeline, and the timeline is set out on the screen in front of you. We were appointed by the Speaker of the Legislature in late March of this year. In April we met a couple of times as a commission to go through the process and to structure the months ahead. We started our public hearings in late May. We first met in Pincher Creek and then Lethbridge, and then last week we were in Edmonton. This week we're in Calgary and points south, Brooks to Medicine Hat. Next week we go through northern Alberta, and June 23 we finish with a day of virtual hearings. After this cluster of public hearings we then will commence deliberating as a commission and starting our work.

What does our work entail? Well, within seven months of being appointed, we must submit an interim report to the Speaker of the Legislature as to what we think the boundaries should look like. The public will then have a chance to respond to that interim report. The interim report will be circulated widely, and we will have another round of public hearings, receiving feedback to what we provided in the interim report. Then, finally, 12 months after our appointment – in other words, late March of 2026 – we submit our final report, and the government and the Legislature take steps to implement our report as they see fit.

Of course, Alberta is currently divided into 87 electoral divisions – it will be 89 after our round is completed – and each eligible voter in each electoral division contributes to elect one member for each constituency.

To give us some historic context, the last electoral boundary commission reported in 2017. They were limited to the 87 electoral divisions, so they didn't have an opportunity to add. Their population that they dealt with was slightly over 4 million Albertans. To give some context of what they did with that population, with the constituencies, they utilized this basic formula. They took the population of Alberta, of 4,088,609 people, divided it by 87, and that figure of 46,697 is the mean average. In a perfect world that's the amount of people that should be in each electoral division. We don't live in a perfect world; we can't have that one person, one vote that the Americans have, so we utilize the term "effective representation." Effective representation means that a target population for each electoral division is in that range, minus 25 below the mean average or plus 25 above the mean average.

Our situation is quite different. As I said, we move to 89 electoral divisions, and our population is considerably higher, at 4,888,723. The mean average is considerable then, almost 55,000, and the target population range then varies anywhere from a low of 41,197 to 68,661. That's the target population this commission is dealing with. Part of the challenge for us as a commission is that the incredible population growth that Alberta has experienced has not been evenly spread across the province, so we have to sort out those 89 ridings based on public hearing information and based on the population data. Our task is not to create ridings that prove one person, one vote; our task is to come up with a map that provides effective representation for Albertans across the province.

Some of the factors that we must consider as part of the legislation are the relative sparsity and density of the population across the province. Common community interests, which we've heard a lot about in Edmonton and we heard some in Calgary yesterday as well, and organizations, trying to keep community interests together in one electoral division. Geographic features, more so in the areas outside of Calgary and Edmonton, are a factor. When we utilize things like geographic features, communication and transportation lines across the province, we hope to be able to create understandable and clear boundaries across the province. Finally, we are able to consider other appropriate factors pursuant to the legislation.

Alberta has changed incredibly the last few years. If you look at it in terms of the last few decades, it's a completely different province. By historic context, and I want to reference, back in the 1970s there was no such thing as a blended or hybrid riding. As of the late '80s, early '90s, that concept has come to be used minimally, but it also is more prominent as the electoral boundaries have evolved.

9:20

In terms of Calgary ridings, in terms of any ridings across the province we want to hear from Albertans. Those of you who are here to present are not restricted to Calgary. We're happy to hear any input you have for anywhere else in the province, but, of course, we're here, and the bulk of our day yesterday was taken up by submissions by Calgarians giving us information on their ridings.

This is the electoral map currently, setting out 87 different electoral divisions. By October we'll have a new one proposed for 89, and by March of next year we will have a completely new one that we submit to the Legislature.

Now we want to hear from you as Albertans and Calgarians. We have a couple of presenters. I'm going to ask that Anita McDonald come forward. As I said, generally we have a time limit. We're somewhat flexible. Please have a chair, introduce yourself, tell us what constituency you live in, and give us your presentation.

Mrs. McDonald: Thank you very much. My name is Anita McDonald, and I am from the Airdrie-Cochrane riding, so not Calgary. I'm happy to be maybe your first from outside of Calgary.

I'd like to start with: good morning, members of the boundaries commission. Like I said, my name is Anita McDonald, and I thank you for the important work you are doing, and I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today. I come to you as a concerned citizen who is deeply invested in my community of Cochrane. I'm a pharmacist and an owner of a community pharmacy. Every day I serve the people of my community not just as customers but as neighbours. I'm also a proud member of the Rotary Club of Cochrane, a local Girl Guide leader, and an active supporter of the arts through volunteer work with local community and theatre initiatives.

I'm here to urge the commission to create a distinct electoral boundary for the town of Cochrane, one that recognizes our community's unique identity, rapid growth, and clear divergence from both Calgary and the rural areas surrounding us. Cochrane is not just a satellite town; it is a self-contained and thriving community. Yet, if we are grouped into Calgary or scattered across rural ridings, we risk becoming voiceless in the Legislature. We do not want to be absorbed into Calgary. We'll lose our ability to shape our future. We risk being defined solely as a bedroom community rather than a town with a distinct voice and destiny.

Cochrane has its own needs. For example, we need a library. Calgary has many. Airdrie has a new one. We need a new one, and we're still waiting. We need a 24-hour urgent care centre. Our population has outgrown the limited health care access currently available. Last year our community faced a horrible tragedy when a family lost their four-year-old daughter because urgent care wasn't open. If it had been open, she might still be with us today. We are lacking arts and theatre facilities, forcing people to leave Cochrane to access these community-defining experiences.

We need representation that understands and advocates for Cochrane's priorities, and the current boundaries for Airdrie-Cochrane, quite frankly, are failing citizens. I'll give you two examples. A gentleman I know lives just 10 minutes up highway 22 from where I work and live in town. He shops in Cochrane, uses Cochrane services, sees Cochrane doctors, yet he falls into the

Banff-Kananaskis riding. His life is rooted in Cochrane, but his political voice is elsewhere.

Another example is that parts of Airdrie fall into the Airdrie-Cochrane riding, while most of the city of Airdrie falls into the Airdrie-East riding. For these Airdrie residents in the riding that I'm in, Airdrie-Cochrane, their MLA lives in Cochrane, and a large part of the voting voice is in Cochrane, a completely different community than their own. As a result, I feel the representation is fractured, and they do not have an equal voice within their own community compared to other Airdrie residents. This is not effective representation.

We need boundaries that make sense, boundaries that reflect real community lines and real service areas. Based on its population, which continues to grow at a tremendous rate, and to meet the needs of our residents and small businesses, Cochrane deserves its own riding. We need a representative who speaks for us and us alone.

Thank you for listening today. I appreciate this opportunity and again thank the commission for the important work you're doing. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much. We appreciate a Cochrane voice here. We did hear from Airdrie representatives yesterday, and certainly we did discuss Cochrane.

The map is up there. Currently you are in electoral division 47. What's the population there now? I can't really see it.

Mr. Roth: Seventy-five.

The Chair: Seventy-five. Okay.

Well, let's start with Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much. I just want to echo Justice Miller. We appreciate you coming. We're now pretty much halfway into these hearings, having travelled a lot of the province and a couple of days here in Calgary. What I'm struck by is the thoughtfulness and quality of the presentations we've heard. People are coming not with a particular axe to grind but with a perspective and also some solutions and suggestions. I just want to thank you and maybe through you to our other presenters. It's been a really great process that way so far.

I did want to pick up on one thing you said. Maybe if you just dig a little deeper. You talked about someone who's rooted in Cochrane but lives in the Banff-Kananaskis constituency. Can you maybe just talk a little bit more about the specific geography and the communities that you feel belong together? I'll just maybe add sort of a second layer to that question. There's no question this constituency is far over the population, but Cochrane itself doesn't quite have the population to justify a single seat. We're looking at an average target of 54,929, right? It looks like we will need to add some other areas around Cochrane to make that number work. Do you have any suggestions on where we might want to look for that?

Mrs. McDonald: I would like to look at service area. As a business owner in Cochrane I can say that I have patients who come to my pharmacy from up highway 22, not quite as far as Didsbury but up near, you know, Lochend Road and all those beautiful ranchlands up there. We have people from Harmony who still travel into Cochrane to do much of their services versus going into the Calgary area, so I think that anyone – and we can't guarantee that. Like, there are people in Bearspaw who will still go into Calgary. It depends on where people work and where their kids go to school.

I would like to see the boundaries drawn for people who have a vested interest in Cochrane. Now, Cochrane: we are just under 40,000 as of today. We have I think six or seven new development areas already in the works. Within another year I'm sure we will be

over that 40,000 and continue to grow. We are the fastest growing community in the country, so hitting that 54,000 with some surrounding area I think would be definitely something that the boundaries commission might be able to look at.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

Dr. Martin: My colleague stole my comments and my question. Again, not only were you succinct and short, for which you get points immediately, but I liked your notion of thinking about a service area as sort of the catchments that make Cochrane a magnet for people. To follow on with the notion of what you would construe as a plausible catchment area, would you include Springbank?

Mrs. McDonald: I definitely see parts of Springbank. I believe Springbank right now is in Banff-Kananaskis, right? Is it lumped in with Canmore and that?

Dr. Martin: Yeah, everything that's not in your current riding is in Banff-Kananaskis.

Mrs. McDonald: Okay. Sounds good.

I would say some areas of Springbank. But, again, much of them use Calgary, so I have to admit I wouldn't have a strong opinion on that without maybe a little bit more investigation. Again, I believe in a service area and making that the proper representation. If we had to take Cochrane and just kind of circle it out a bit and say that, you know, in general these people would be utilizing those services – and I'm talking about the big services like our recreation centres, our public libraries, our urgent care centre, things like that. I think that would then give those voters – I would like when people go to the polls to think about: "Okay. Where does my family get the things that it needs, and how does my vote represent that?" I think that would be what's best for Cochrane.

Dr. Martin: That's very helpful. Thank you.

The Chair: Susan.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. Nice presentation, and thanks for coming. My question is this. When you are a Cochrane resident and you're looking to share or advocate for your priorities, how do you feel your representation is? Because you share a riding with also Airdrie, which is a large city and probably has similar issues, how do you feel representation is for the citizens of Cochrane?

9:30

Mrs. McDonald: As a citizen of Cochrane I would say that we have very different priorities than Airdrie. Airdrie is a large city. It has different needs, and it needs, of course, its own voice as well. I don't want to say that we're not represented, but I would say that because we share also a big rural area that connects us with that small chunk of Airdrie, it gets a little overshadowed. As you can see, we're kind of tucked in the corner there, so even visually we're kind of off to the side.

My biggest concern, actually: I'm here to advocate for Cochrane, but it's actually the Airdrie people that I do really feel are left out of their community representation because their vote – like I said, if you want voters to go to the polls thinking about, "How can I best serve my community with my vote?" perhaps, those Airdrie people actually have very little say in what's happening in their Airdrie riding if there's a whole other riding making a different vote who maybe has different priorities or if Cochrane is voting for something that Airdrie people don't want. That's why again I just come back to this idea: if we can go over service areas and where

people live, work, and see their neighbours. That's mostly why I'm here.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Evans?

Mr. Evans: No. No questions. Thank you.

The Chair: Did I understand you correctly, ma'am, to say that your MLA lives in Cochrane?

Mrs. McDonald: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. Well, what's your experience as to how that person balances Airdrie's concerns and Cochrane's concerns?

Mrs. McDonald: Our MLA, Mr. Guthrie, was a minister up until just a short while ago, so I would say that he had other priorities at the time. When it comes to his activity involvement, I would say that I'm not familiar with it, so I wouldn't be able to comment.

The Chair: Okay. Now, looking at this map – and you've answered about Springbank – you're just under 40,000. Where would you draw the boundary for this new proposed riding? Would you just leave it as the city limits of Cochrane in that bottom left-hand corner and then glob onto Springbank and others west and north? You know, if we took and we use highway 766 there – do you see that? – as your easternmost boundary, would that make sense?

Mrs. McDonald: Yes, that would make sense to me.

The Chair: Okay.

Mrs. McDonald: And then when it comes to going west, again, I think that we also have different priorities than Banff and Canmore. Again, they have hospitals. Being a health care provider, that's kind of my number one concern for Cochrane. We can definitely go somewhat west and same with, you know, down to even Redwood Meadows possibly but just looking at who comes into Cochrane for different things.

I did mention Harmony, that new community that's on the highway there going into Calgary. Many of them still come into Cochrane versus Calgary and definitely going more north. Like I said, I know a gentleman who lives just past that line on highway 22 and does everything in Cochrane.

The Chair: Okay. You and Airdrie are going to have a race for a hospital, then? Is that fair?

Mrs. McDonald: Well, I would say Airdrie: again, they're almost at 80,000, I believe. Like, the hospital there would service Cochrane. We're just looking for 24-hour urgent care services. Right now we're 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. I'm a mother of a six-year-old, so I have to admit this story that happened last year just broke me. If you have a sick kid at 11:30 at night because you thought, "Okay. Maybe I don't need to go," you're driving to the Children's, and you're trying to make that call. That's the scary part for Cochrane residents. I know a number of patients that have quite acute kidney disease, and they can have some very scary episodes. Again, they are driving to the Foothills at 2 a.m.

The Chair: One last question. What about Bears paw in order to get the numbers up? We have some options. The good news is we have some options here, but then, of course, every boundary that's drawn has a ripple effect to the adjoining boundary. Could you live with Bears paw, a portion of Bears paw?

Mrs. McDonald: Yes, and the only reason I'm pausing is that I was thinking about the comparison between Bearspaw and Springbank and if it would be better to loop all of those people to get all of Springbank together and then move Bearspaw somewhere else or keep Bearspaw all together. However, if you're looking at the service area, you might end up taking a chunk of each. I wouldn't say that I'm a good representative for those areas, and it'd be great to hear from them, again, when it comes to service area.

The Chair: We may very well hear from Bearspaw people today.

We're also tasked with naming electoral divisions. Cochrane-Springbank, Cochrane-Bearspaw, or whatever we do will be a relatively easy name, I think, as long as we have Cochrane as the first part, right?

Mrs. McDonald: I would agree, yes.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Clark: Sorry. I just want to jump in if you don't mind. I've got a bit of a magic map here that we can do a little bit of arithmetic on. How far north is north on highway 22? Like, Cremona, Water Valley: is that sort of about the limit, or is that too far?

Mrs. McDonald: Let me just think of highway 22. I drive it a lot: small towns, small towns. I would say that because we have Westbrook school up the highway there and they are definitely users of the Cochrane area, going a little bit further up then, Cremona would be the next small town right on highway 22. Carstairs and Didsbury, Sundre would still be their own riding up there.

Mr. Clark: Those are further up.

Mrs. McDonald: Sorry. I'm thinking in my head as I talk.

Dr. Martin: So that'd be the extreme northern zone, as it were.

Mrs. McDonald: I would say that would be the extreme, yes.

Dr. Martin: That's the penumbra of your catchment area whereas further south, like, the Bottrel neighbourhood would definitely be in there. That's where highway 22 meets 574.

Mrs. McDonald: Yes, and Bottrel is quite small. It has a campground and some acreages in the area and that kind of stuff.

Dr. Martin: Yeah. Basically, we're asking you to do our job for us.

Mrs. McDonald: Oh, no. I'm happy to give as much feedback as possible, although I will admit I am not an expert in the area. Although having grown up in another rural town in Alberta, as soon as I moved to Cochrane, I drove around to find all the little small towns, which I love to visit when I can.

Mr. Clark: That's incredibly helpful. Thank you.

The Chair: Well, thank you so much, Mrs. McDonald. This is a neat exercise. We're all enjoying this, and we learn about communities. I think that what you're suggesting fits in with the thinking of the commission. But, again, everything has a ripple effect, so we have to manage that.

Thank you very much, and if you can, please stay for the rest of the presentations. You might be able to have some input later, too.

Mrs. McDonald: Thank you very much. I appreciate it. Thank you so much.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Our next presenter on the list is Gurinder Brar.

In theory we're running a little late, but not to worry; these things tend to work out. Please introduce yourself and tell us where you're from.

Member Brar: Well, thank you very much. My name is Gurinder Brar. I'm a failed singer, failed songwriter, and an average actor, and I also happen to be the MLA for Calgary-North East.

The Chair: So there's life after entertainment?

Member Brar: That's correct.

Well, I want to begin by expressing my deep gratitude. Thank you so much for doing the work that you do. Drawing fair, effective electoral boundaries is important not just for the current situation; it's important for the democratic future of Alberta, so thank you for doing your job with integrity and thoughtfulness.

Last year the government introduced Bill 31, Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2024, and it amended the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act. I would like to bring your attention towards two of those important things that deserve attention.

First is that the legislation authorized the addition of two new electoral boundaries, which is very important for my riding in Calgary-North East because it is already 40 per cent higher than the average population that an electoral district has in Alberta. I would highly recommend to allocate another riding somewhere in Calgary-North East so that people can have fair representation. The trend is mirrored the same across Alberta, especially new areas in Edmonton as well as south Calgary. I believe that these people do deserve fair representation.

9:40

The second thing is about section 14 of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act. Previously the commission was required to consider factors such as common community interests and municipal boundaries. Now it is at the discretion of the commission on these matters, and this discretion is really important to look at. How it is exercised will impact the representation of communities, especially racialized communities and people from other ethnic community backgrounds. I respectfully submit that preserving the integrity of community interests and existing municipal boundaries should remain a core guiding principle.

If I talk about Calgary-North East, this reminds me of a small river that forgot its own name. It had been diverted so many times by engineers, by planners, rerouted to serve different purposes that it no longer flowed through the same villages that named it, that sung songs about it, and that prayed by its banks. This river still ran, but something in it had died, which was its memory, its meaning, and its soul.

I don't want the same to happen with Calgary-North East, because it has been cut, chopped, and rearranged so many times that people in Calgary-North East don't feel that representation that they should. Calgary-North East is more than just a geographic label; it's a different kind of community. It's a living and breathing community with different cultures, places of worship, so many different kinds of foods, so many different kinds of people living from so many different kinds of ethnic backgrounds, and they have different needs.

Currently my riding of Calgary-North East is cut into two different pieces. One is the west side of the Deerfoot, and if we look at that part of the Deerfoot, 70 per cent of the population has English as their first language, whereas on the east side of the Deerfoot only

40 per cent of the people have English as their first language, and 60 per cent of the population speak other, multiple languages.

If I compare two specific communities – one is Coventry and one is Redstone – they have very different demographics of population. They have very different people from different backgrounds living in those communities, so they have different interests. If I go out and door-knock in Coventry and Harvest, they ask for a green line LRT project, but if I go on the east side, their major concern is insurance; their major concern is new schools in those communities; their major concern is a new community centre hub, that is missing in that community, because the Genesis Centre is the only one that they rely on.

These are a few of the things that must be kept in mind. Residents on the east side, as I mentioned, are connected to the Genesis Centre. Over 60 per cent of the population on the east side are newcomers with complex needs.

Above all, I request all members on the commission to follow a simple rule, that communities with more in common should be kept intact and should be kept together.

I know that there are many other presenters and they have lots to say, and my other colleagues have also come up and shared their opinions. Thank you for the work you do, and thank you for giving me an opportunity to share some of my experience.

The Chair: Thank you. Your southern neighbour presented yesterday, which was very helpful.

Okay. Mr. Evans, any questions or comments?

Mr. Evans: Can you tell me more about the Genesis Centre and where that's located in the riding? We heard about that yesterday as well, so I'm interested to know where that sits.

Member Brar: The Genesis Centre is just beside Nelson Mandela high school. It is close to the communities of Saddle Ridge and Martindale in the riding of Calgary-Bhullar-McCall. If you want, I can get the address as well. It's at 7555 Falconridge Boulevard.

Mr. Evans: Tell me more about the Genesis Centre. What's its genesis?

Member Brar: The thing is that Genesis is a place where community comes together. It has got places where you can have community events. It hosts a large variety of ethnic events. It hosts a large variety of events that bring people together from different backgrounds, different languages, and different cultures. Many seniors get to sit there, and they can have their own activities. We have soccer tournaments there. We have field hockey tournaments at the Genesis Centre. I will be going to a soccer tournament and cricket tournaments happening there. That centre is a hub of communities in Calgary-North East. It reflects the diversity. It reflects the real people that live there, and it is operating above its capacity. It's part of the YMCA. People are demanding another community centre, because it's already full, and the city of Calgary is already consulting communities on this matter. That's the genesis of the Genesis.

Mr. Evans: Who operates the Genesis Centre? Is it a community association? Is it the city? You said that it was the YMCA?

Member Brar: Yes. It has YMCA, and it has its own board that operates it.

Mr. Evans: Okay. So it's a YMCA org?

Member Brar: Yes. Just to add on to that, on the other side of the Deerfoot, west side of the Deerfoot, is the Vivo centre, and that

attracts population more from the Calgary-North riding, Coventry, Harvest, and those communities, and it has got its own different board. But if you go there and look at those places, the population is very diverse. The clientele is very diverse.

Mr. Evans: Is that a YMCA?

Member Brar: That is not the YMCA. Vivo is just their own.

Mr. Evans: Okay.

The Chair: Susan.

Member Brar: Sorry. The Vivo population and the Genesis population are different. That's what I meant to say.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for coming out. Your presentation was very good.

Member Brar: Thank you.

Mrs. Samson: My question to you is: the population of your riding is in front of me, at 85,000, and you know we're working with 55,000. I take to heart your comment about the constant chopping and rejigging of your riding, but it's probably going to happen again because we've got to get down to 55. Knowing that and knowing, you know, you've got some clear geographical and transportation routes that cut it, what has to stay together to get to where we want to be?

Member Brar: Well, the thing is that, as I mentioned, people on the east side of the Deerfoot have very different needs. They have a very diverse population, a very different population as compared to people on the west side of the Deerfoot. I mean, I have seen while door-knocking, I've seen while talking to people, and even the case works that we get in our office are very different on both sides of the Deerfoot. Even my office is on Country Hills and 36th Street, and I try to keep it in the middle of both sides, but still I get far fewer people from one side of the Deerfoot as compared to the other side of the Deerfoot. I mean, the thing is that I believe that people who are racialized people, who have complex needs, people who are coming from different backgrounds, they have similar needs. Yes, those needs are complex, but they are similar. So I believe even putting it with Airdrie, putting it with Chestermere or other parts of neighbouring places, will not serve the purpose. They should be kept intact.

Mrs. Samson: I have one more question, but I think my colleagues will ask it, so I'll leave it. If it's not asked . . .

The Chair: Quickly, because I think we're getting to this. If you look at the map, and your descriptor of first language, I think, is helpful. On the west side of Deerfoot, what's the population? Do you have a rough idea how many of the 85,000 live on the west side?

9:50

Member Brar: I mean, I don't have the exact number that I can point to, but during the previous election, when I looked, there were about 17,000 electors, not just the population in Coventry Hills. I have the Coventry Hills . . .

The Chair: Would the Deerfoot evenly divide their population?

Member Brar: If you look at the 10-year population growth, it might, yes, because Cornerstone is going to be the biggest community in Calgary. I was talking to the developers in

Cornerstone. They said that the expected population will be 40,000 there, in Cornerstone.

In Coventry Hills the population that I have here is 17,000. Yes, that's the population, 17,350. In Harvest it is about 7,000. In Livingston in 2022 it was about 4,000, but I think it would have gone up significantly. There are two new communities that are being constructed just close to Livingston, so that will also have population growth very soon.

The Chair: So Livingston is on the west side?

Member Brar: Livingston is on the west side of the Deerfoot and also on the north side of Stoney Trail.

The Chair: Okay. Roughly, then, you're looking at – what? – about 30,000, you think, on that side? I kind of lost track of the map.

Member Brar: Yes, 17, 7, 24, 6, 30 plus the two new communities that are being constructed, so another 5,000, 7,000.

The Chair: Okay. Good. I'll turn it over to Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you. And thank you. Again, as the judge said, I found your analysis very helpful. I mean, I'm quite familiar with Edmonton-Mill Woods, so I'm relatively familiar with some of the dynamics of serving new Canadians and their families, citizens or not. It's all on your shoulders.

If we divided it at the Deerfoot in some form, you would be a bit light. But I want to ask you two things, the first is about growth. I fully expect the remaining area in the northeast corner to fill out with residences. Would I be correct in that?

Member Brar: You are absolutely correct. Cityscape, the community which I live in, has grown significantly, and it is still under construction. Redstone is almost developed, but there are still some parcels they are developing. Cornerstone is going to be the biggest community in Calgary, and they are expecting 40,000 people there in just that community, and we are expecting one regional park, a city of Calgary park, being constructed there.

Dr. Martin: This is music to my ears. I asked most presenters a question along these lines about growth. One can talk about growth. City planners talk about growth, and they generate plans, but what interests me on behalf of this work is what is imminent and tangible. How much Tyvek is there on new buildings? I mean, we can project a little bit into the future for population growth with that kind of information as opposed to just the gut expectation that things will grow in a rather vague sense. So are you confident that development permits and the like have been accumulating such that you can confidently project another great building wave in the northeast corner of your riding?

Member Brar: Well, that's already under way. I believe that every street you walk onto, there is construction going on. Even two streets from my house there is construction going on. Cornerstone is fully under construction. They are opening new phases every few months, and people are coming in, especially the new population growth that has already come to Alberta from other provinces have settled in pockets of those communities. So it is already under construction. I'm not saying that they will get new permits in the next five years out; I think it's already under way.

Dr. Martin: Thank you. My second question, I think: if we had to extend this quadrant – let's play the thought experiment, that this unit, what you call the east side, becomes the core of a new electoral

district, and it's currently light. One possible solution would be to go south a few blocks. Could you stomach that?

Member Brar: South on the east side?

Dr. Martin: Yeah.

Member Brar: You mean towards Savanna and those communities?

Dr. Martin: No. Going south of Country Hills Boulevard, south of Airport Trail.

The Chair: Calgary-Bhullar-McCall, basically.

Member Brar: That's Savanna and Saddle Ridge.

Dr. Martin: You know, it's a bit cheeky because I haven't asked him, but if we had to push south into what is now his riding, are those compatible communities? That's a key theme for you.

Member Brar: Yes. That means Savanna, again. Communities from Cornerstone – I'll start from up north, on the east side of the Deerfoot.

Mr. Evans: It might be helpful if you go to the map.

The Chair: Yeah, feel free to go. Just take the microphone. Yeah.

Mr. Evans: It'll be easier for us. Is there a way for us to see more of the northeast?

Member Brar: This is Deerfoot.

The Chair: Can you expand that?

Member Brar: Sorry. This is Deerfoot. This is where Cornerstone is. This is Redstone. I want you to move it a little bit up. This is Skyview. This is more of Cornerstone again, and this is Cityscape. This whole thing is Cornerstone.

Mr. Evans: And that's all being developed?

Member Brar: Yes, everything is under construction. There will be a big park here, and this area is under construction. As you can see, these are all under construction.

This is the boundary for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall. A little bit up, please. Yes. This is part of Savanna, and this is Saddle Ridge. These are all communities that are very diverse. This is whereabouts Genesis Centre is.

The Chair: Okay.

Member Brar: This is Martindale, and this is Saddle Ridge. If we go a little bit up, please. Sorry; this is half of Taradale as well.

Dr. Martin: Well, all I wanted to see was the next couple of quadrants, and they are visible somewhat on this very map. Again, in terms of your primary concern, which is about the coherence and keeping like communities together, if we had to go further south, would we be keeping like communities together?

Member Brar: Yes.

Dr. Martin: Okay. I'm not suggesting we're going to do it, but, you know, we're sensitive to the issue, and whether or not we are obliged to consider it, in fact, we are.

The Chair: Hypothetically, if we went down south – and you've got two quadrants from Calgary-Bhullar-McCall there, right? Let's

call it the northwest and the northeast. And these are a lot of assumptions. Which one would you prefer, the northeast or the northwest, to be carved into?

Member Brar: You mean this side or that side?

The Chair: Yeah.

Member Brar: Either one should be fine.

The Chair: It doesn't matter. Okay.

Member Brar: The population is very similar there.

The Chair: Okay. Good.

Member Brar: Sorry; just one more thing to add. If I can move the map a little bit down. The new community hub just like Genesis Centre that we are considering will be around this place, somewhere in Cornerstone.

The Chair: Okay. Good.

Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Thank you. I think this has been a great discussion. My colleagues have asked most of the sort of technical questions. Deerfoot Trail feels like a very natural dividing line, and mathematically – I don't think it's any great surprise – that probably aligns as well, if we were to make that.

Part of our role here is to name these constituencies. One of the written submissions, interestingly enough, said the area west of Deerfoot Trail in the north there. Nose Creek runs through it. It's an important geographic feature. How does that name land with you? Does that make sense? Do you have a better or different suggestion? I'll ask the same question of Calgary-North East. It is, in fact, in the northeast of Calgary. That's a pretty obvious geographic. But do you have any opinion or preference or suggestions?

10:00

Member Brar: For this side of the Deerfoot, you mean?

Mr. Clark: Yeah, the west. I'm interested in both sides, but let's just say we make the boundary Deerfoot Trail and we need names for both. Do you have a suggestion or preference on either side or both?

Member Brar: Well, I can share my suggestion. I think people do associate with this area, as you mentioned, Calgary-Nose Creek. Even the new high school that is built in Coventry Hills has some elements of nature and of the Indigenous community's history embedded in those schools. If you visit that school, it has got a beautiful building that reflects that. So, I mean, definitely it could be Calgary-Nose Creek or something similar to that.

The Chair: What's the high school name?

Member Brar: There is a high school in there.

The Chair: Yeah. What's the name of the high school, though?

Member Brar: It is Calgary north high school.

Mr. Clark: We already have a Calgary-North, so we're not naming it that.

Member Brar: On this side of the Deerfoot you can definitely call it northeast because people do associate themselves with that name.

Even when they have to tell somebody: where do you live? Calgary-North East. So that's certainly helpful.

For this place, I mean Calgary-Bhullar-McCall, that is in the memory of former MLA Manmeet Singh Bhullar, so that is something that should be considered as well.

Mr. Clark: This is very, very helpful. Thank you. Yeah, that was great.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Evans: Thank you so much.

The Chair: You know, an old friend of mine used to say that there are two kinds of problems: good problems and bad problems. I think this is probably a good problem. Yeah. Thank you so much, and if you are able to stay for the rest of the presentations, please do so.

Mandeep Toor? Not here.

Deborah Dean. We're asking you to come up early, if that's okay.

Ms D. Dean: As you mentioned, my name is Deborah Dean. I'd like to say good morning and thank you for the invitation to speak to the commission today. My constituency is Calgary-Cross. Full disclosure, I have submitted a written submission because I wasn't sure that I'd be able to make it today. I'm not going to read the full written submission, you'll be happy to know, but I'll give you the high points, and then if you have any questions, I'd be happy to try to answer them.

As you have commented this morning, I'm amazed at how quickly the city of Calgary is growing and approaching that 2 million people mark. Given that certain aspects of our day-to-day life like education, for example, and hospitals and emergency rooms and child welfare and justice fall under the responsibility of the provincial government, it's important to me that the attention of our MLA should not be diluted from our demographic in those areas. For example, when I pay my portion of education tax to the city of Calgary property tax, I expect to see it reflected in the Calgary board of education school system. It is necessary for effective representation that a Calgary-Cross MLA speak for the educational success of our community's children with that first in their mind.

The needs and the interests of urban and rural areas are different, and amalgamating rural and urban by not respecting municipal boundaries would be a disservice to the residents of both. I'm concerned that citizens in the city of Calgary constituencies are being underrepresented in the Legislature. Equality of representation is important, and, especially with the availability of modern communication options, population discrepancies based on the geographic size of a riding are perhaps becoming unnecessary and undemocratic.

Thank you again for the opportunity for input into the redistricting process. If you have any questions, I'd be happy to try and answer them.

The Chair: Quick question. Are we in Calgary-Cross right now, or are we just to the west of it?

Ms D. Dean: We're just to the west of Calgary-Cross. We've crossed over from 36th Street. You could walk into Calgary-Cross quite easily. Maybe not in the smoke today.

The Chair: Well, thanks for welcoming us.

Mr. Clark to start off.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Thank you very much. I really appreciate your presentation. I read your written presentation as well.

One of the challenges we have, as I think we've talked about and you've probably heard, is the population growth in Calgary. Calgary-Cross itself is a little large now, and its growth trajectory looks like it's continuing. It's about 11 per cent over. Do you have suggestions on which neighbourhoods you feel, if you needed to carve out perhaps a piece and move it into a different constituency, where the natural boundaries are? What goes with what? Any opinion on that?

Ms D. Dean: Sure. I mentioned it a bit in my written report that when you're talking about geographic boundaries, you know, there are certain things like Deerfoot Trail, as was discussed, which are like a river. I mean, you're not going to ride your bike or walk across Deerfoot Trail. You're going to have to take a bridge. Obviously, for Calgary-Cross Stoney Trail is pretty insurmountable in a lot of ways, though there are plans to extend Memorial Drive, I understand. Certainly, Deerfoot would be a limiting factor. We're not that far west right now, but it would be a limiting factor.

South: we're pretty permeable going south. You know, we've got Memorial Drive now as part of our southern boundary, but certainly there's lots of back and forth across Memorial Drive quite easily on transit. I mean, Calgary is a very car-centric city, but I like to think that people who are using other modes of getting around can easily do it within their riding. On the north McKnight Boulevard in certain areas is quite impenetrable. So those would kind of be my logical geographic boundaries, limits.

Mr. Clark: Great. That's very helpful. Thank you very much. I'll walk out the front door and wave at Calgary-Cross. Thank you.

The Chair: Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you. Thank you for your submission, which I read, but I wanted to ask you a question, so this is perfect. Now, this is full up. This riding is full up. Just judging from, say, a Google map and peering at the more detailed street map – you can correct me if I'm wrong – I don't think there's much opportunity here for further growth of neighbourhoods. Is that correct?

Ms D. Dean: I would agree with that. I mean, there isn't an overabundance of I'm going to say green space in the riding. We have some nice parks, but certainly we wouldn't want to sacrifice any of the green space we have.

It's a pretty settled neighbourhood. I'm in Marlborough Park, and I've been there for 35 years, and it was established – well established – when I moved in there. A lot of the neighbourhoods are like that. There's some densification, quite a bit of densification, I would say, happening. We've got a lot of back-alley suites happening in our neighbourhoods and that kind of thing, but that can only go so far.

Dr. Martin: Yeah. We see that all over Calgary. There's a trend there. I don't know the city bylaws on the matter, but I think that they are becoming increasingly indulgent on this kind of thing. But there are no major development pods. The previous speaker has got lots. But, you know, this is kind of a mature set of neighbourhoods.

If I could press you further on the community of interest theme, which we had heard about, what about Monterey Park? I'm guessing it was the last sort of section to get built out back in the day.

10:10

Ms D. Dean: Yes.

Dr. Martin: Is it integrated, do you think, into the broader community?

Ms D. Dean: I think it is, because 68th Street is, again, you know, quite permeable. I mean, we have the Trans-Canada highway running smack dab through the middle of our riding, of which you might think: well, that's a boundary. But it isn't really. You know, 36th Street, 52nd Street, 68th Street are all pedestrian friendly, and the high school is on the other side of the Trans-Canada highway, parallel to Monterey Park, but not. I mean, it's west of Monterey Park. It's on 52nd Street.

Dr. Martin: Right.

Ms D. Dean: Yeah. I don't think it's – it's probably a little bit different, because it is a quite a bit later community, and maybe some cultural differences, and certainly the houses are a bit different there. I live in a bungalow-intense neighbourhood. It's, you know, the more modern, two-storey house.

Dr. Martin: I like all of those housing forms. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.
Susan.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. Thank you for your presentation. Do you think that there is more space, without being able to look at it in detail, in Monterey for development? I'm thinking – are you suggesting that the increase in population is mostly due to densification in the mature neighbourhood?

Ms D. Dean: I would say so. Now, Monterey, you know – I've been in Monterey, and I've kind of walked through Monterey, and there are some green spaces there that exist because of Stoney Trail. I don't know that they would ever be developed, because I'm assuming there's ...

Mrs. Samson: There must be setbacks.

Ms D. Dean: Yeah. A considerable setback for Stoney Trail, you know, as there is for Deerfoot Trail. Like, it would be surprising to me. And then north of Monterey is Coral Springs. That's not in our riding, but it's already a developed community.

Mrs. Samson: Right. I see it now. Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Evans?

Mr. Evans: Good morning. I'm wondering – I'm looking at Laguna Way N.E. and Catalina Boulevard and California Boulevard N.E. Is there more development in that area? If you're looking on the map, it would be the west side of Stoney Trail.

Ms D. Dean: You know, I've walked the path there. If you're familiar with Stoney Trail, it's a wonderful wetland area on the east side, from one end to the other. You could sort of see on the map that there are wetlands there. So I don't think that there is a lot of room for – now, that would be a city of Calgary development decision, I guess, in conjunction with the province, because Stoney Trail is a provincial road, not a city of Calgary road. But I don't think there's a huge plan. I'm not aware of any planning in that area.

Mr. Evans: Are those built out, I guess, is my question. I want to know if those communities have built out there.

Ms D. Dean: Oh, yeah. When you walk on that pathway, you're walking past backyards.

Mr. Evans: The population of this electoral district is 61,000, which is up 11 per cent. What I want to know is: are we saturated

now, or is there going to be continued growth in these communities? Because that makes a difference in terms of how we handle what we need to do.

Ms D. Dean: I think that we're pretty much saturated. Again, unless there's significant densification. I mean, there is densification, but at this point not in the form of, like, high-rise towers or anything like that. Yeah.

Mr. Evans: Are there communities of interest that go across – are there similarities and connectivity between Rundle and Marlborough, for example.

Ms D. Dean: Yes. The communities north, like, Marlborough and Marlborough Park are south of the Trans-Canada. The other ones north – Pineridge and Whitehorn and Rundle and Temple – not all of those are in the riding, but they call them the properties, and they're all pretty similar, I would say, right up to McKnight Boulevard.

Mr. Evans: They call them the properties. Where does that come from? What's the origin?

Ms D. Dean: I think it probably had something to do with the developer. You know, again, we're going back 40 or 50 years. I'm not a hundred per cent sure, but before my time. But they are very – a lot of commonality. Our rec centre – I mean, people use the Genesis Centre because it's huge. Ours is a little aged. It's Village Square. It's on 52nd Street in Pineridge, right across the street from the high school. It has a public library. It has swimming pools and an ice rink and all that kind of stuff. People commute back and forth there on a regular basis to take advantage of that.

Mr. Evans: Sorry. In which area do you live?

Ms D. Dean: I'm in Marlborough Park.

Mr. Evans: Is there a community association there?

Ms D. Dean: Yes, there is. They're a very active community association. It's on Madigan Drive, the community association, in the middle of what is called Big Marlborough Park. Its official name is Big Marlborough Park. It has a community centre, and there are actually two Calgary board of education schools and one Catholic board of education school in that park. It's a huge green space. The city of Calgary is looking right now at doing some significant renovation in that park because it hasn't had anything done since it was basically built, and it's surrounded by a lot of – there are a lot of townhouses in Marlborough Park, so it's a fairly dense community, but mostly owner-occupied townhouses, so well maintained. Yeah.

Mr. Evans: And the name of it again? Sorry.

Ms D. Dean: The park?

Mr. Evans: No. The community.

Ms D. Dean: Marlborough Park is the community.

Mr. Evans: The community association?

Ms D. Dean: Yes.

Mr. Evans: Okay.

Ms D. Dean: In Calgary there's always a lot of confusion because we have Marlborough and we have Marlborough Park, and

everyone assumes it's the same community, but it's actually two related communities next to each other.

Mr. Evans: I was confused, so thank you. I appreciate that. Thank you so much.

The Chair: Ms Dean, I just want to go back. The previous electoral commission predicted that in this riding the population levels will likely be at or below provincial average by the time of this electoral boundaries review. You're actually about 5 or 6 per cent above the potential average, just as you were eight years ago; I think you were 5 per cent above. So just like so many predictions with Alberta, the population has changed that.

My question is: why the name Calgary-Cross? What's the origin of the name?

Ms D. Dean: I think it's named after Sandy Cross. Was he one of the big four?

Mr. Clark: There's a Sandy Cross conservation area: does that sound right? A.E. Cross was the . . .

Ms D. Dean: A.E. Cross.

Mr. Clark: That feels like Google.

The Chair: A municipal councillor?

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Well, A.E. Cross was one of the original big four who founded the Stampede.

The Chair: Oh, okay, so that's the history. That's helpful.

Ms D. Dean: Yeah. I mean, I have to say that I don't think it's a significant name relative to the neighbourhood.

Mr. Clark: Do you have a better suggestion?

The Chair: Yeah. Okay. Well, we won't touch it if it's got some history.

Yeah. One more question.

Mrs. Samson: One short one. This is more of an interest question. The newest district is Monterey, and now I see it's got all California-type names.

Ms D. Dean: Yes, it does.

Mrs. Samson: What makes it unique? Are there architectural controls in there?

Ms D. Dean: It's a lot of stucco and sort of Spanish style.

The Chair: It's Monterey-ish.

Ms D. Dean: It's Monterey-ish.

The Chair: I'm surprised to hear you say that that leisure centre is old, off 52nd. What is it called again?

Ms D. Dean: It's Village Square Leisure Centre.

The Chair: Okay. I would've called it new, but that's maybe my age.

Ms D. Dean: Yeah. Well, I mean, it's well maintained and it's been renovated. As I said, I've lived in my neighbourhood for 35 years, and I was taking my kids there for summer camps 35 years ago.

10:20

The Chair: Notwithstanding the odd shape, it seems to be a fairly cohesive electoral district.

Ms D. Dean: It is. I mean, as you said, it probably doesn't need to be expanded because I think densification is probably happening faster there. I just say that because I've lived there for 35 years. There are an awful lot of basement suites, and there's a good reason for that. It's a low-income area, and in this day and age for low-income people to be able to buy a house, and I'm talking families, they want a house with a suite so that they can make their mortgage. There's lots of that, and it's fine. I mean, it's good. It's healthy for the neighbourhood. There sometimes can be a little bit of parking wars going on but, you know, that's life in the big city.

The Chair: I'm not from Calgary, but I do have some familiarity with this. My sister-in-law lives just off Rundle, so I have some familiarity with it.

Well, thank you. Your presentation is very helpful.

Any last questions? No. Sorry; I don't think we have a lot of time. We'd better move on here, but please feel free to stay because if we have time at the end, we can have maybe some more conversation.

Ms D. Dean: Thank you for your time.

The Chair: I'm way past the break. Let's have a very, very precise 10-minute break. We will be back at 10:35. Terrible timekeeper sometimes.

[The hearing adjourned from 10:22 a.m. to 10:32 a.m.]

The Chair: The next presenter who I believe is here in the present is Keith Purdy. I'd ask that you come forward and sit at the table. Please introduce yourself and tell us what electoral division you are from.

Mr. Purdy: Good morning. My name is Keith Purdy. I'm a constituent of Calgary-Currie.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Purdy: This is my husband here with me. He's going to assist me with giving me points that I wish to speak to. I don't particularly want to talk about Calgary-Currie; I want to deal on a more broad, Alberta-based scenario.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Purdy: I've lived in Calgary-Currie for the last 35 years, and with the structure of Calgary-Currie I don't believe there are going to be any changes there. That's why I wanted to talk on a more broad-based issue here, so just bear with me. Okay.

As we look at the province of Alberta and Calgary and Edmonton in particular, it raises questions for me that the 2021 census is quite outdated at this point, because of the influx of migrants and people moving to this province, mainly because of the Alberta government's call to workers across the province to come to Alberta. With the immigration status over the past few years, the population has increased quite substantially, and I feel that the data in the '21 census is quite arbitrary at this point, because the influx of people has substantially changed the look of ridings and the populations in a lot of areas within the province, Calgary and Edmonton in particular, but as well Red Deer, Lethbridge, Grande Prairie, Medicine Hat. Those particular areas have increased to a point where it puts the average electoral voter rate somewhat higher than what it was in the past.

In some circumstances, it increases the average over the 25 per cent margin of what the electoral districts are supposed to carry. It kind of alters what the main issues are for those constituencies, and it changes a little bit of the parity of the vote. If someone in an area has an expectation that the MLA will represent them in the same fashion as, you know, a more populated area in the riding, then that decreases the affectability of that particular voter to be represented properly.

It's my submission that the boundaries, if they change, and they will change: I think they should reflect a particular boundary that is very concrete and very easy for the voters to recognize where their boundaries are and where the issues of that particular riding reflect the people that vote in that area.

If this commission is going to, for example, in Calgary, extend the boundaries outside of, say, the city limits, then the voters that are going to be in the outer ring of the area may not have the same voice with their MLA as the people that are concentrated in the other sections of that riding. In particular, if you look at Calgary-West, for example, if it extends out into Springbank and those outlying areas that are currently in a different riding, then some of those voices may not be heard the same as someone else. It's very concerning that these people that live in the entire riding have the same voice as the other people that might be in a more concentrated and an area that they are more active in and have the opportunity to voice their opinions a little bit more strongly.

In that as well, there are a couple of ridings of interest to me. Central Peace-Notley and Lesser Slave Lake are substantially below the provincial average, and I think those two particular ridings need to be adjusted so that they are inclusive of, at least, you know, less than 25 per cent below the average.

10:40

The statistics for those particular ridings not only are covered through the '21 census; there are also other forms of documenting people such as the – I think the name has changed, but it's the Indian affairs and northern development department in the federal government which register those Indigenous people as opposed to the general census. Those areas that include a reserve or a Métis settlement or something like that: you need to have the information from different levels of government to get the proper accounting of the people that are in those areas.

That points to effective representation. It's my opinion that if the numbers aren't correct or if the numbers are skewed through different types of legislation, then the representation may or may not be there. Some ridings, particularly the rural ridings, are quite distant. The population is sparse. The representation is very hard to provide simply because of logistics in travel in setting up meetings or events where people can speak with their MLA, with the representatives. It's very difficult, especially in the rural ridings, that the MLA has the ability, without isolating any particular part of that area, so that equal representation is there. It's the constitutional right of every Albertan to have that representation and to have the access to the people that make the decisions.

The population, as I led to earlier, has increased substantially over the last three to four years. The current census that is in effect doesn't reflect the migration provincially and immigration through the federal government as well. Some of the other factors that we could look at would be the Treasury Board's report in 2025 that reflects the number and the location of people so that this commission can have a more current representation of the people that are in Alberta, particularly in the large cities, so that there is a lot more current information that is available.

This commission, in my opinion, was formed too early for the 2027 general election. The federal general census is not scheduled

till the spring of 2026. Therefore, the reflection of the voters in this province is somewhat lacking in their accuracy. I suggest that some of these other forms of documentation be taken into consideration so that the reflection of the voters has a little bit more concrete information.

I believe this commission should look at not only the increase in population; it should look at the interests of the particular areas. Like I led to earlier, a more urban part of the riding has different concerns, different service providers, different amenities that they access and give information as to what needs to change or things like that than a rural part of the riding that deals with, you know, more of the municipality issues.

The municipalities have a lot to do with where the money flows, where the representation lies, and the rural areas don't have that same accessibility. It seems to me that if you take a riding and split it from a largely urban area and include a rural aspect to it, then the rural aspect is going to be eliminated from a lot of the decision-making simply because of the numbers. They don't have the ability to supersede some of the large urban areas that would have the largest number of votes.

I make an example of Airdrie-Cochrane, that particular area. It seems to me that it's got two larger urban centres divided by a largely rural area where the urban centres of Cochrane and part of Airdrie would overrule a lot of the issues that the rural areas would have in that particular instance. Some of the aspects of the boundary would make it more difficult for the particular rural people to have the validity of their votes.

The Chair: Mr. Purdy, if I can just interject here. I don't believe, if I recall when you came, you were here for the introduction. I made some comments about the time limits. We try to keep it to about seven minutes for the presentation. We're a little past that now.

Mr. Purdy: Sorry.

The Chair: I'll let you wind up your very comprehensive presentation, and then we'll have some exchanges between the commission and yourself.

Mr. Purdy: Okay.

Finally, I've looked at all of the constituencies in the province, and the commission is expecting two new ridings. I would suggest that with the increase in population and the density: Calgary would receive two new ridings, Edmonton as well would receive two new ridings, Airdrie would stay the same at two, Lethbridge would stay the same at two, Medicine Hat would be incorporated as one, and Grande Prairie would be incorporated as one as well.

I will conclude with that, and I would be happy to take questions.

10:50

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Purdy. It's always beneficial for more global or more province-wide perspectives, and you've obviously thought deeply about this and considered the whole provincial scene very well. As to the timing of the Electoral Boundaries Commission, that train has left the station. We can't slow it down, we can't stop it, so it's kind of out of our control, but you raise a very good point, which I probably failed to explain at the introduction.

You talk about the population figures we use. Let me just make reference to section 12 of the act, which says, "For the purposes of this Part, the population of Alberta is to be determined by the commission in accordance with this section." Section 12 has several paragraphs, and it outlines several factors. Your concerns were exactly the concerns of the commission that we had when we were

first appointed, because the act is very clear that we rely on the decennial census, which is every 10 years, the last one being 2021.

What we learned, and you touched on it on it a little bit, is that, notwithstanding the census is only every five years – I don't like the term decennial, because it means 10 years, but it's actually every five years – by Statistics Canada, it is constantly updated by Stats Canada monthly, quarterly, and annually. In addition to that, the Alberta Treasury Board, not to be confused with Alberta Treasury Branches, through its Office of Statistics and Information quantifies and verifies and validates what Stats Canada does, so we are relying on a population cut-off as of July 2024.

I'm not an economist, I'm not an actuary, I'm not a statistician, but I am told and we are convinced as a commission that that is the right cut-off for population: July 2024. That amount or that population level is, as you alluded to or hinted, much more significant than the last time. It is a 4.888 million population. Now, unfortunately, there've been some news reports that have come out since, recently, that Alberta's population is 5 million. It may very well be 5 million, but we are relying on the most accurate data that we can find, and it's 4.88 million. I hope that alleviates part of your concern about the population.

Having said that, and I hope I clarified some things, and if you reference section 12 it talks a little bit more about the background and what we are able to do and rely on, and that's what we are doing. Let me open it up to the rest of the commission for any dialogue or comments or questions. I'll start with you, Mr. Evans.

Mr. Evans: Thank you for your submissions. No questions arising. Thanks.

The Chair: Mrs. Samson.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you, and thank you for your presentation. You made an interesting point that I had been mulling over for a while. You talked about the rural not having the best representation when they're inside a riding that has two midsize cities. Would you like to comment on how you think the representation is for the two midsize cities who share a riding? You use the example of Airdrie and Cochrane, which is fitting, because we have been talking about that today.

The Chair: Were you here for the person from Cochrane?

Mr. Purdy: I was not.

The Chair: Too bad. Okay.

Mr. Purdy: You know, I've talked to a lot of people in Cochrane in particular, and they have their issues there. The ring around Cochrane deals with – and one of the points that I want to bring up is the gravel pit issue in and around Cochrane. The people of Cochrane don't seem to have a voice on what the government policy is on the gravel pit issue in the surrounding areas.

The gravel pit issue is very controversial for the people of Cochrane. They are going to have a lot of noise, dust, traffic, destruction, well, maybe not destruction, but changes to the environment in that area as well. So I think that, having that particular area inside the boundary that envelops Cochrane and, you know, Airdrie as well, the policy of these pits is more a rural issue that I think the rural people should have the voice in that because it affects them a lot more than it would the urban areas.

The Chair: Thank you.
Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you, and thank you for your presentation, inexorably logical I thought. But it's your initiating premise that the judge was poking his finger in about the census data. I hope we've given you some comfort on that, although it remains an issue. I found out to my horror many years ago that no census is empirical. There are always estimates and re-estimates and Band-Aided bits of information.

What happens in the work of the Office of Statistics and Information at Treasury Board is to assess additional and alternate lines by which you could see a growth of population. Here's one: the issuance of new health cards. It's kind of neat, and there are many of these sorts of streams of data, but they are all partial in one respect. Namely, you can't have a hundred per cent reliability on them. They all have a probability percentage attached to them, but they fulfill one serious requirement, which is that you can work in all the data, and it allows you to estimate population growth in all the electoral districts, which is one of the requirements of the act. So they have built a quilt of estimates of the highest probability, and we don't use the bleeding edge because there's volatility. So you back it off a bit to find stable numbers, and that's how we arrived at July 2024.

You alluded to the next federal five-year census. It takes them a year to do the remedial work on their own census, and then that puts everything in a mess for the next predicted provincial election. That's why they chose to ask us to go to work on this earlier than you might see as relevant.

I actually wanted to ask about gravel pits because if I own a farm, if I discover good gravel, I'm over the moon because it's better than cattle. So whosoever is running these gravel pits, which are, I take it, the ones on the south flank of Cochrane . . .

Mr. Purdy: Yes.

Dr. Martin: Then I'm not sure how one goes about negotiating the fact that they don't work at night, do this, do that, but I can't imagine that it is easily fixed in a way that would make any difference as to the boundaries of Cochrane. A gravel pit you can hear like a train. You can hear it 10 miles away. I take it that it's an issue. It's always a difficult issue, but its relevance as far as an electoral district boundary line is zero, I believe.

The Chair: But in fairness, Dr. Martin, I think it was whether the MLA in the area had the ability to properly represent. I think that's what the presenter was getting at.

Dr. Martin: Okay. I stand corrected.

If you elect an MLA, they do take on the burden when they swear in to represent all the people.

11:00

The Chair: Sorry to interject, but we are getting granular when we get down to gravel.

Okay. Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: I really appreciated your perspective, and we've touched on the population question. Trust me, we think a lot about this. It's a bit like being an economist or a weather forecaster; the only thing you know definitively is it's wrong. What you hope for, though, is that you're not grossly wrong, that you perhaps have predicted a direction of travel, you know, with some degree of specificity. I know Justice Miller likes to read out some of the predictions from the previous report as to where the population may or may not go. I know it keeps him up at night thinking about his name on a document that predicts where Alberta's population may go.

I guess all that is to say, just maybe as a wrap-up, thank you for coming. We very much appreciate your contribution, and it very much is heard and something we think a lot about up here at this table. Thank you.

Mr. Purdy: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Purdy. Please remain for the rest of the morning. Feel free and come back after lunch to hear the presenters, because sometimes when we have time at the end, we do engage in a more communal conversation. You're excused to the gallery.

Our next presenter is Lizette Tejada.

Member Tejada: Tejada.

The Chair: Tejada. Please come forward and have a seat. Normally we restrict people to seven minutes, with an additional three minutes of exchange and conversation, but we're somewhat flexible in terms of the rest of the day. Please introduce yourself. You're a serving MLA; is that correct?

Member Tejada: I sure am.

The Chair: Okay. Please introduce yourself.

Member Tejada: Well, luckily because I am an MLA, I tend to prepare and time myself. Sometimes I don't really stick to my own time so well.

Thank you very much. My name is Lizette Tejada. I am the current MLA for Calgary-Klein, so a lot of my remarks will focus on that riding. I just want to thank the commission for giving us this opportunity to participate and to contribute and for providing so many opportunities and different ways to participate. I see that there was an online option there as well. That is fantastic. Thank you for that.

I'm here today to share some of my thoughts on electoral representation in terms of electoral divisions and how that might impact individuals, organizations, communities, municipalities throughout the province but, of course, with a special lens on Calgary-Klein.

I just want to start with saying that with electoral ridings my feeling is that they, of course, should be fair to all communities to uphold democracy. What this looks like is keeping like communities together; considering the demographic needs, which can include cultural groupings and what services they may need to access, the context of the region in which they are regularly accessed; and how individuals live, work, and commute within that riding.

For Calgary-Klein itself, it's a very diverse constituency, and it's comprised of people from all walks of life. That ranges from very urban to suburban. We have haves and have-nots and an array of community-serving organizations and institutions.

Oh. There's the map. All right. You can see what the span is of the riding. It's quite a large riding.

In Calgary-Klein we have active resident community associations; community organizations that serve diverse populations, ranging from the disability community to other vulnerable populations as well; newcomer-serving organizations; seniors' homes; cultural organizations; government services; clinics; the Peter Lougheed hospital, of course, is a major point in the riding; over 56 places of worship; 37 schools; postsecondary hubs; and hundreds of businesses also included in a large industrial area within the boundaries of Calgary-Klein. We also touch on a lot of the main arteries within the city of Calgary. That's highway 1,

highway 2, Memorial Drive, Centre Street, Edmonton Trail, McKnight, John Laurie, and 14th Street. If anyone here is familiar with the transit lines in Calgary, those are also major touch points and criss-cross the riding. Some of them I rode, going to and from high school to university. We have all the major routes. They've changed a little bit but are still a huge part of what we have in the riding.

Some of the modes of transport also form some of the boundaries. We have the C-Train line on the edge of 36th, which you can see on the map and just along Memorial Drive. That's not one of the boundaries but a major artery. Of course, we had hoped for a green line in north Calgary, but I know that that's a discussion for another day.

When I look at Calgary-Klein, it's the very definition of central Calgary. I've had the privilege in different points of my life of living here, studying here, working here in various iterations of my career. Now I'm very fortunate to serve the constituents of Calgary-Klein and touch on three quadrants of the city. I think I might be the only riding that does that in the city of Calgary.

The Chair: Do you want the fourth?

By the way, can you tell us how long you've served as an MLA?

Member Tejada: Sure. I have actually served in the riding of Calgary-Klein since May 2023. This is my first term.

The Chair: Okay. Good. Thank you.

Member Tejada: In the time leading up to speaking here, I've thought a lot about how very diverse this riding is and how it has really everything a person could touch in their lives when it comes to living in a city. That can be services, infrastructure, natural spaces, socioeconomic diversity, and it really is just a microcosm of Calgary as a whole.

I know that I heard one of the previous speakers talking about population growth. In my role as shadow minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism, of course, that has been a huge focus for me, population growth, seeing the largest spike in '23. I know there are lots of changes sort of coming down the pipe from federal, but we are still dealing with the spike from '23 and trying to address the needs there.

We've seen interprovincial and international immigration as well as shifts in population and a resurgence, I would say from my observations, of young families looking for proximity to local schools. The needs here are distinctly urban, much like the needs of the neighbouring ridings that use similar infrastructure. You know, of course, Peter Lougheed hospital is serving a larger community in Calgary. They have diverse populations. They access service through the corridors that I'd mentioned earlier.

In my time representing Calgary-Klein I've seen demographic concentrations along cultural and racialized lines. You know, there is a tendency to have that, especially in immigrant populations. They tend to sort of congregate, and I've seen a higher concentration of racialized residents. This matters especially in terms of municipalities because the services and the social needs and any of the social issues that may arise really need to be looked at with that lens applied.

Rural and urban needs in that context would be very different. I know that we've seen population growth across the province. I know that there are several initiatives that target immigration into some of the less populated centres. Those folks also have needs as a group, but they will be very different within that context.

The current boundaries of the riding are mostly, like I said, urban dividers, natural dividers, and this makes sense in terms of an urban

riding. Some are perhaps like little jagged dividers that might take a sliver of one community or another, but in general terms I would say like communities are together. This is especially true of the more densely populated areas in central Calgary around 16th Avenue and that sort of thing.

Like I said, I'm seeing a lot of growth in terms of new builds, not only in the established neighbourhoods that are densifying but even in some of the vast industrial area that is contained within Calgary-Klein. What I'm seeing is additions of affordable housing initiatives in those industrial areas. I know we have a Silvera that was a conversion from a hotel to resident apartments, so we're starting to see a little bit more of that happening. That's, of course, welcome. We are in dire need of affordable housing. I think that any of the infrastructure builds, any of the changes that happen along those lines, happen, again, within that very specific context of an urban centre.

11:10

As I said before, the neighbouring ridings would have similar needs, and I would imagine – like, the industrial areas aren't just in my riding. I would be curious to see if some of those changes are happening there as well. But, again, it is all urban, and in the context of Calgary that is critical because that impacts the way that you access services, the conversations that are happening around infrastructure builds, and the way in which you can be represented by your MLA.

Just to quickly talk about some of my experiences and some of the conversations I've had with rural stakeholders, because I'm having those conversations, too, both within this role and within larger conversations around development and industry. Their needs are also very distinct, and political representation should be relevant to that context and give ease of access to their elected officials. I heard a little bit of that discussion with the previous speaker. They are also experiencing growth, welcoming newcomers, and need representation that has, like, a keen understanding of that population of the history of that constituency and how it's changing.

When we're talking about electoral boundaries and how those get drawn, I hope that strong consideration is given to keeping like communities together and keeping in mind the context in which people live, commute, learn, and work. I would caution against boundaries that try to meld urban and rural communities. My fear there is that the very specific and nuanced needs of those communities might not be met appropriately if that's the case.

When this commission is looking also to add new seats, I would emphasize looking at that population growth, and I know that's why we're here. There's been massive change even within my riding, from 53,000 to 66,000, based on the last information I received from the Legislative Assembly. I know that that growth is even bigger in some of the neighbouring ridings. So what I would emphasize is the importance of fair representation that is contextual, especially when it comes to that growth, ensuring that that's considered. I would suggest that there are more seats needed in some of those urban centres that have seen the biggest growth, like south Edmonton, north Calgary, what I'm seeing all around me in my communities.

I think that communities should be kept together, that all those demographic considerations should be centred as well, and that municipalities be kept intact because I think MLAs should be able to represent the needs of their constituents and be very familiar and never feel sort of split in their responsibilities.

With that, that concludes my comments on the boundary commission and the work that you're doing. I appreciate that work.

I appreciate that we're keeping in mind, you know, our democracy and how well our constituents are represented.

The Chair: Well, thank you. Thank you very much, Ms Tejada. I wasn't texting while I was on my phone; I was using the calculator.

Member Tejada: That's okay.

The Chair: I just want to make sure that we're speaking the same language. I'm not sure if you were here when I discussed population with the previous presenter.

Member Tejada: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. According to our statistics – you mentioned 66,000 that your district has – we have 60,336.

Member Tejada: Oh, okay. It might be projected. I'm basing it on the information that I got around, like, a constituency office budget and how many people were represented.

The Chair: Okay. That's fair. Just so you know, we're relying on the 60,336. While the previous commission said that you were supposed to stay at the provincial average, you're 10 per cent over the provincial average right now. I just wanted to clarify that that's the number. Again, it's from July 2024. We're unanimous in the use of that population base.

Thank you so much for your presentation. As I've said repeatedly, it's so nice to hear from presenters that knock on the doors, that walk the streets, and know the community and know the electoral division better than anyone. Much appreciated. Thanks for taking the time.

I'm going to start with Mr. Evans on the end. Any questions or comments?

Mr. Evans: Good morning. Thank you for your presentation. I just want to confirm. Would you say that the growth that you've seen in your electoral district – is it new growth? Is it infills? Is it basement suites? Are we at a point of saturation? Do you see new developments happening?

Member Tejada: I am seeing, actually, that it runs the gamut. We're seeing a lot of infills. We're seeing some of those basement suites, I would say probably because of the increase in rents as well. We know that the rents have gone up quite high, so I'm seeing more basement suites. I'm seeing new builds in some of those industrial areas. Those are new buildings meant to accommodate families that are low income. In some cases I have been looking at some of the information that the city has on new developments, and some of those are also to densify neighbourhoods and to provide affordable housing. Depending on the neighbourhood, there may be more or less, but I'm seeing all of it.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Susan?

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. Thank you for coming out. I appreciate your input. When you started off, you talked about urban and suburban. You know, I can't believe I haven't heard that word, "suburban," in use. Can you explain to us: what is your definition of suburban, and where does that occur in Calgary-Klein? Why do we need to weigh that out?

Member Tejada: Okay. Actually, that's a good question. Suburban, I think, is sort of almost into the outlying areas, and I would say that occurs a little bit more at the edges of the riding

where we're going into the ridings of Calgary-Beddington. That would be the edges of the riding: quieter communities, more residential, perhaps fewer businesses. I guess it would be good to have, like, a formal definition. I think there are probably several, but that's what I'm thinking of when I say suburban.

Mrs. Samson: Yeah. I think it's important for us because, when we're faced with electoral districts that have to be changed, we want to keep the like communities together, so a suburban versus an urban: there might not be a lot of commonality there.

Member Tejada: Well, I would say the commonalities there are really in the access to services and the major corridors. It really is, I guess, more that the riding is an urban riding, right? It's not anything bordering on rural, and I would just say those edge communities are, like, slightly less populated. They're still seeing growth, but they're not as dense.

Mrs. Samson: Right. Okay. Thank you for that clarification. I appreciate it.

Member Tejada: Okay. Thanks.

The Chair: Earlier this morning we heard from a resident of Calgary-Cross, so it's your neighbour to the east, I guess. Thanks for keeping these together, because having the presentations at the same session: it's helpful for us.

I only have one comment. My goodness. You have every major transportation route except for Stoney in your riding, it seems. You could even take the canoe a little bit on the Bow River.

Member Tejada: You actually can. Yeah. It's a great riding, lots of different experiences across the riding. I do a lot of driving.

The Chair: Yeah. Okay.

Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you, and thank you. You have been very helpful to me. At first I was going to ask about housing forms and, you know, the phenomenon of people renting basements and the like, but I think my colleague touched on that with you.

11:20

What I'm really interested in is everything that happens to the east of the Deerfoot. Now, you've said, and quite rightly, that you have to keep an eye on all the light industrial uses that are there as well as the residential pods. Crudely put, there are three residential pods within your boundary. You know, the area is going to include some affordable housing and then two more established pieces.

Now, we've heard a very great deal over the weeks about ambiguous relations because of urban and rural. How can an MLA, you know, advocate for both things at once? But here we are; we've got a hybrid riding right here, and it's yours. You have the burden of advocating for business owners, warehouse owners, and their workers, who probably don't live in your riding but the infrastructure is in your riding so you have to keep half an eye to it. How do you pull that off?

Member Tejada: Talking to a lot of people.

Dr. Martin: Yeah. You spend a very great deal of time as an MLA arranging meetings, driving to meetings, talking to people on the phone from both residential orientations and from light commercial orientations as well. This sparks for me this interesting problem – I mean, it just hadn't occurred to me before, so thank you – that an MLA in a big urban site has to take care of the light industrial and

commercial situation as well. Most of those people don't live in your riding, but all of their buildings and their work day is spent in your riding.

We've heard a great deal about dealing with residences and their issues and their communities, but here's a completely different scenario. You've got to juggle both, and I commend you for doing it, but I must ask. I mean, it is a somewhat different kind of set of relationships, yeah?

Member Tejada: Yeah. Absolutely.

Dr. Martin: I want to characterize it as hybrid because much of what we have heard is about: well, you can't bring them in here because it's a completely different set of interests. You think, "Well, you know, that's kind of plausible," but maybe not when I look at your riding.

Member Tejada: Well, to that I would say that there is a difference in representing electors and the businesses and, like you said, the industrial areas, right? You will take their areas of concern also into account when you're doing your presentations. I would say it's such a large area that actually a lot of residents do end up using a lot of the industrial spaces and all of that infrastructure as well.

I would say that in terms of representation, like, I do have a lot of meetings with businesses; far more with the electors, and they are urban, right? I would say that that's a really important distinction in the services that they access, in the issues that they bring to my attention, whether it be access to health care, education, the transportation needs that they have, and they will be very heavily centred on where they live.

Dr. Martin: I should sit in the corner with you, and we could tease each other on this issue.

Member Tejada: Okay.

Dr. Martin: It's not just your electors; it's the full population. Typically there's 30 per cent or more of people who are not electors because they're new immigrants or kids or what have you, so you're already carrying the representative burden for the full population, and therefore that would be true for the business managers and whosoever is working on the east side of Deerfoot as well.

Member Tejada: Yeah. Absolutely.

Dr. Martin: Well, I commend you for it.

Member Tejada: Well, thank you. Yeah. When I say electors and residents, really – like, it's residents. I tend to think in those terms more than – you know, I said electors, but definitely residents. When we're thinking about residents, in my mind we're talking about families – right? – and wherever they may be in the riding, the needs of those families specifically and individuals because we have some apartments as well. But, yeah, residents.

Thank you for that. Thanks for that comment.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Great. Yeah. I was going to pick up on that thread. I think if we define hybrid too loosely, it almost takes on no meaning, but I think your answer was spot on. I don't know if you could read the notes I'm writing, but I think you caught most of it in terms of just characterizing the work that you do as a member of the Legislative Assembly representing the kids who go to school or

seniors or postsecondary students or whoever it may be. I think that was a great summary on your part.

I did want to ask you a bit about the geography of Calgary-Klein. You've got this big Deerfoot Trail right down the middle of it. North of 16th Avenue is primarily retail, industrial office, not – I've got a bit of magic here that tells me you've got about 2,700 people who live in that part of your constituency south of the airport. Then Mayland Heights I think is probably the biggest residential piece east of Deerfoot. I guess I'm curious how you would characterize the sort of east and west of Deerfoot and then also kind of the Thorncliffe and north. You talked a little bit about getting more kind of suburban up into that area, but that seems to be where more of the residents are. Is the Deerfoot Trail a bit of a natural break for you, then, on the west side more than the east side in terms of where the actual population lies of your constituency?

Member Tejada: I don't know about a natural break. Even, like, when you look at places like Mayland Heights, it is a very particular community. It is bordering on industrial as well, and they're seeing some changes there. But there are corridors that connect Mayland to like communities like Renfrew, let's say, and the needs, I would say, around any of those corridors are very similar. I think of what's east of the Deerfoot. I think about Mayland but also along Memorial as well, so Radisson and Albert Park. I would say that the needs are similar. They might change a little bit based on socioeconomic status, but the needs are pretty similar.

The conversations that I have around development, around accessing those larger services are the same. You know, any of the bigger corridors could be considered a boundary, right? But I would say that through all the conversations that I've had east and west of the Deerfoot, a lot of the concerns are similar, and it's centred more around how densely populated places are.

Mr. Clark: So Mayland kind of heading south then, Albert Park, Radisson Heights, Southview that's sort of a bit of a natural – not all of that's in Calgary-Klein I don't think.

Member Tejada: Albert Park and Radisson are in Calgary-Klein.

Mr. Clark: Are they in Calgary-Klein as well?

Member Tejada: Yeah. Memorial actually goes through.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Exactly. Good. That's really helpful. Thank you so much.

Member Tejada: You're welcome.

The Chair: Thank you very much. As you appreciate, the numbers tell us you're 10 per cent above the average. We can't tell you what we're going to do with Calgary-Klein, but the conversation you had with Dr. Martin reminded me of the Saskatchewan reference in the Supreme Court of Canada. Of course, that's in a sense the baseline for interpretation of section 3 of the Charter of Rights in terms of the right to vote and what is part of the mandate of this commission.

Justice McLachlin in that decision talks about the role of a Member of a Legislative Assembly or of Parliament as being representative of the people, but she also references – and it's a characterization that we've not really talked about – the role as an ombudsman or an ombudsperson, and you seemed to fit in your conversation with Dr. Martin the role of a representative and an ombudsman.

Member Tejada: I'll take that as a compliment.

The Chair: Yeah. We know you've got a tough job to juggle all the interests and the various people you represent, but that conversation has brought to light the role of the ombudsman. Thank you for it. Thank you for your presentation and for coming. Very much appreciate it.

Member Tejada: That is a joy and an honour and a long day.

The Chair: Thank you. Yeah. You're excused, but please stay if you can to hear any further presentations this morning.

Member Tejada: Okay. I will.

The Chair: Now I'm going to go quickly through the presentation list. I'm relying on our official secretariat here.

Pranav Bakaraju is present to present? Please come forward.

11:30

Mr. Bakaraju: Good morning.

The Chair: Good morning.

Mr. Bakaraju: Should I just get started?

The Chair: Introduce yourself. Tell us what electoral division you live in, and then proceed into your presentation.

Mr. Bakaraju: For sure. My name is Pranav Bakaraju. I live in Calgary-Buffalo in downtown, but I'm here to speak about Calgary-Foothills, which is where I work, in the northwest.

I guess I'll add that you just spoke with an MLA; I work as a constituency manager for the Calgary-Foothills MLA, so kind of a similar experience of hearing what's happening on the ground, speaking with community members regularly, residents, a lot of time knocking on the doors and going to community events. I'm not quite at the point where I'm ready to live in a suburb, so that's why I'm downtown. But that being said, I get a good sense on a daily basis as to what the needs and the issues are. As you were just talking about, the constituency office often is a place where not only are we trying to represent the needs of the constituents but also are handling complaints from businesses, residents, et cetera, and beyond.

I want to thank you, first, for giving us the opportunity to present and speak about our experiences in these areas. You know, it's obviously important to our democracy to have fair representation, and the riding boundaries are a big part of that. If I recall correctly, I believe the last census showed that Calgary-Foothills had about 67,000 people in the riding, and it's expanding still. There are new neighbourhoods coming in in Glacier Ridge, and Esker Park I believe is the other one.

Generally, in speaking with friends and colleagues who live in that riding as well as residents who I communicate with on a daily basis, the biggest concern that I often hear from Calgary-Foothills residents is that they feel that they are perceived to be at the very edge of the world in Calgary and maybe even not a part of the city sometimes. One of the concerns that they have is around respecting municipal boundaries with provincial ridings: you know, following those city limits, ensuring that when the constituency office is speaking with residents, we're talking about the same services, for example. Where it gets a little bit confusing is when a riding overlaps multiple wards, multiple ridings, multiple municipalities, to be able to clearly share that information.

I know Alberta has a huge, growing population. I believe that the commission is planning to create two new ridings. You know, I would put my perspective in to say that I believe that north Calgary is one of the largest growing areas of the province and, from what I

hear, south Edmonton as well, so I feel that the new ridings that are created likely should be in those areas. The crux of my submission is that for this riding the municipal boundaries should be respected and that the Calgary-Foothills riding should remain within the city of Calgary. While many people believe that suburban ridings don't always have character or shared values, I have learned, even though I live downtown, in speaking with families regularly that there are quite shared values and kind of unique needs in the area. This ranges from the need for schools and hospitals to sports fields and even disability services. We help people with AISH, et cetera.

One of the concerns that these residents tend to have is that if the riding on the edges of the city starts being more and more diluted to areas outside of the city, the people living in those provincial ridings might not actually be perceived to be suburban or urban. They point out that, of course, all the concerns of all the residents in all the cities are equally valid, but the concerns of somebody who lives even just outside of the city limits of Calgary such as in, like, Bearspaw is very different than somebody who lives at the edge of the city. Often the residents in the suburbs feel their issues are closer to someone who lives in Kensington, for example, versus somebody in Balzac or Bearspaw, depending on how ridings get sort of diluted on the edges of the city.

There are many people in Calgary-Foothills who value their local community. It's something that I've actually learned eventually. I do have a family. I've realized community associations are really, really important pillars of the community. They host events, and people attend these events, and I've already learned this. If you look at the eastern edge of Calgary-Foothills – it's a little tough to see on the map there – the neighbourhood of Evanston is sort of split between Calgary-Foothills and Calgary-North, so that community association actually has two MLAs that sort of represent that entire neighbourhood. We regularly kind of run into problems, and I actually work with the Calgary-North constituency office regularly to kind of say: hey, this constituent technically is in your area, not mine. We're kind of sharing those case files.

People get confused as to who actually represents them, who they go to. It shows that if you have boundaries that go through neighbourhoods or go through certain areas, it kind of makes things extra challenging for people. It becomes complicated for the community associations themselves to, you know, work with multiple elected representatives across different jurisdictions, and when MLAs have residents under different city boundaries, with different municipal services and tax systems, it's important to consider the same issue around school divisions and school boards and how that sort of affects people.

I think the big concern is that if Calgary-Foothills residents are now – if the riding gets pushed out further to the north or the west and Calgary-Foothills residents are now sharing the space with people who live technically outside of the Calgary city limits, they might feel less enthusiastic about sharing their concerns around the democratic process. If we hold a town hall, you know, the MLA or constituency office would now need to think: "Okay. Would people be willing to drive 20 minutes out of the city to attend this town hall? Would they want to engage?" We already have that issue. We don't have a ton of venues in Calgary-Foothills, so we often have to have events downtown or in other places. People aren't often very willing to drive past 20 minutes, right?

Many Calgary-Foothills residents are immigrants with diverse cultures, and they might be intimidated to go to a town hall or an MLA office that is outside of the city, where they feel they might not be as familiar with the area or the people that are living there. But while being immigrants, many of the people in Calgary-Foothills have lived in these neighbourhoods for 10-plus years.

They came here when the area was new. Their kids grew up here. The families grew up with the lifestyle that northwest Calgary provides: wide-open fields, wide roads, and lots of wind. If anyone's been up there, you'd know. This is completely different than somebody who lives outside of a city environment and outside of the city boundaries because there is almost a rural element once you kind of go even 10 minutes out of the city.

There are aspects of Calgary-Foothills that keep everyone connected and shouldn't be broken up by provincial boundaries. For example, Symons Valley United church is a hub where Christians and Muslims regularly practise their faith in the same building. These are residents from neighbourhoods ranging from Sage Hill, Kincora, Arbour Lake. Having a provincial boundary divide this riding would lead to confusion. For example, these faith communities regularly talk about local issues and have relationships with local representatives, but now in that mosque they have to worry about and ask: which MLA actually represents me, and which neighbourhood is actually covered? Right now all those communities are kind of covered by the same place.

Riding boundary changes are difficult for any Albertan to remember, let alone for somebody for whom English is not their first language. For a lot of immigrants in Calgary-Foothills that is the case. Census data actually shows that Calgary-Foothills is one of the most diverse ridings in the entire province. Every community kind of lives in our area, so we're always engaging with the Chinese community, Muslim community, Hindus, African and Caribbean populations. They all have roots here. The same can't necessarily be said for the areas just outside of the city of Calgary where there might be less diversity. Many people might not have immigrated here but, rather, were born there, or they live on farms and acreages, which is a very different experience.

We were talking about the industrial space in Calgary-Klein. Even business owners in Calgary-Foothills would have more shared values where there are lower density commercial plazas like pizza stores or car washes versus business owners who would be north of Calgary or west of Calgary that are more likely to own a ranch or a farm and have, you know, different types of sort of business needs.

11:40

As I mentioned earlier, it's important to note that there are new neighbourhoods like Glacier Ridge and Esker Park being built, and those residents who are going to be moving in here shortly will have similar expectations of a suburban lifestyle as the current residents on the edge of the city. Their experiences won't necessarily match nor be expected to be similar to those who live outside of the city boundaries. People who live outside of the city boundaries, outside of Calgary, around Big Hill Springs provincial park, which is beautiful, by the way – you should check it out – likely come with a different expectation of lifestyle, different asks of their elected representatives. Calgary-Foothills residents on the edge of that city are more likely to have common needs and expectations as people within the city of Calgary within ridings like Calgary-Edgemont or Calgary-Beddington more than, for example, Airdrie or Cochrane.

For all those reasons that I've discussed, I strongly recommend that the riding of Calgary-Foothills should remain within the city of Calgary.

Overall, I just want to thank you for taking the time to hear out the public and my submission and for the important work that you're doing to ensure a fair and democratic process. I think it's important to note, you know, that Canadians don't want politicized processes and/or gerrymandering, and the work that you're doing is critical to ensuring faith in our democracy, so I appreciate you doing this.

The Chair: Thank you. Thank you very much. My same comments that I make to MLAs: if you work in a constituency office, you really know the people, I can imagine. Thank you very much for your thoughtful and experiential presentation.

Just for clarification the numbers that we have are 66,088, so you're about 11 per cent above the average. Are you content with the boundaries as they are?

Mr. Bakaraju: It's a good question. I think that the boundaries as they are are already too large, to your point, in comparison to other ridings. That is something that we note when we are speaking to residents and getting out in the community. It's hard to sort of reach everybody.

It's also a little bit odd. The northwest area of the riding: there's a gravel pit. You know, it's industry, right? We don't really have many rural residents, like, very, very few. It's just kind of empty space, which sort of works out from a representation standpoint because then we have a small group of people – very small – who live out there. It's more like Calgary wildlife, the University of Calgary Spyhill campus, who we work with regularly. But the needs of the residents – it's primarily suburban residents in Kincora, Arbour Lake, et cetera. I feel that we're at the point where I think that we've kind of had a handle of the communities where we understand Kincora is a little bit different than Arbour Lake; Sage Hill being at the north edge is a little bit different than Sherwood. We notice these minor differences, but overall things are quite similar.

I'd say the only thing that I'm especially concerned about around the boundaries is Evanston, where, you know, I regularly, at least once every two weeks, will have a constituent confused as to whether Evanston is part of Calgary-North or not. There's, like, a river on the east end that kind of separates things as well. I know geographic boundaries kind of matter there.

Overall, I think we're content with the boundaries, but the thing is my expectation is it's going change because we are, like you said, quite large compared to other ridings nearby.

The Chair: One of the other tasks that we have as a commission is to name the electoral divisions. I can't think of a better name for you than Calgary-Foothills. Would you agree?

Mr. Bakaraju: Oh, man. Actually, funnily enough, my MLA and I have good-natured disagreements about this because I love the name Calgary-Foothills because I'm a big mountains guy and I love the idea that I represent an area called Calgary-Foothills, but I will admit there is some confusion when it comes to: are we part of the federal riding of Foothills? Is Foothills hospital in Calgary-Foothills?

The Chair: Those nasty federal cousins.

Mr. Evans: They've done it to us again, yeah.

The Chair: Exactly.

Mr. Bakaraju: So minus those two things, I love that name.

The Chair: Okay. I don't want to monopolize. The rest of the commission will have some questions, starting with Mr. Evans.

Mr. Evans: Thank you. My questions relate to the upper quadrant. I want to know about continued growth and development in areas that are being developed. It would be north of 144th Avenue northwest. It looks to me like there are some developments that are happening there and in that quadrant. Is that true?

Mr. Bakaraju: That's exactly right. Glacier Ridge and Esker Park, I believe, is the second one that I'm referring to. They're both just above that street.

Mr. Evans: Is there any development on 144th Avenue northwest and then Shaganappi Trail moving towards the east?

Mr. Bakaraju: I'm just trying to think. I think less so, but I'm going to have to try to recall. There are a lot of empty fields around there. I don't know if the developments go quite that far, but I do know as you go down 144th and just, really, the edge of the city and north Calgary at all, there's a continuation of – I don't know what the word is – sprawl. That's the word. There's a continuation of sprawl that we're seeing. People actually ask me sometimes: hey, pretty soon we're going to be part of Airdrie; like, when are we going to meet up? That connection is there.

I can't think of it just off the top of my mind, the specific neighbourhoods, but I'm confident that above 144th Avenue as you go east, because this is the northwest end of the city, there are continuous kind of boundaries. I helped out on the Calgary-North campaign during the last election, and I recall that even there they were talking about expected developments in the future. I just don't know the names.

Mr. Evans: I mean, you had a 20 per cent growth rate. Is that going to continue at that pace in your electoral district, do you think?

Mr. Bakaraju: Yeah. That's a good question. I mean, from what I hear from residents who have lived here far longer than I have, they have said that there has been continuous growth, continuous development but that in recent years it's kind of spurred much higher.

To go back to the original question of "Are we content with the boundaries?" we're content with the boundaries as they sort of stand today, but with the expected population change I do think that there will be – I mean, we could be looking at, you know, a 75,000-person riding, like, in a few years, right? It is something that, you know, I guess, depends on housing prices, demand, all these kinds of things, but there's no doubt that there is interprovincial migration and whatnot.

Mr. Evans: I'm looking at 112th Avenue northwest up to 144 Avenue northwest and then west of Sarcee Trail. It looks like there are a number of gravel pits, a correctional centre. Are those still operational, or are those moving into being developed?

Mr. Bakaraju: They are operational. In fact, we've actually just met with the business owners of the gravel pit, and they had said that they're actually hoping to expand. I don't know if they're going to succeed at that, but they're certainly operational, all of that area. As far as I know, there are not residential developments west of Sarcee.

Mr. Evans: Okay. That's what I wanted to know. Yeah. It looks like they're digging dirt.

Mr. Bakaraju: Yeah. Pretty much.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Bakaraju: It's actually a really big hill. That whole grey space is a really big hill that you almost can't even sort of see. There's a hill, and then there's a gravel pit in the middle of that white space.

The Chair: Susan.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. Thank you for your presentation. I'm looking at the map. You know, the riding is huge, but there's not a lot of people west of Sarcee, so that's a bit of a saving grace in planning for us with the growth. But assuming that Sarcee is a natural barrier right now, I guess what we would attempt to do is contemplate the population that would develop contiguously along that 144th Avenue to the north. Then once we figure out there are four full quarters up there, hopefully, we can plan for those numbers and get us into the next commission eight to 10 years away.

I was glad to hear your comments on the Evanston community. I would have a serious look at that, about taking that away. That road, Symons Valley, the way it's there, is a good cut-off with the river. You know, when we talk about like communities, the transportation corridor likely puts it in the other riding. That's what I would look at anyways, and I wouldn't have thought about that if you hadn't have been here and told me that, so thank you.

11:50

Mr. Bakaraju: Yeah, certainly. No problem. I think the main thing of that community is that, like, if I'm looking at the map here, there's sort of a – I just want to make sure you can hear me. The boundary on Beddington Trail kind of turns right. There's a river in between there. So you have a boundary of Beddington Trail going north, but you also have another boundary of the river, and then you have this sort of arbitrary provincial boundary, you know? I think either way you split it, whether you move the neighbourhood out of the riding or keep it in, there's going to be a bit of a challenge because of those geographical differences. But right now we kind of have the worst-case scenario because you have the geographic differences plus an arbitrary provincial boundary in the middle. I think it's better to keep it either in the riding or take it out fully. I love the residents of Evanston, so we have no problem having it there.

To your earlier point about just the general growth in the north of the city, I guess it kind of depends on when these developments are going to come to fruition. I guess that's the magic thing that we don't necessarily know, but I wonder if there is something to be said around the idea of creating a riding that would be, like, specifically focused on all those new developments just kind of housed into one on the northern edge. Some of these areas like Sherwood, once you get down near Nose Hill, are neighbourhoods that have been there for a long time whereas as you get further north, it's more and more new, more and more recent.

From a community perspective of residents, you now have shared values of "I just moved here in the last two years" versus "I moved here in the last 10 years." For an MLA constituency office in terms of representation, same deal, where you are speaking to one group of people who, again, have certain expectations or experiences over several years and others who are like: we just came here; we're new. You know, having all those people be in one area might be helpful as well both for that community and for the representatives.

Mrs. Samson: I think one of the points you made that I have heard before and that is so important is clear, concise, identifiable boundaries, and when our work is done and the report is out, then your work begins. Those very people you represent need to know that you still represent them or you don't. There will be changes. Unfortunately, as we make a change to your riding with Evanston, it ripple-effects down. You know, if it was as easy as putting in an empty riding and "Let's fill it," I wish. I'd be done, wouldn't I?

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you, and thank you. It's nice to get down to details. I must say that every time I turn around, that Sarcee Trail is going further and further north, and it's being used in this instance as a major thoroughfare up to this new Glacier development. But I would like to direct your attention south to the two neighbourhoods Citadel and Arbour Lake, which seem a little bit artificially attached to you, or maybe it's just the effect of the 201. Talk to me about why there is a community of interest.

Mr. Bakaraju: Why there is a community of interest? What do you mean by that?

Dr. Martin: Well, many of our presenters, and rightly so, are concerned that one keep communities of interest when we're doing things with boundaries. I take it that these neighbourhoods to the south side of the 201 are older. They're more connected to Hawkwood and places further south or maybe to Royal Oak than they are to you. So if we are to do some nip-and-tuck work, can you give me any advice about these districts?

Mr. Bakaraju: Sure. Yeah. I guess now that I'm looking at it visually, you're sort of implying: like, why don't we remove Arbour Lake and Citadel and just have the boundary go on Stoney Trail? Is that kind of what you're . . .

Dr. Martin: Yeah. Crudely put, that's what I'm inquiring after.

Mr. Bakaraju: Fair enough. I mean, certainly, like, I think that's reasonable. I don't know whether the new developments that are coming up in the north are going to equal the populations of Arbour Lake and Citadel. Like, Arbour Lake and Citadel are both quite big neighbourhoods, so that's one thing to consider. I'm slightly skewed on this because our constituency office happens to be literally at the bottom edge of Arbour Lake, just happens to be there, so Arbour Lake has been kind of a pillar in our community; Citadel as well. The highway in between definitely kind of creates that geographical boundary.

The connection of the issues between Arbour Lake, Citadel, once you go a little bit more north into Sherwood, Kincora: they're quite similar, I guess. I think that you can have certainly a good discussion as to whether you want to just remove those two and keep the riding going. But to the point made earlier, it's about the ripple effects, at the end of the day. I don't know what your thoughts are around Edgemont or Beddington and the other areas that are kind of connected there. I probably would say – like, that's up to the commission, at the end of the day. Of course, everything's up to the commission. But the concern that I'm more familiar with is the northern and western edge and making sure that that's not kind of diluted.

Dr. Martin: That's helpful.

I want to turn your attention now to the northern edge, which is all farms. I can't from here see how many sections, but it's a lot. You as a constituency manager are, in theory at least, responsible for their concerns as well. That's a lot of farmland. This came to my attention. You were talking about below Symons Valley Road, that it's just empty land. I'm going: "No, no. That's farmland." There's a difference.

Mr. Bakaraju: Yeah, for sure.

Dr. Martin: There's a lot of farmland as well as industrial in your riding. As I put it to the former speaker, who has to juggle industrial as well as residential as part of her due diligence, so, too, do you.

I would remind you that without these gravel pits, Calgary would not have highways, so they're going to stay, I suspect. You have to reach accommodations with them for all sorts of things: how many hours of the day and night you operate, and all kinds of good stuff like that.

But you also have all this farmland. Do you have regular contact with the farmers?

Mr. Bakaraju: That's a great question. As you're saying that, I'm realizing that we've been very well connected with the gravel pits, very well connected with the University of Calgary and that kind of area there.

In terms of the farmers, frankly, they haven't reached out to us, and we rarely get out there.

Dr. Martin: But they wouldn't, would they?

Mr. Bakaraju: Yeah, you're right. We rarely have a reason . . .

Dr. Martin: So it's on you to engage with them.

Mr. Bakaraju: For sure. You're absolutely right.

I would say that they're very sparsely spread out, for sure. When you look at the overall population of Calgary-Foothills, at a certain point it's a logistical challenge for us, where you have 66,000 people and, let's say, 800 of them are living in that farm area, right? Like, what are the exact numbers? That might even be a high number for it.

At the end of the day, you know, we don't always have – our democracy often runs on volunteers. We don't always have the resources to reach the 66,000, let alone the 800 whose needs are very vastly different from those within the city. So there's probably an argument to be made that the boundaries should actually be pushed further south to have better representation for those farmers, et cetera, who probably would have more in shared needs with Airdrie-Cochrane or the other ridings on the edge there.

Dr. Martin: Thank you very much.

Mr. Bakaraju: Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Thank you. I'll just be quick. We've got the city of Calgary building permits going up, and we've got quite a few housing units going in, over 400 in Glacier Ridge and in Sage Hill, 1,400 housing units. There are a lot there.

There are a couple of things I noted. I think that geographic river feature of Sage Hill is an important piece. And, I guess, just maybe more of a comment than a question. Part of our struggle is that Calgary-Foothills is already quite a bit over. So if we're looking at the Arbour Lake, Citadel area, and Stoney Trail is a natural boundary, without making any sort of – you know, we're still trying to bake this cake, so who knows? We're not really trying to find new amounts of population to off-set that. We're thinking of skating to where the puck is going to be in the next five to 10 years. We need to sort of balance all things out.

12:00

All that said, it's a giant puzzle. You know those plastic toys where you have, like, 15 squares and you have to slide them around to try to make a picture, if you know what I'm talking about? It was Julian's analogy the other day.

Dr. Martin: It's an old-world analogy.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. That's maybe Gen X and beyond. I'm sure there's an app.

Anyway, it's that sort of challenge we have, right? I have to say, just to echo earlier comments, that it's really helpful to have folks who are from those communities and who are particularly plugged in at the MLA level and the constit office. I'll just end my time by saying thank you. I appreciate it.

Mr. Bakaraju: Thank you. On that note, I realize something important that I should share is that the challenge of Calgary-Foothills is a lack of venues. There are not many community halls, not many places to hold events, not many places to hold town halls. You know, it's literally availability. There are only two places that we generally have been able to host events, and that is the Symons Valley church, which I mentioned is, like, a huge cultural hub, and the second one is the Arbour Lake community association. Sage Hill doesn't have a community association. Evanston doesn't have a community association. Everything else is that you're on a field and at the mercy of the weather, and when it's winter, that means there are no events, right?

There is confusion when we hold an event in the Dalhousie community association or wherever because we can't find availability in our actual riding, and people go: I have to go outside of the riding to talk about my issues? That's probably why I feel like, you know, for our work, Arbour Lake has been so important in being the place that everybody went to because, frankly, there

just aren't many other places. That's kind of a big challenge. That's why I think while it makes sense to kind of geographically cut off around Stoney Trail, it's not something that I really envisioned in practice because of the need for, really, that area to have some sort of public services in this riding.

Thank you very much for your comments and questions. Thank you for your time.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your presentation.

Just one last question: what's your MLA's name?

Mr. Bakaraju: Court Ellingson. He's coming later this afternoon.

The Chair: Oh. Good.

Mr. Bakaraju: He's subbing in, and I've got to sit in on a meeting for him.

The Chair: Thanks for coming.

I believe that takes care of every presenter this morning. I've blown past the seven-minute time requirement on a few occasions, but it's been most helpful. We'll adjourn the commission hearing till 1 o'clock to reconvene.

[The hearing adjourned at 12:03 p.m.]



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

Calgary

Wednesday, June 11, 2025
12:59 p.m.

Transcript No. 17

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission

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Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Calgary

Public Participants

Court Ellingson, MLA, Calgary-Foothills
David Howard
Craig Hutchenreuther
Brian Malkinson
Miriam Obst
Andrew Stewart
Dale Wascherol

12:59 p.m.

Wednesday, June 11, 2025

[Justice Miller in the chair]

The Chair: Well, good afternoon, everyone. Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the afternoon session for the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission public hearing in Calgary. This is our second day in Calgary.

I want to introduce our commission to you. First of all, my name is Justice Dallas Miller. I'm the chairman of the commission. To my left is Susan Samson from Sylvan Lake, a long-time municipal councillor and mayor of Sylvan Lake. She's a dedicated volunteer in her community with a focus on public health care.

Next to Mrs. Samson is John Evans, KC, a trial lawyer with a province-wide firm known as Stringam, and he spends most of his time conducting trials out of the Lethbridge office. John's legal ability has been recognized by being awarded King's Counsel, and John also volunteers on the Alberta Judicial Nominating Committee.

To my right is Dr. Julian Martin, a retired history professor from the University of Alberta with advanced degrees from Cambridge University. Dr. Martin volunteers on many committees, formerly in Edmonton and now in Sherwood Park where he resides, and he serves on two provincial boards, the Surface Rights Board and the Land Compensation Board.

At the far end of the table is Mr. Greg Clark, an entrepreneur and consultant. He focuses on information and knowledge management. Greg is a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II platinum jubilee medal. He serves as the chair of the Balancing Pool for Alberta, and he brings to this commission real-life experience as a member of the Legislative Assembly, for which we are very grateful.

As we start this afternoon's session please silence any cellphones and don't worry about the audio. The microphones pick up all the audio. The audio proceedings will be posted on the website in a day or two for the Electoral Boundaries Commission, and as well written transcripts through *Hansard* will be made available to the public. If you have any written documentation that you want the commission to see or retain, please provide that to Mr. Aaron Roth, who's just walking with a clipboard, and check in with him if you have that material.

Our task as an Electoral Boundaries Commission is to provide a report to the Alberta Legislature as to where the electoral boundaries for the next version of the electoral map should be. We are moving from 87 constituencies in Alberta to 89.

To give you a sense of the timeline of this commission, we were appointed by the Speaker of the Alberta Legislature in late March. That starts the clock ticking for our work. We met in April on a couple of occasions to decide process and calendar, and in late May we started touring Alberta and hearing submissions in public hearings just like this starting in Pincher Creek. This week we are in Calgary for a couple of days, and then we move south to Brooks and Medicine Hat, and we were also in Drumheller on Monday.

When these public hearings are completed, which will be the end of June, we will then take into consideration all the submissions that we've heard, and we will look at the population data and use mapping programs. Throughout the summer and September we will work on what's known as the interim report. That interim report must be filed with the Speaker of the Legislature no later than late October of this year. That report will be made public, and we will give an opportunity for Albertans to respond to that report in the months after October with a view that by the end of March of 2026 we will present to the Speaker of the Legislature our final report.

That final report, of course, will be made public as well, and the Legislative Assembly will deal with that report in terms of passing any ensuing legislation.

Of course, as you are all no doubt aware, each electoral division in Alberta elects one member of the Legislative Assembly, and as I said, we're moving from 87 to 89.

1:05

In order to give some context to the work that we have to do we look back at the previous Electoral Boundaries Commission report. That report was issued in 2017. That report was based on a population of just over 4 million people. The 2017 electoral boundaries report was based on a population of just over 4 million people. The formula that that commission used was to take the population of Alberta of 4,062,609 and divide it by 87 constituencies and it gave us a mean average of 46,697 per electoral division.

We don't operate under the system of one person, one vote, in Canada, but it is, rather, effective representation. The effective representation formula gives an average of minus 25 to plus 25 of the mean average. You can see that range on the screen. That is from the last Electoral Boundaries Commission.

Our task is to take the population that Alberta currently has, and it has increased significantly. The population of Alberta that we're using is 4,888,723. The mean average after considering 89 constituencies is 54,929, or in other words, almost 55,000. The range then for each electoral division from minus or plus 25 is 41,197 to almost 69,000 per electoral division.

The task of this commission is to examine where the growth is in the province and draw the proposed electoral boundaries appropriately, taking into consideration the term "effective representation" and the target populations that I've just cited. Effective representation is our goal, and how we reach that goal is through several principles of the legislation under which we must operate.

The first is relative sparsity and density of population throughout the province as well as common community interests, organizations, the day-by-day work that people do in communities. That's a factor that we must consider. More importantly in areas outside of the larger cities are geographic features of the ridings. Communication and transportation routes also have an impact.

Ultimately, our task is to create understandable and clear boundaries for Albertans that also apportion the real estate of Alberta to provide effective representation. The legislation also gives us a catch-all factor or instruction that we can use, and that includes any other appropriate factors. That's the type of information, the sociological data, the information we receive from members of the public, that we glean from these public hearings. With that background, that's our current map of electoral divisions of 87. We will draw a new map of 89 electoral divisions after our task is completed.

Now we want to hear from Albertans, and thank you so much to everyone that's here that signed up. Our first presenter is Mrs. Miriam Obst. Please come forward and have a seat at the chair to my left. Just identify yourself. Tell us what electoral division you are from and begin your presentation.

Mrs. Obst: My name is Miriam Obst, and I live in Calgary-Elbow. I am retired. My husband and I moved back to Alberta to be closer to our families. I have lived in several large and small cities in Canada, the U.S., and overseas, and this has given me a unique opportunity to see a variety of elections and experience how they're managed.

I grew up on a family farm north of Lethbridge and attended school in Picture Butte. It was a small community with distinct concerns. We had dry land and irrigated crops on our land. We had cattle, sheep, and other animals during my childhood. I saw how the farmers needed assistance from the provincial government during years of drought, and the good years seemed far between at times. Either the crops or the cattle did okay, but usually not at the same time. Water for irrigation was a growing concern, especially as more land became irrigated. We lost the local hospital in Picture Butte shortly after I moved from home, which impacted our town. Several times we had farming accidents which required quick attention, and having a hospital within 30 minutes was invaluable.

After I was married, we moved to Cold Lake and saw another part of the province. That region too had its own unique challenges. It was an area of small towns surrounded by farms and oil and gas and, of course, the air force base. It was a boom-and-bust economy there, depending on the price of oil, and the businesses of the area were dependent on the industries located there. CFB Cold Lake provided stable employment in the area, which helped ease the ebb and flow of the oil industry.

Tourism also brought people to the area, and local businesses were able to maintain their presence throughout the leaner times. The marina in Cold Lake has recently been transferred to the city by the province, which will allow it to directly control any future development in the area.

The hospital was built in 1987 and was a huge addition to the health care in the community. As the hospital on the base was not open to the public, families of military personnel were unable to access that facility. Having a new and larger public facility enabled the community to grow and service the communities around Cold Lake.

Since retiring to Calgary in 2021, I've seen how the issues in Calgary are different again. Calgary faces serious issues with homelessness, housing shortages, and transportation infrastructure. The Alberta government has actively encouraged people to relocate from other parts of the country as well as from overseas but has not facilitated the municipal governments to prepare for the new arrivals. The health care is stretched and not able to manage the number of people needing care. Our schools are overcrowded and underfunded, at the lowest per-student funding across the country. The population of Calgary has grown by 6 per cent over a 12-month period ending July 2024. Where are the schools, doctors, jobs, et cetera for these new residents? These are provincial responsibilities that are not being met in the larger cities with a significant number of Alberta's new residents locating here.

We had lived in the U.S. for 11 years. While there, I was aware of numerous issues with the gerrymandering of the electoral districts. The official *Oxford* definition of gerrymandering is to manipulate the boundaries of an electoral constituency so as to favour one party or class. This approach was very effective in ensuring the states continue to elect representatives of their party to the state or federal governments regardless of the actual percentage of their voters in the state. These other voices were not heard or even seen. There was no effective representation for those voters and no way for their voices to be heard. I was very disillusioned by this approach to democracy. Tactics such as cracking, which is splitting like-minded voters across multiple districts, and packing, which is concentrating them into a few, eroded representative democracy. The states using this approach discouraged engagement of the electorate and weakened democracy.

As you decide the new electoral boundaries for Alberta's next provincial election, I trust you will not develop the boundaries for the new ridings to dilute the voices of Albertans, but will ensure a

fair map that keeps towns and cities voices heard. Each area has its own challenges and needs, and those voices deserve to be heard and represented. These electoral boundaries are not meant to consolidate votes for a particular party and influence the outcome of our elections. Our representatives are expected to bring the concerns of their ridings to the government. Please ensure this approach is respected in the new riding boundaries.

Thank you so much for this opportunity.

The Chair: Thank you so much for your presentation and for a couple of new terms that I've learned. Did I understand you correctly? Cracking and . . .

Mrs. Obst: And packing.

The Chair: And packing. Okay. Thank you. Well, Mrs. Obst, our tradition is to engage with the presenters. I'm going to start with Mr. Evans on the far end if he has any questions.

Mr. Evans: Thank you. My one question is: would I be correct in presuming that the premise of why you're here today is to remind us not to engage in gerrymandering?

Mrs. Obst: Exactly.

Mr. Evans: You're not the only one who has mentioned that, but I did appreciate the definition because some people misuse the term.

What specific about your riding – are you concerned if we think about it from opposition to gerrymandering, or is it a broader context?

1:15

Mrs. Obst: I would say that it's broader in that, I suppose, over time there's been tension between urban and rural. My experience with the gerrymandering in the States is the ridings became so convoluted so as to dilute those, and I just really don't want that to happen here. I know there's been a lot of population growth in the larger centres. It's going to be interesting trying to figure out how to manage that growth and keep the representation valid across the province.

Mr. Evans: If I can direct you to the map, is your concern with urban and rural related, then, to your southwest – I guess the more south-southwest – portion of your boundary, the bottom part?

Mrs. Obst: I suppose somewhat in there, but as the population of Calgary expands beyond just the city limits – it goes into Airdrie, it goes into Cochrane, it goes into a lot of other smaller centres – that the similarities are not diluted in those areas around the city as well.

Mr. Evans: Looking at your boundaries, if they had to change, you know, slightly one way or another, could you identify a concern that you would have with respect to those boundary changes that you would then think would constitute gerrymandering? In other words, packing or – what was the other?

Mrs. Obst: Packing or cracking?

Mr. Evans: Cracking. I was going to say fracking, but I didn't want to start a fight.

Mrs. Obst: That's another rhyming word.

Not specifically, because I haven't been in Calgary-Elbow that long. But when I would go to some of the open houses and things like that in the riding, they would say: Oh; this is part of that one,

and across the street is there. So there is a little bit of people who have been here longer who might have a bit more concern that way.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you. I appreciate your answering all my questions.

The Chair: Susan.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you, and thank you for coming out today. I think that one of the things we're tasked with – we're tasked with a lot of things – that's important to me is clear and identifiable boundaries. You know, as boundaries change, as they will in a big city like Calgary because of the cascading effect of once you move one thing, then everything kind of happens, I think it's going to be really important not only for the commission but for people like you who are on the ground to be able to clearly say: this is my riding, and this is what it encompasses. I appreciate you coming out today because you will be one up on your neighbours. Thank you.

Mrs. Obst: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.
Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you, and thank you for your presentation. We've heard from other people who have been anxious about gerrymandering. Of course, when you have a commission with this kind of work, that sort of thing leaps to mind. But I'd like to reassure you that we take very seriously all the factors listed in the act, which is not just population, obviously, but it's communities of interest, the kind of industry, the kind of geography and transportation. We juggle a lot of balls. But I would also say that this riding, I mean politically, has elected people from different parties quite regularly within these kind of boundaries. So, I think your neighbours have a finely tuned sense of who can best represent them.

I look, for example, at my colleague, who was formerly the MLA for Calgary-Elbow. I think I've gained a much greater appreciation by talking to lots of MLAs in these hearings for the diligence with which they pursue connectivity and relations within their ridings. Your concerns remain your concerns, but I think the likelihood of that kind of thing happening is very, very low, except for those with the most jaundiced perspectives.

Thank you.

Mrs. Obst: Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Thank you. I appreciate you coming out. This process, we were talking about it earlier. It's a very active act of democracy, I guess, to have these sorts of commissions. Just to build on what my colleagues have said, one of the fundamental differences in the way we're doing this in Alberta and in Canada and the way the Americans do it is we have commissions like this that are neutral, appointed by the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly as opposed to the legislators or the politicians themselves sitting down with the maps and, you know, horse trading with each other and sort of creating that situation, and we have the jurisprudence in Canada leading back to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. There's a pretty clear line in Canada, anyway, from our Charter of Rights and Freedoms to the Supreme Court to the act to this activity for the public participating.

Just the nature of the conversations we've had and the questions, you know, I've heard from my colleagues: I guess the only thing I can guarantee is that most people won't be very happy

in a sense. Not to say we're going to try to make everyone unhappy, but it's very, very difficult. We're not sort of in the make-people-happy business, but it doesn't feel like there's a thumb on a scale necessarily. It's taking the feedback, looking at both the map, the arithmetic, considering the relevant factors of effective representation.

We haven't drawn the maps yet. That's what we're about to set out to do here in a few weeks, but I think your point is important. I guess maybe just take this as, I hope, some reassurance. I'm hopeful that we have a process here that's going to end up with a fair map at the end of the day, but at the same time your concerns, I think, in particular the comparison between Canada and the U.S., are helpful for us. I just want to say thanks for that.

Mrs. Obst: Thank you. I'm really pleased to see the difference in the process in how those boundaries are established because it was disgusting down there. Let me tell you, it was not good.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much for presenting. It's always helpful to have someone that has such a rich experience and background present to us, so thank you so much. You're excused to sit in the gallery, and if you can stay for the entire proceedings, that would be helpful or may be helpful because, if we have some time, we might continue our conversation.

Mrs. Obst: I had e-mailed this copy to you earlier, so do you not need the . . .

The Chair: Yeah. We don't need it now. It's in our system, and we will be reviewing it again. Thank you.

Mrs. Obst: Okay. Thank you so much.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: David Howard? No?
Brian Malkinson? Please come forward.

Mr. Malkinson: I think we're aiming for seven minutes, correct?

The Chair: Well, I'm not that strict.

Mr. Malkinson: Not a hard seven minutes.

The Chair: No. Some of them this morning turned into 27 minutes, but don't use that as a guide.

1:25

Mr. Malkinson: Well, my name is Brian Malkinson. I am the former MLA for Calgary-Currie and former Minister of Service Alberta at the end of Premier Notley's administration. My current riding is Calgary-Glenmore, where I actually live. Interestingly, talking about boundaries in the city, the whole reason why I ran in Calgary-Currie ages ago was that I looked at an out-of-date map, so when I actually got elected, I lived – well, I could throw a baseball to my riding from my house, but I had lived in three different ridings in the apartment I had downtown, because I was right at the corner. I was in Calgary-Buffalo, Mount Royal, and Calgary-Currie in the span of the 15 years that I lived there, so I am acutely aware of boundary changes when you have a dense city.

To start off my presentation, what I am going to do is get less into the weeds of my specific riding because it is within the city limits. Where I'm coming from is that I put myself in your shoes and thought about the decisions you are likely going to have to make when it comes to adding those ridings. You chatted about how as soon as you add ridings, there's quite the butterfly effect. I was

hoping to provide some general thoughts of, you know, areas where I think you might have to make some difficult decisions and provide some suggestions for guidelines you could use while making that decision. I hope you would find that helpful.

Besides being a former MLA, I'm also in the power generation industry, both standby and actual utility power generation, which means I do a lot of travelling in southern Alberta. My comments are generally going to be to the southern part of the province.

With that in mind for general comments, when I look at the numbers, to me it seems like you are going to need to add two new ridings to both Calgary and Edmonton, looking at the population from your original presentation. I don't envy you having to do that because that means you are going to need to take at least two ridings from not Calgary or Edmonton and add one each from the new ones, which will create a lot of a knock-on effect.

While doing that I think, number one, you should as much as possible respect city boundaries and, specifically for Calgary and Edmonton, really try to avoid having ridings that would be, you know, Calgary-Okotoks as a random example. As we move out of Calgary and Edmonton, keep larger cities whenever possible within their own ridings, so cities like Medicine Hat, Airdrie, Lethbridge, Red Deer within their own riding or within two ridings if at all possible.

Looking specifically at Calgary, where you're going to have quite the butterfly effect if you do indeed add two ridings, as I'm suspecting you might, it's important to respect some natural boundaries. In order of importance, I would suggest that the Elbow River within Calgary city limits to probably be the most important boundary because there's not a lot of access or transport over that river besides on bridges. I think that that should be a very hard boundary.

Second and almost equal to it would be Deerfoot Trail going north-south through the city. Again, even if you look at a map on Google maps, there's a very clear delineation between what side of Deerfoot you're on, and it tends to nicely divide up communities of mutual interest as well.

Going down from there, I'm sure you'll get comments from others on specific ridings and specific roads. That would be the same sort of idea – Crowchild Trail, McKnight, Macleod Trail – but those first two, being the Elbow River and Deerfoot, I think are the most important ones.

Of course, as you expand around Calgary, you know, I used my comment of Airdrie. Airdrie is a rapidly growing city. We do a lot of business there by my count. Google says it's at about 88,000 people right now, which could be two ridings all to itself, which I would suggest, the way it's growing, I think that would be something the committee could do. Alternatively, have Airdrie-East encompass all of Airdrie and the current Airdrie-Cochrane take whatever part of Airdrie wouldn't be able to fit in that riding.

As we move around Calgary, there's also Banff-Kananaskis. I think there would be a temptation to perhaps put Cochrane into Banff-Kananaskis, you know, the butterfly effect that comes from moving those ridings into Calgary. I would suggest that Banff-Kananaskis, being that it is a resort area, people in those communities and the Indigenous reserves in those communities are very much mountain- and tourism-based whereas Cochrane, I think, as a like community would be much closer to Airdrie or the areas immediately surrounding Calgary.

I would suggest for a riding like Banff-Kananaskis that you could consider going further north to include Jasper or south along the mountains, again, because you'd have like interests related to tourism, use in the mountains. Whether it's mining or other economic activities, they would be similar, and that would be my suggestion.

Moving out, sort of further afield from Calgary, looking at Medicine Hat, again that's another riding where you have most of it in one riding, and then it goes south to include a rural area. But there's this little piece on the other side of the river in the riding that is north of it, which, I apologize, its name is escaping me at the moment.

The Chair: Brooks-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Malkinson: Brooks-Medicine Hat. That might be an example where Medicine Hat – I get that it doesn't have enough population to be its own riding, but perhaps all of Medicine Hat should be in its own riding and then the surrounding rural area, whether it be north, south. I leave that to your good judgment. From the perspective of an MLA that means your local councillors in the smaller centres – Strathmore, Chestermere – are only dealing with one local MLA as opposed to in Medicine Hat, for example, where you have mostly an MLA and then plus one more. I think it would make sense for those communities to try and not split them up.

With *Hansard* here I was looking at Lethbridge going south. Similar sort of situation. I read in *Hansard* that somebody made a presentation about splitting Lethbridge into four, going out into the related communities. As an MLA – again, I haven't been an MLA in Lethbridge – that would seem to be a little untenable to serve those people. You would have the city council of Lethbridge dealing with a potential of four MLAs potentially from different parties, perhaps even from more than two parties. That just seems like a way to sort of get lost in the weeds or have MLAs working at different purposes for the community. That seems like a bad idea to me. I would suggest my original comment of keeping those medium-sized cities as close to being in one or two ridings as possible. I don't envy your task.

Final comment as far as a general one for within Calgary itself. As Mr. Clark can attest to – we were both MLAs at the same time – during the Marda Loop festivals his booth and our booth were on the same street, and we were still within our own ridings. We could look at each other across the street. I get that, you know, you're going to have to make boundary changes. That means you're moving neighbourhoods from one to the other. I would just ask that you try to keep the density of downtown Calgary-type areas as much as possible within their own ridings. So a riding like Calgary-Buffalo or Calgary-Mountain View, more or less is the same shape. Very deep south or northwest communities are somewhat homogeneous. Again, try and keep them in their own ridings as much as possible.

I know the butterfly effect of potentially adding two, so I do not envy your job at all in that regard. With that, those are my comments. I did spend some time thinking about this and, again, a former MLA, so I'm happy to take any questions, how you might deal with theoretical situations. Again, thank you very much for your time. This is an important part of democracy. I'm glad the public is participating in it, and I'm glad we're here.

The Chair: Well, thank you so much. I have to say that anybody that has gone back to *Hansard* and read a presentation already from our beginning, hats off to you and thank you for doing it. You understand, if you've read through Lethbridge's presentations, that it was at the end of the evening, almost like – not a hand grenade but it was a different presentation and interesting. There were arguments on every side. I know that you are engaged if you've done that. So thank you so much. As I say, we always appreciate MLAs or former MLAs who have knocked on doors, walked the sidewalks day in, day out and campaigned because you bring a fresh perspective that we need.

I want to allow the commission to engage. Mr. Clark, do you have any questions?

Mr. Clark: I don't, actually. No.

It's good to see you again, and thank you for being here. You know, as I said to the previous presenter, I think it's always really impressive – again, I'll just maybe reflect on the kind of general feedback we've received. As Justice Miller said, it's been a range of input, and I think a few things. People have acknowledged how challenging our job is. We hear that a lot. Undaunted, though, we'll take it on.

Yeah. I guess I don't think I have any specific questions. I mean, I just appreciate you sharing your perspective on it because I think you do bring a unique perspective having been in the Assembly and just having lived the implications of the boundaries. I've written down most of what you've said. We also, as you say, have *Hansard*, so we can reflect on that as well.

Thank you very much. I have no specific questions.

1:35

The Chair: Okay.

Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you, and thank you for your presentation. I was a bit startled, as you might expect, with the notion that we have two new electoral districts for Calgary on the one hand and two new electoral districts for Edmonton on the other, which certainly would make the math easier, but we are not allowed to do it. The act specifies that there shall be 89 EDs.

Mr. Malkinson: If I may clarify, Dr. Martin, what I was meaning by that is that in order to make the math work, two of those ridings would come from – basically, there would be two less, not Calgary or Edmonton ridings, that would fold into Calgary or Edmonton. Then the two ridings that are being added would also be added to Calgary or Edmonton. Putting myself in your shoes, that was my suspicion of what you might be considering. That's where I drew my thought process from.

Dr. Martin: Okay. I apologize for overthinking it, but let's pursue that scenario. That would require, would it not, boundaries to cross the city boundary?

Mr. Malkinson: I mean, I think you guys might have your numbers in front of you perhaps a little bit more specific than I do. I don't believe so, but it's a tough one because, of course, Calgary and Edmonton are both growing rapidly. So it would be that if there has to be a riding that is slightly outside, maybe that's what it needs to be to allow for growth.

What I just did, again: population of Calgary divided by 16 ridings. The math made sense. That's, of course, based on what the 2025 estimated population of Calgary is, and I did the same thing for Edmonton. I also get that with two less rest-of-Alberta ridings, as they're often called, that means you're going to get some very big rural ridings and that's going to be tough. I don't envy that. I mean, that's something that you guys are going to have to weigh in the committee.

I think it's unquestionable that at least Calgary and Edmonton are getting more ridings because it has to make the math work. I would suggest that it's two. That was my thought process, but like I said, that would mean you would have significantly larger rural areas. I would say that in a time of modern communication I think that can be addressed and worked around, but you know, I'm sure, as you tour the province

in areas like Medicine Hat, you'll have lots of comments to help with that and draw from.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Susan, questions?

Mrs. Samson: Thank you, and thank you for coming out. I appreciate your thoughts, wide ranging. I think, if you could just expand on this, we've got a situation, and it occurs more than once. It's something like Airdrie, where Airdrie is joined up with another mid-sized city, Cochrane.

Mr. Malkinson: Yeah. It's probably Airdrie-Cochrane you're talking about.

Mrs. Samson: Right. And it's not up, but they're joined together. Then, you know, the population isn't there for Cochrane to stand on its own. So they would have to have a hybrid riding. But what do you think about when you have two mid-sized cities sitting in the same riding with urban and rural in between? How does representation – do you want to just discuss that?

Mr. Malkinson: Yeah. I can. That was something that I alluded to in my initial comments of: what do you do about Cochrane if you're going to add two ridings to Calgary? Going with the theory of same interests that you chatted about at the beginning, I would suggest that the concerns of Cochrane would be more similar to that of Airdrie than of Banff or Canmore, being more resort towns, which would be my suggestion to not put it there. But you bring up an excellent point. If you are a farmer that's in the riding that's between those two, it's a hard one, and I think it's unfortunately something that is going to be unavoidable.

The only other way around that would be if you would put Cochrane in part of Calgary; say, west or northwest does something to grab Cochrane. It's a question of: what boundary do you want to respect? I think for Calgary and Edmonton, being large, you would generally want to have that be in there. Being that those are smaller centres that are geographically relatively close to each other, I would think that an MLA would have an okay time representing those. Of course, it'd be a good example to get some feedback from any current or former MLA in a similar riding.

Mrs. Samson: We haven't seen an MLA yet from that area.

Mr. Malkinson: Or even a former one that has a similar type of situation, right? I would think that it would be doable due to the general proximity from it. This is not a riding – I think of Central Peace-Notley and some of the northern ridings, which are geographically massive. Because of their relative closeness to Calgary, they are going to have similar interests that are going to be in the gravity of a city like Calgary. Or if you go into other areas like, for example, ones that would be around Lethbridge, Lethbridge would have a certain gravity around, as you draw out into the rural area, that would be that similar community, perhaps similar interests.

I would suggest that it's not too large of a deal, but it's something that would need to be balanced, and I'm sure there would be differing opinions from other members of the public. I would just suggest that you have to bring it down to those interests. It's like: what's the bigger gravity pull? Is it the mountains and resort-style towns in Banff-Kananaskis? Is it true farming of the areas more north of that area that would make sense to put that in? Or is it the bigger gravity of being Calgary adjacent? I think of, like, Leduc and

Edmonton. It would be Edmonton adjacent. It's where's the biggest pull of gravity is, so to speak, as far as when you have similar interests.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Mr. Evans, any questions?

Mr. Evans: No, no questions. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you. I want to engage a little bit more, but our list is filling up here.

Mr. Malkinson: Fair enough.

The Chair: You acknowledge that you've already looked through the Lethbridge transcripts. Maybe we can share a little bit of our thought process. Your suggestion is that basically we have to take two ridings out of the non-Calgary regions in order to make cities whole, with two new in each city.

Mr. Malkinson: Two have to come from the rest of Alberta.

The Chair: Somewhere, yes. But one of the attractions of the one presentation in Lethbridge, in terms of dividing up the city the way it was, was that it did remove one rural riding. It reduced it from six in the south to five, I believe, or something like that.

Mr. Malkinson: No. Five down to four.

The Chair: So that was certainly an option, but then you've got the countervailing problem of mixing a city that has never been part of a rural situation.

Anyway, those are the struggles we face. I thank you for your presentation. If you can stay for the rest and if there's time at the end, we can maybe continue the conversation.

Mr. Malkinson: Absolutely. Well, I'd give my 10-second final thought if you'd allow it in that regard.

The Chair: Sure.

Mr. Malkinson: Lethbridge is big enough that it should have as much of itself as its own riding as is humanly possible.

The Chair: Oh, yeah. No question.

Mr. Malkinson: In southern Alberta there is a lot of farmland and similar small communities that I think would make sense, as appropriate, to move the boundaries than to do with Lethbridge, would be my suggestion as a counterpoint.

I will aim to stay around.

The Chair: Yeah. You know that area, obviously, so thanks for your input.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you.

1:45

The Chair: Okay. Mr. Howard. David Howard.

Mr. Howard: Thank you very much for having me.

The Chair: We normally allow seven minutes for presentations and three for discussion. We've failed with almost every presenter – yeah – so you may be the guinea pig; I'm not sure.

Mr. Howard: Let me get started here with a timer so that I am faithful to some time.

The Chair: Please identify yourself and tell us which electoral division you live in.

Mr. Howard: My name is David Howard. I'm a lifelong Calgarian. I live in Calgary-Elbow today, represented I believe by Samir Kayande, MLA. I'm a citizen and haven't engaged in, I guess, civic duty ever other than voting, so this is my first time being in front of a panel, but I feel compelled to maybe start to engage.

First of all, I'd like to thank all of you for your service. This is a very difficult task that you have. Obviously, that came up with the last presenter, but just a reminder of why we are all here. It's because we need to protect the trust in our democratic system, which across the world is under threat.

The message I would like to bring is, very succinctly, let's try to maintain – I'm going to borrow from President Lincoln: the government of the people by the people for the people, that works with us. To that end, I feel the mandate that you have should be to limit population discrepancies between ridings to the maximum extent possible. I remind the panel that this is a common grievance that the people of Alberta use against the people of other ridings in Canada, so we can live by example here.

The other thing, too, is to remind the panel, as we are reminded, that democracy isn't just exact numbers; it must also be effective, and effectiveness includes taking into account history, geography, Indigenous populations, et cetera. With that end, I am piling on, so to speak, from the last presenter and strongly urging that large population centres be kept intact as culturally distinct, that we try not to mix rural and urban population centres to any sort of maximal degree, and then, obviously, limit the differences between ridings.

Since I have absolutely zero experience in what you're doing and have none of the details, like your past presenter, I am feeling like I'm a little bit unprepared, but I did manage to do some analysis quickly using the modern power of AI. The robot told me – it is a bot, so it is subject to hallucinations – that, roughly, if you constrain the problem to 89 seats plus or minus 5 per cent population difference between constituencies, it is an outcome of two extra seats for the urban Calgary centre, two extra seats for Edmonton, consolidating seats in northern Alberta by one, consolidating seats in central Alberta by one, and keeping southern Alberta whole. Now, that's what an unbiased read from an AI agent would tell you. Obviously, your jobs are more difficult than that, but that would be my recommendation. That is one person and several hours of work; you've got a lot ahead of you.

In conclusion, I think that what I'm trying to do with my proposals is increase effective representation by keeping cultural communities together. There is also decreasing the risk of loss of voter trust in the electoral system. If electoral boundaries look funny, as we know from the United States and the level of gerrymandering that exists in the U.S., it erodes trust broadly in the population.

Then, thirdly, is to keep this panel above the spectre of, I guess you could say, partisan politics. The difficult decisions that must be made should be obviously bipartisan in the end and avoid that gerrymandering.

So that is my one citizen's opinion here, and I am five minutes and five seconds into the presentation, so have lived up to the seven-minute rule. Concluding remarks. Thank you.

The Chair: The amazing help of AI: it keeps our presentations shorter.

Mr. Howard: There you go.

The Chair: You know, sir, you don't know how many times I lie awake at night thinking: "Is this the last in-person Electoral Boundaries Commission? Are we all going to be replaced by AI in the future?" I'm serious.

Anyways, thank you so much for your presentation, and you don't sound like a rookie in this business; a very smooth and very on-time presentation, but I'm sure the commission has got some questions, and I'll start with Mr. Evans.

Mr. Howard: Your questions were too hard on the last guy.

The Chair: No. He handled them, and he might get some more if we have time.

Mr. Evans: Me specifically?

Mr. Howard: No. Just everyone. I thought the questions were very thoughtful.

Mr. Evans: Oh. Mine are softballs.

I want to ask you about your understanding or what you're trying to convey to us with respect to effective representation and how you delineate the difference between effective representation in an urban versus a rural setting and, specifically, why there's such trepidation on your part with respect to looking at a hybrid situation.

Mr. Howard: Yeah. One of the thoughts I had when preparing this is actually thinking of an ideal state of mind. Kind of, in my thinking, the ideal state of existence is that my riding federally is the same as my riding provincially, and it's the same as my ward in the city, so it's very easy; you can have very easy, linear demarcation of responsibilities. My problems are mine, but I know where to go to, and my neighbours' problems are all very similar to mine. In the mixing context, I just think you get such wildly different challenges in communities.

I spend a great deal of time in the community of Canmore, and I would say that their problems are wildly different in a lot of respects than Calgary-Elbow, say. I do not have a lot of experience in a, say, farming sense other than driving around the edges of Calgary. I do have some experience from a work perspective, having worked in the oil and gas industry in and around Calgary, Turner Valley, et cetera. The issues are different, and the issues around farming, oil and gas regulation, more industrial land use, versus the major issues that we have in a civic context could be a relationship between the city of Calgary and the province of Alberta, civic infrastructure, et cetera. I just think it's hard to get effective representation from an MLA that has to bridge such issue gaps.

1:55

Mr. Evans: I got the sense – and I want you to just clarify for me – that in addition to the municipal boundary idea, in terms of rural versus urban, you are also focusing on the idea of voter parity.

Mr. Howard: I recognize those are basically the two levers of contrast that this problem hinges on.

Mr. Evans: So how set are you on the idea of absolute voter parity?

Mr. Howard: To prioritize, I would – and I think the experience in the United States, which has a very high voter parity in their U.S. House of Representatives districts; I don't know exactly what the stat is, but they are almost even to the person. But they are really ineffective by the way that they are drawn out. So if you're asking me as a citizen: what would I prefer, pure voter parity or a geographic sense that honours, say, communities and history, I

would be compelled to say that I would take the geography over pure voter parity if only based on the experience in the United States, where they had voter parity above all and gerrymandered districts to no end.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.
Susan.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. And thank you for coming out. I think you had one statement, and I'm going to quote you.

Mr. Howard: Oh, thank you.

Mrs. Samson: "The loss of voter trust when ridings look funny." I got started on this, and I started looking at the ridings. When you hit the cities, man, they all look funny. You know, it's only when you're out in the rural, where you have the big spaces, that you can draw nice curvy lines. I think it's going to be a real challenge because clear boundaries are not possible when you have these high-density areas, and the numbers are the starting – it's not necessarily the priority measure, but it's the starting point of how we build the ridings. Wow, loss of voter trust because Calgary looks funny; so does Edmonton.

Mr. Howard: Yeah. I haven't taken a close look at it. If you are asking for my comment, I mean, the strangeness of our ridings pales in comparison to some of the most egregious examples you see out of the U.S. in terms of gerrymandered ridings. So I don't see our ridings as looking funny, because my context is ones that are inexplicable. I think the better way to put it, especially in civic settings where you could have large swaths of land that are industrial in context and don't have people in it – right? – I think it has to be, I guess, believable that the best intention of the panel or the commission was to uphold the trust in our democracy versus what you see in the U.S., which are these really funny districts in civic settings that are drawn almost exclusively on, say, socioeconomic or ethnocultural lines within large cities. That's just not explainable. It's not believable to rational people that may not be partisan.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. That was an excellent comeback. I'm going to change "funny" to "inexplicable" in my notes.
Thank you.

Mr. Howard: It has to be. To me that's the test. Yeah.

The Chair: Thank you.
Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you very much. I want to probe a little bit into some present examples of radically different housing forms. Calgary-Foothills: we had a representative here to talk about it. It was good. But as we talked further, we realized that we've got residences, a lot of them new and burgeoning. We have gravel pits. I love gravel pits – and there are a lot of them – because without the gravel pits Calgary doesn't build roads. It also has, in Calgary-Foothills, a huge footprint of agricultural land all plowed.

Now, the question I put to him, obviously, was: how do you juggle the putatively different interests of these different sectors? He confessed that he was in conversations with the gravel pit owners, which is great, but he hadn't really reached out to the farmers. I guess my real point is that there's a perfect situation of: you've got rural land use inside the city of Calgary and lots of it.

If you juggle that mentally, what would you say about that social fact?

Mr. Howard: Good observation. I would ask – I’m not here. I don’t have the data. The questions where I would ask for additional context would be: if you took a look at the large, you know, ridings, electoral districts in Edmonton and Calgary, put them together, how many of them would have farming? Is it just Calgary-Foothills, or is Calgary-Foothills almost the exception that proves the rule that it shouldn’t be done, right? So there are six of...

Dr. Martin: Maybe seven.

Mr. Howard: Six, maybe seven.

Mr. Ellingson: Between both cities.

Dr. Martin: No. Around Edmonton.

Mr. Howard: Okay. I mean, that’s good data. Then what is the context of, like, the population differences between those rural – say you are the landowner, that citizen farmer, and your issue is yours and distinctly different than the 55,000 other people in your district, and you’re one person. Are you effectively being represented there, or would you more effectively be represented in the district next door where there are 55,000 people that, you know, engage in a life that’s much more like mine.

It’s not to say that it’s – what we have today is not perfect. I’m striving for more perfection, I guess you could say, into the future.

Dr. Martin: I think that’s a good answer. I mean, obviously, we can’t solve this in any overly precise way, but I’m just – I want to stimulate your thinking about what constitutes a representative footprint of people for an electoral district. There are many such as Calgary-Foothills which are perhaps anomalous in the way people tend to think about urban and rural. That’s all.

Thank you.

Mr. Howard: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: I’ll just dig a little deeper on that because that’s something I think a lot about as well. It’s not so much that – I mean, I guess the farmer example is an interesting one in Calgary or Edmonton. There may be some agriculture on the edges of the city but not for long. That’s not the intended purpose of that land within the boundaries of the city, right? That’s eventually going to become houses and transit and shops and things. That’s perhaps one subtle difference.

The other question I guess I’d wonder about is: is part of the concern a balancing of interests? For example, in this rural example if we’ve got 10 farmers on an edge corner of the city which we then blended in with a different constituency or you’ve got, you know, sort of an imbalance – right? – where you’ve got one very small minority group and they’re being represented by an MLA who has got a bunch of other priorities from the vast number of their constituents, that group may feel unrepresented. I guess I’m just interested in your thoughts on that.

Mr. Howard: I would ask the 10 farmers on the outskirts of Calgary: where do they actually engage in their civic engagement? Like, when they have common cause to engage in civics, are they engaging in it with their rural neighbours? Are they attending the small-town meeting in the small town next to Calgary, or are they engaging in Calgary’s civic matters? Are they up in arms about

rezoning, or does rezoning not at all affect them? That’s how I think you get the balance, where those individuals would tend to engage in civics. Where are they going to? Are they going to Calgary, or are they going to the county office to raise their concerns about the roads nearby?

2:05

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Howard. Much appreciated. You’re excused, but please just return to the gallery. If you can stay, stay, and if you’ve got some time, I’m sure we can continue this conversation.

Mr. Howard: Perfect. Just a parting comment. Thank you very much. Like, the five of you are what make this a great, great democracy, so please carry out your duties. We thank you for everything.

The Chair: By the way, you are the first presenter that brought a bot along.

Mr. Court Ellingson. Please identify yourself. Tell us what riding you are from although we have a pretty good idea already.

Mr. Ellingson: Hi. My name is Court Ellingson, and it’s probably pretty easy to know that I represent Calgary-Foothills in the provincial Legislature. I also happen to live in Calgary-Foothills. Unlike the previous presenter, rather than bringing a bot into the presentation, I’m going to bring to the presentation a lot of on-the-ground talking to people in the constituency and door-knocking roughly 35,000 houses in the last few years.

First of all, I do want to recognize that I appreciate that the work that you are doing is challenging. I appreciated, Dr. Martin, the questions that you had about Calgary-Foothills, and I expect we’ll talk a little bit more now that I’m here.

Calgary-Foothills is also maybe an example of a riding of why we are doing this work, right? It is a riding where you can see intersections of different activities. It is also a riding that is growing in population very quickly. It’s not the most populous constituency in the province, but it’s up there, and the growth is high. Sorry. We’ll get back to the slide that shows the 2016 population and 2024 population. In part, that’s why you’re doing your work.

I wanted to talk about kind of the fabric of the communities. We can talk maybe a little bit later in Q and A of, like, where the growth is happening and what that looks like. I just wanted to talk a little bit about the fabric of the communities and the work of keeping communities together and acknowledge some of the challenges that are there in keeping cultural communities together, in keeping kind of urban and rural maybe where they may have similar concerns and issues and questions.

Also, if there are any questions around voter parity, I grew up in Central Peace-Notley. I grew up in Valleyview, Alberta. I was just there this past weekend. It was a fantastic weekend in Valleyview and Grande Prairie celebrating pride. It was amazing to be back home. So I also know that when it comes to voter parity, I represent a constituency that has twice as many people as Central Peace-Notley, but I also know that it takes five hours to travel from one end of Central Peace-Notley to the other. I wholly appreciate that you can’t just, you know, like, wave a magic wand and make a northern Alberta constituency the same population as Calgary-Foothills. It becomes very challenging because the physical distance between communities becomes almost impossible for an MLA to manage. I get that. I get that.

Talking a little bit about, like, “What are some of the things that people think about in Calgary-Foothills?” one of the big things that

they talk about in Calgary-Foothills is schools: access to schools, where their kids go to school, and just kind of the challenges that they face there. This is something that unites Calgary-Foothills even though there are some differences between communities.

When we look at the communities north of the Ring Road with respect to schools – Sherwood, Kincora, Nolan Hill, Sage Hill, and now Glacier Ridge, so we're talking about five, and I'll also carve off the piece of Evanston that we have – there is not one Calgary board of education school in any of these communities. The people who live there, the parents who live there: it's one of their biggest concerns. I think it helps them maybe, like, with that unified advocacy. They know that they currently have an MLA across the riding. That is something that they are unified on, that issue, and it's a very compelling way for them to come together and advocate and have conversations with their MLA.

It connects a little bit, too, even when we think about Citadel and Arbour Lake. What it reflects there is that because they do have a few schools in Citadel and Arbour Lake, what it means for them is that many, many of the children north of the Ring Road are coming to their schools, which means that their schools are crowded and overpopulated and facing those challenges, too. So they feel it maybe from a different angle, but they're feeling the same thing.

Now, what I also want to talk about is that I know that the same challenge for schools exists in Airdrie-Cochrane and in Airdrie-East, but they're a different school division. Again, the parents in my constituency are working with the Calgary board of education versus, like, just north of us it's the Rocky View school district. Again, it's kind of an electoral division that exists on another level that compels people to be advocating and working together for that issue. Schools matter deeply to my constituents. You'd struggle to find something else that matters as much.

Now, I also want to talk about communities of faith and cultural communities and about the concerns and conversations and representations with those conversations. I want to appreciate, too, that in the work that you're doing, these cultural communities span constituencies. It's not that all South Asian Muslims live in Calgary-Foothills. South Asian Muslims also live in other constituencies. But Calgary-Foothills is a little bit unique in and of itself in that it's an incredibly diverse constituency. Approximately 65 per cent of the population of the constituency is not White.

The Chair: Sorry. What was that percentage?

Mr. Ellingson: It's between 60 and 65 per cent. Like, 62, 63 per cent maybe is not White. It's also evenly divided or kind of evenly divided. You'll find, if I can remember the numbers off the top of my head, that 18 per cent of the population is Muslim, 20 per cent of the population is Chinese, 16 per cent is South Asian, 12 per cent is African, right? So it's diverse within its diversity, which also maybe makes it a little bit different than a place like Calgary-North West or a place like Calgary-North East, where they might be more kind of South Asian and less Chinese. That diversity within the diversity makes Calgary-Foothills a little bit unique and special compared to the others.

Now, what I'll also say is, like, the gathering places of where they come together – Calgary-Foothills has not a mosque but a place of prayer. It is a gathering place for mostly South Asian Muslims. They have a singular gathering place in Calgary-Foothills. You think about, too, what that gathering place means and how those people are coming together and what that means for their approach to and their understanding of the provincial electoral process.

African and Caribbean communities are also maybe, again, not specifically unique to Calgary-Foothills, but you will see that that is an element that you won't necessarily see in Calgary-Edgemont

or Calgary-Beddington; maybe a little bit in Calgary-North West. With respect to the African and Caribbean communities, the relationship between us and Calgary-North West we have the Royal Vista Business Park, which, if you're looking at the map, you would be like: why is the Royal Vista Business Park a part of Calgary-Foothills and not part of Calgary-North West? Well, you might also notice in the Royal Vista Business Park a lot of halal stores, African stores, South Asian grocery stores, and they're serving mostly people who live in Calgary-Foothills because that's where those communities live. They don't live in Tuscany, right? Maybe that was something that you were thinking about eight years ago, about why you put Royal Vista with it because that's where the people who live in Calgary-Foothills go and gather and where they shop, which is kind of interesting.

2:15

I'll also say that when we're looking at not just urban-rural divide, I think you'll look at and see that the cultural diversity of Calgary-Foothills is maybe different than Airdrie-Cochrane. That's what is kind of like a separation between the two. I think that when we're thinking about these cultural communities, if you are in a constituency where you're a small cultural group within a larger cultural group within an electoral constituency, you may feel disenfranchised. You may start to feel like, "does your vote matter?" because you are different than everybody around you. That's maybe what makes Calgary-Foothills feel special, that that disenfranchisement maybe disappears a little bit in Calgary-Foothills because you see kind of like an equal representation between all of those different groups.

A little bit with the urban and suburban in those neighbourhoods, how they might see things differently. They may see the relationship of environmental concerns. Social justice causes may be viewed differently in urban areas than in rural areas. I think we can talk a little bit, because I'm probably over time, in the Q and A of, like: how am I serving the rural parts of Calgary-Foothills? Do they feel like they belong to Calgary-Foothills, or do they feel like they belong to Airdrie-Cochrane? That might be a valid question because they may have different perspectives on what they feel is important and how they want to be represented.

Now, I also want to talk about natural gathering spaces. In Calgary-Foothills, and this is kind of one of the important things, the newer communities do not have community centres. They don't have community halls. The only physical gathering place for the communities north of the Ring Road is Symons Valley United Church. You'll see in that church that from a faith-based perspective it brings together both Christians and Muslims. They both use it as a place of gathering and a place of prayer and a place of community.

The only community halls that we have are in Citadel and in Arbour Lake. That kind of ties together south of the Ring Road and north of the Ring Road in that if you live north of the Ring Road, you're probably going south of the Ring Road, again, for some gathering places because only Arbour Lake and Citadel have community halls.

I think the commission also needs to think about: what are those gathering points? What are those gathering places that bring people together? In those places they will also talk about politics, right? That might break down some cultural barriers that might exist because they come to that physical place and they're together in that physical place, and that's where they're going to talk about stuff that they care about.

I think I will leave it on that. You can see that we go to, like, skating parties in the dead of winter when it's really, really cold.

We'll go back to that map. Can we go back to the map that you're using for everybody? I'll just say thank you for your work. I know it's hard. I too have spent a lot of time thinking about the stuff that you're thinking about. You know that my riding is a little bit different than maybe some of the others, so let's put up that map and hit me with some questions.

The Chair: Mr. Ellingson, thank you very much. I may sound like a broken record to my colleagues, but we really appreciate when the MLAs come and present, because you've knocked on the doors, you've walked those sidewalks, you drive those streets time and time again.

I'm just curious. How long have you been the MLA?

Mr. Ellingson: I was elected as the MLA in 2023, so I guess I'm relatively new.

The Chair: You don't sound like a rookie.

Mr. Ellingson: I'm part of the new cohort, the cohort of 2023.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Evans, can we start on your end? Any questions of this presenter?

Mr. Evans: I just want to make sure that I understood you correct when you listed off the schools and you said that not a single one was part of the Calgary board of education. Or was it the opposite of that?

Mr. Ellingson: North of the Ring Road: no Calgary board of education schools. There are two Calgary Catholic schools. Calgary Catholic is special as a district because it also includes Rocky View. That's where public has two different school districts, but the Catholic does not. So north of the Ring Road we have two Catholic schools. One of those is in Evanston. The other is in Sherwood. But there are no CBE schools north of the Ring Road.

Mr. Evans: And that's significant why?

Mr. Ellingson: Because there are about 50,000 people living there, and their kids go to school anywhere from Forest Lawn to Mayland Heights.

Mr. Evans: There are no schools there. Is that what you're saying?

Mr. Ellingson: The parents there, the one thing that those parents really want is a public school that's closer for them. Their lives are complicated. Let's be honest. A lot of parents drive their kids to school, and their lives are complicated. Taking one kid to Mayland Heights, another kid to Huntington Hills, and then they drive downtown to get to work, or something like that, right? Like, it is an issue that unifies them in the challenges that it presents in their life.

You know, it was interesting. I even had a conversation with city councillors a couple of years ago about the green line in transit, and they were asking me why I care about a northern green line going up to the transit centre. My response is: because there's a brand new Calgary public high school at that terminus, and it makes people's lives easier to drive their kids to high school, get on the train, and go to work, right? I think that even the members of city council weren't necessarily thinking about the physical relationships that people have in their lives.

The Chair: Thank you.
Susan.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for coming out. It's been most interesting. Earlier in the day the CA spoke to us about the riding.

Mr. Ellingson: Yeah. Pranav.

Mrs. Samson: Yeah. I enjoyed his presentation, too, and learned a lot.

One thing I want to ask you specifically. Because of the population that we're faced with in your riding, we had focused in on Evanston, to talk about pulling it into the neighbouring riding, but we also got talking about Citadel and Arbour Lake. Now, after listening to you, I'm not so sure that we should even contemplate that. I'm not sure what the population numbers are when we start taking Evanston. Do you know what Evanston is?

Mr. Ellingson: I'm going to say that our piece of Evanston probably is 4,000 people, maybe. Maybe a little bit less. Like, it is a decent size. Our part of Evanston probably has as many people as Sherwood, so maybe 4,000 or 5,000 people.

When you were talking earlier about: do any of the urbans make sense? Calgary-Foothills has both a piece of Evanston – and when I'm out in the community, sometimes I joke that we have the piece of Evanston that the minister didn't want. I spend a lot of time with my neighbouring MLAs, so I actually see him at so many community events. But we also have Citadel. It's also divided, right? There's a piece of Citadel that is east of Nose Hill Drive. It's a very small piece of Citadel. It's called Morningside.

Mrs. Samson: Oh, I see it now. Yeah.

Mr. Ellingson: That also is – if I'm going to be honest, the people who live there sometimes are confused. And I know, if it's okay for me to share, that I have a little bit of an idea of the conversation that you had with my colleague.

Mrs. Samson: Yes.

Mr. Ellingson: When you look at the natural boundary of west Nosehill Creek, part of Sage Hill is east of that creek, and it does create some complication for the people in Morningside. It's part of Citadel. They know that they're represented by Calgary-Edgemont. It confuses them, because then they also feel like they don't belong to the Citadel Community Association, which they do. They don't belong to the Hamptons Community Association.

2:25

It's the same with Sage Meadows, like, at the bottom of that hill and beside the creek. It looks like they should be part of Evanston, but they're part of Sage Hill. From a community association perspective the communications that they get, what they get mailed to them, is from Sage Hill, not from Evanston, right? It's complicated.

Mrs. Samson: It really is. I did not get a clear direction from this conversation.

Mr. Ellingson: I apologize for that.

Mrs. Samson: I know, but you brought the points to our attention, which is important. Thank you.

The Chair: Dr. Martin, you probably have no questions.

Dr. Martin: That's true because your CA answered them.

Mr. Ellingson: And I really appreciate the questions that you asked him.

Mr. Clark: I guess I'll try to be brief and take that broad hint as well on timing.

Mr. Ellingson: Actually, before we go to Greg, can I answer some questions you didn't ask them? I'm going to think of, like, from a municipal perspective and whether or not that influences people's provincial perspectives. The rural areas in Calgary-Foothills were annexed into the city, right? Slowly, over time, they're becoming urban. They were annexed into the city. The planning guidelines and the taxes that apply to them are grandfathered and attached to what they had when they were part of Rocky View, so they do have some differing views of the world, that they remain rural even though technically they're within the boundary of the city of Calgary.

I'll be honest, because you asked a question of Pranav earlier. I wholly appreciate the complications for, let's say, the Member for Airdrie-Cochrane. They have urban areas, they have a slice of Airdrie, they have all of Cochrane, and then they have all of that rural in between and around. It's physically not easy to get to all of those places as an MLA. Again, I'll go back to: when there's no physical gathering place that makes sense for the people who reside there, that also makes it more complicated.

Sorry. I'm not making your work easier.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Ellingson: Back to Greg.

The Chair: Yes. Sorry, Greg. Your time's up.

Mr. Clark: That's entirely unsurprising.

This has been a great conversation, and I just appreciate the nuance and understanding in more detail, you know, of Calgary-Foothills, because there's just a lot of complexity.

You're too big. That's the challenge, right? Twenty per cent over.

Mr. Ellingson: Yeah, and the one north of me is even bigger.

Mr. Clark: That's right.

You know, as I said to another MLA, recognizing that *Hansard* is forever and you wouldn't necessarily want to tell any one of your current or potential future constituents that you have a preference one way or the other, so please don't take this as implying that, but if you were sitting up here and you needed to make a change and say some areas of this need to move somewhere else – and you don't have to answer that. It may not be a fair question for you, right? But I think, continuing on with the theme which I feel strongly about, we do want to try our best to keep like with like.

Mr. Ellingson: Yeah.

Mr. Clark: You know, just that ravine in Sage Hill: we were looking at it the other day, and not until you look closely at it do you go: oh, there are houses there. Right. Like, let's just be careful, if we do draw a line there, that we don't draw a line over top of something. Just kind of those nuanced sorts of things. If you have an opinion on that, which you're not required to, but if you do, I'd love to hear any thoughts you have.

Mr. Ellingson: What I'm going to say is – and I know that you don't make your decisions based on the emotional response of an MLA. Because I was elected in 2023, these boundaries were set in place for 2019. I know that the name Calgary-Foothills has changed many times. The physical boundaries of Calgary-Foothills have

changed many times since it was created in the 1970s. But I was elected into it in 2023 with the boundaries that it has today, and I'm going to be honest that we work within the boundary that we have, and because of that we become attached to it as it is. So when you ask us, "What would you take out and what would you leave?" like, any response is going to feel like a punch to the stomach because from the moment that I said that I was going to put up my hand to be an MLA, it's been these neighbourhoods, right? So it's tough for me to divide it in any way.

Mr. Clark: That's a totally fair answer.

Mr. Ellingson: I think that a lot of MLAs would respond that way to their constituency, that those are the neighbourhoods that they have come to know, so removing and adding anything is – if you're running again, it's going to feel awkward and you're going to feel a little bit dislocated, to be honest.

I'm going to go back to those physical gathering places. If the commission thinks that Arbour Lake is big – Arbour Lake has got 12,000 people – so if you took away Arbour Lake, maybe you're getting closer to Foothills being normalized. I know that neither Calgary-North West nor Calgary-Edgemont are facing population pressures. They're both kind of, like, around the target population that you're looking for. Calgary-North West is growing a little bit; Calgary-Edgemont is not really growing very much. But you also take away a physical gathering place for Foothills. Like, without fault, almost every single indoor event that we have is in Arbour Lake because it's the only physical gathering place that we have, so if Arbour Lake disappears from Calgary-Foothills, it becomes very challenging. Now anywhere we go to gather is outside of the communities of Calgary-Foothills. I'll just say that.

Mr. Clark: That's really helpful. Thank you.

The Chair: Yeah. That's a rock and hard place. Is that what you're saying?

Mr. Ellingson: I'm saying that it's a rock and hard place. We are growing quickly. It's not just the addition of Glacier Ridge; Sage Hill itself is still going to add another 4,000 or 5,000 people. The density in Sage Hill is markedly higher than the other communities.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Ellingson. Much appreciated. You're excused. Do please stay if you can because if we have time at the end, we'd maybe continue the conversation.

Mr. Ellingson: I really loved listening to the two people before me, so I'm going to try and stay for one or two more and see what they have to say.

The Chair: Great.

Craig Hutchenreuther, please come forward.

Mr. Hutchenreuther: Very good. You got the last name right the first time.

My name is Craig Hutchenreuther, and I live in Calgary-Edgemont. A bit about myself. I am a dual citizen. I grew up in the U.S. and moved to Canada when I was about 21, so the majority of my life has been as a Calgarian. I've lived in Calgary my whole time in Canada in various neighbourhoods. I work as a musician. I'm a violinist in the Calgary Philharmonic. My political identity over that time has been, you know, once I became a citizen, which I did some time ago because I feel that one ought to participate where one lives, that I vote for whomever I feel is going to do the

best job. The best job includes things like honesty in governance, effective government, things of that nature. Yeah. We can include motherhood and apple pie if you want.

2:35

I'll try not to eat too much of your time because I feel that all those who spoke before me spoke very eloquently and very much to the point. I do want to underscore what the first speaker was talking about with gerrymandering.

I grew up in Detroit, Michigan, and one of the things that I found that really fractured democracy was playing games with the electoral process, whether that be creating bizarre-looking electoral boundaries or things like not making polls accessible to certain neighbourhoods and certain ethnicities. Over time what this does is that it creates a lot of cynicism or, to use your word, Dr. Martin, a jaundiced view of things. I know that you've heard the message about no gerrymandering, no jiggery-pokery with boundaries or trying to have politicians choose their electors, so I won't weary you any further about that.

I will point out that when I think about electoral boundaries, I don't envy you people, with the decisions you need to make, because you're shooting at a moving target. Yesterday's maps are not the same as today's, and they won't be the same as today's tomorrow.

You know, I was looking at a neighbourhood like Calgary-North, which currently is one of the smaller in terms of electors. But every time I turn around – I like to ride my motorcycle up that way to get out of town – I see more and more buildings, more and more houses. Very soon it's going to be a full-sized district. I would be cautious about combining that with another riding unless you have good information on where it's headed and soon. I would say the same thing about Court's riding. I believe that not so long ago Court's riding, Calgary-Foothills, was smaller than Calgary-Edgemont, and now I think that it's actually larger in terms of number of electors. It's continuing to grow at quite a rate. Yeah. I don't envy you your choices in that department. That's going to be a tough one.

In the interest of not making you listen to the same things over and over again, I'm going to cut it short right here, because other people have spoken most eloquently before me.

The Chair: Well, thank you, and thank you for your comments and your courtesy, I guess, which is much appreciated because then we can have a more fulsome dialogue.

I'm going to start with Mr. Clark on the end.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Thank you. Thank you for being here. I'm interested in just digging into a little bit more about Calgary-Edgemont specifically. You're our first presenter from Calgary-Edgemont, and Mr. Ellingson noted it seems Calgary-Edgemont is growing at a slightly lesser rate. As it stands now, your numbers – and take this please as the compliment in which I intend it – are almost the most average in the province. Not quite but very close. You're right on, almost exactly on the number.

I'm just interested in sort of what you can tell us about the growth projections. Are you expecting growth, or is it maybe not even absolute growth but perhaps relative to the rest of the city? Do you have any insights on development pressures and potential future growth in Calgary-Edgemont?

Mr. Hutchenreuther: I look at the boundaries as being evidence that the preceding commission did its job well, and I hope for similar results from this commission.

I think that Calgary-Edgemont is going to be fairly stable. When I look around the community, there isn't that much room for new

development. There is a hill behind us, which I hope forever remains a green space, and it would be most impractical to build on anyhow, being a hill and all. I think, you know, there'll be some inevitable pluses and minuses when some buildings come down and others go up. I think it's going to remain fairly stable is the short answer.

Mr. Clark: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Just one. An impressionistic question. It's about the neighbourhoods south of Nose Hill and the neighbourhoods to its north and northeast. Are they compatible?

Mr. Hutchenreuther: I wouldn't want to pretend to have a learned answer to that. What defines compatible? I know that in Calgary-Edgemont, like Calgary-Foothills, we have quite a diverse population, represented by many ethnic groups and religions, and I would describe us as compatible. I would be wary of packing and cracking, like the first speaker brought up. I love those terms. I've seen what happens when they are put into use, and it's not pretty. I grew up with it, and I don't wish it on anyone.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

Mr. Hutchenreuther: There is one other thought I wanted to underscore regarding the urban and rural. Being urban, you know, people around me tend to focus on what this would do to the urban people and the representation. I also have friends that live in the rural districts, and I can only imagine how frustrating and annoying it would be for them to be lumped in with a city. Totally different things that they need to have represented. I just want to add that in to the arguments you've already heard.

The Chair: Susan.

Mrs. Samson: No questions, but thank you for the presentation. I appreciate your time.

The Chair: John.

Mr. Evans: No questions. It's unfortunate you didn't bring your violin.

Mrs. Samson: Yes.

Mr. Evans: You could have done your presentation in song.

Mr. Hutchenreuther: Well, I would instead invite you down to Jack Singer Concert Hall next fall when we start playing again. We have some good programs.

Mr. Evans: I'm going pencil that in. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you so much. I know it's easy to take potshots at our friends south of the border.

Mr. Hutchenreuther: Unfortunately, my fellow citizens south of the border are making it all too easy.

The Chair: I have to acknowledge the blessings of the differences between us as Canadians. We have not gone the route of one person, one vote that forces this, you know, ugly makeup of democracy.

Mr. Hutchenreuther: Do you really feel that it's one person, one vote that's forced that?

The Chair: Largely it has.

Mr. Hutchenreuther: I don't agree.

The Chair: Well, we've gone the effective representation route for which our courts have interpreted section 3 of the Charter, and we are fortunate as Canadians in that respect.

Mr. Hutchenreuther: I do feel fortunate – my Canadian side feels very fortunate. My U.S. side is in mourning.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you. Thank you very much again, Mr. Hutchenreuther.

Mr. Hutchenreuther: Yes.

The Chair: If you can stay, please do.

We're going to go right through. We're not going to have a break. Ms Andrea Llewellyn is present? No?

Okay. Dale – sorry; I just have “w” – Dale W., please come forward.

Mr. Wascherol: I think there's only one.

The Chair: Okay. You're the right Dale? Please have a seat. Identify yourself, tell us where you're from, and begin your presentation.

2:45

Mr. Wascherol: Good afternoon. Can you hear me all right?

The Chair: Yeah.

Mr. Wascherol: Good afternoon. My name is Dale Wascherol. I'm a retired professional engineer, and I live in the riding of Calgary-Elbow. I'd like to suggest boundary adjustments to the Calgary-Elbow electoral district that would better reflect the principles of effective representation, community identity, population balance, geographic consistency, and clarity. Sounds familiar.

Under the principle of contiguity and clarity I recommend removing Glamorgan from Calgary-Elbow. Glamorgan is not physically contiguous with the rest of the riding. I've heard some words this morning describe how the ridings are a little bit erratic. It lies west of 37th Street, and it's separated by major roads and disconnected from the communities that form the core of Calgary-Elbow. It really belongs, you know, more logically with adjacent western neighbourhoods in another district.

Secondly, I also propose removing Lower Mount Royal. This neighbourhood is highly urban and shares far more in common with the dense, downtown-oriented communities of Calgary-Buffalo in terms of housing, transit patterns, and lifestyle. Keeping it in Calgary-Elbow undermines community identity and effective representation. Its concerns are very different from the other more suburban and mid-density communities.

In addition, Lincoln Park, you know, while small, is more aligned with military, institutional, and postsecondary uses, and its population profile is notably different. It fits better with the adjacent district of Calgary-Currie. Removing it allows Calgary-Elbow to consolidate around communities with more similar characteristics and concerns.

While removal of these three areas slightly lowers the population of Calgary-Elbow, we can restore balance and respect the principle of relative population equality by making thoughtful additions with other contiguous and more aligned communities. The Lakeview community is a natural fit, and it is currently split across electoral districts. It sits directly south of the existing Calgary-Elbow

communities, and it is closely aligned in demographics and community concerns. Secondly, Richmond Knob Hill should also be included in Calgary-Elbow. It falls partly directly adjacent to the community of South Calgary, and if added it should be included in full as dividing it would weaken the voice of a coherent, historically rooted community.

These changes result in roughly the same population representation as currently in the district and allows for expected growth in and around 3,500 people resulting from announced municipal policies, including the West Elbow local area plan and blanket rezoning. Together these changes strengthen community cohesion, maintain geographic logic, and meet the required populations of electoral fairness. Most importantly, they align with the commission's responsibility to draw boundaries that respect how people actually live and engage with their communities.

Thank you for your time and your commitment for upholding democratic integrity in Alberta. Thank you.

I also took the time here of drawing a nice little map of, you know, what that would include.

The Chair: Oh, your proposal?

Mr. Wascherol: Yes.

The Chair: Do you have a couple to just give us here?

Mr. Wascherol: I do. I made two copies here.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Wascherol: I just included the puts and takes for additions and subtractions.

The Chair: Puts and takes. That's a finance term.

Dr. Martin: That's nice.

The Chair: We're going to replace nip and tuck with puts and takes.

Mr. Clark: Puts and takes. I like that.

The Chair: Mr. Wascherol, I'm going to have Mr. Clark start off because he will be most interested in engaging with you and your proposal.

Mr. Clark: I do have a tiny bit of experience with Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Wascherol: I studied extra hard knowing that one of the commission members used to be the MLA for the constituency.

Mr. Clark: That's right. I'm going to ask you very specific population – no, I'm not.

I very much appreciate your presentation. I guess the one question I would have is Lakeview. I found it strange. The boundaries changed in the time that I was in the Legislature from 2015 to 2019. That little North Glenmore Park notch south of Glenmore Trail getting added in always seemed a bit odd. I know technically that is North Glenmore Park and that's where the community hall is because it predates Glenmore Trail, so that's, I guess, the history. That was the piece I guess I was curious about. A lot of what your submission was is kind of natural geographic boundaries, and Glenmore Trail is a pretty big wall, right? To extend beyond that, maybe you can just talk a little bit about your thinking around adding Lakeview in. It doesn't flow necessarily naturally with the rest of the constituency.

Mr. Wascherol: Well, that's a really good question. I think the question is: where would you put Lakeview? It's north of the reservoir, and it would make no sense to go south of the reservoir. I think that by default it just about begs to be part of a constituency association that's north of the reservoir. The fact that it's split up today – I don't even want to use the word gerrymandering. I don't like the word; I don't think it applies here. To have it as part of a CA that's north of the reservoir, I think that's where it has to be. When I look at it, it seems to be relatively straightforward. The reservoir is just too big a boundary to divide a community and a constituency association, in my opinion.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

The Chair: Julian.

Dr. Martin: No. I've had my run on this particular set of issues for this district, so I'll pass.

The Chair: This is not to diminish your very precise proposal, but we had, I think, someone else this afternoon. I think yesterday we had some Calgary-Elbow. Yeah, we had the MLA actually present as well.

Mr. Wascherol: Okay.

The Chair: Although he didn't make those suggested changes because it's difficult for MLAs to make those suggestions.

Mr. Clark: Yes, as we've heard.

The Chair: Susan, any questions?

Mrs. Samson: Yes. Can you explain Richmond Knob Hill? Did I get that right?

The Chair: Maybe you could just grab the extra mic there and go to the map and point it out to Susan.

Mrs. Samson: Oh no, it must be this. I'm just not sure which one it was.

Mr. Wascherol: No, that's Glamorgan. Glamorgan is out.

Mrs. Samson: Oh right.

Mr. Wascherol: Richmond Knob Hill is this community that's just west of 20th Street and north of 33rd Avenue. It borders on Crowchild Trail, and it kind of goes a little bit further north, as far as the Children's hospital. This division here at 20th Street, we're saying: well, let's just extend this all the way to Crowchild Trail and include this in here, where my left hand is.

Mrs. Samson: Okay.

Dr. Martin: Is that Bankview?

Mr. Clark: No, Bankview is north.

The Chair: Okay. Any questions?

Mrs. Samson: No, I just wanted clarity. Thanks.

The Chair: John?

Mr. Evans: I'm trying to sort out Knob Hill.

Mrs. Samson: It's right there, but that doesn't help.

Mr. Evans: Okay, Richmond Knob Hill.

Mr. Wascherol: Again, it's the community immediately west of 20th Street, and it borders between 20th Street and Crowchild Trail, and I believe it goes as far north as the Children's hospital.

Mr. Evans: What's your thoughts on that area just below? I think it's called Linden Drive SW, even below Lakeview, across 66th Avenue SW. Would you include that? Lakeview is one of the ones you're saying you would like in. That would take it right to the right to the reservoir.

2:55

Mr. Wascherol: Right. Exactly. Right to the reservoir. Otherwise, it just ends up being divided again and being part of another constituency association. I think what we've heard here consistently amongst presenters is that what we strive to do is have the needs and concerns of residents kind of shared in the same CA. You know, it follows the thinking that residents that live in the same community share those same concerns as well.

Mr. Evans: I'd like to ask you about – you're wanting to keep the Mount Royal campus in the constituency, correct?

Mr. Wascherol: I think that's actually part of Lincoln Park.

Mr. Evans: That's being removed as well. Okay. So Glamorgan and the campus and Lincoln Park out.

Mr. Wascherol: Right.

Mr. Evans: I asked a previous presenter about Glamorgan; I think it was last night. Tell me about that community. I think the question I asked the presenter was the connection between that community and the rest. She assured me there was one; tell me why there isn't one.

Mr. Wascherol: I've never lived in Glamorgan. I've lived in Signal Hill, and now we live in South Calgary. I think just from a geographic perspective it's kind of further west, and if you're trying to consolidate and make a box around a community, it just seems to be further west. I'm not sure when we talk about the cities, you know, whether there's that much diversity there. I was born and raised on a farm. I was hoping I could ask some farmland questions because those needs are very different, but I can't actually come up with a reason or rationale why it's materially different than the rest.

Mr. Evans: Is your proposal here mostly based on geography and less, for example, focusing on community interests and that sort of...

Mr. Wascherol: That and maintaining kind of a reasonable size to the electoral district. It's just like Mr. Clark's question. You know, if you wanted to make a change, what change would you make and what would be the consequence? That kind of was my thinking. Well, if you are going to make a change and you want to rationalize things, how would you propose to do that? I was sitting down there, and I said, "Well, this works really well for Calgary-Elbow," but what it does is that it triggers other changes for other electoral districts, and that's the part that I say – to me, the only way to describe it: that's a headache for you, the commission. There's no other way to effectively describe it.

Mr. Evans: Thank you.

The Chair: Yeah. Okay. Any other questions? Mr. Wascherol is the last presenter this afternoon.

You mentioned something about farms. Did you want to present something on rural?

Mr. Wascherol: Well, I mean, other than I was born and raised on a farm, and I left my raising to attend postsecondary education, I'll just say this. The livelihood of farming today is not the same livelihood as when I was raised. It's not farming anymore; it's a business. You know, I'll just say the reason that interests in farming are very different than urban settings: to make a farm profitable or to continue to exist as a farmer or in the agricultural business, you have to make business decisions, and those business decisions are very, very different than living in an urban lifestyle. I was an engineer. I worked in the pipeline business my whole career. Completely, completely different types of concerns.

I think that it can still work. I'll just say, though, that the MLA that represents areas like that: it's a very, very different type of MLA, a very, very different type of job. And yes, I think it's way more work than it would be in an urban setting or a rural setting. I mean, I think that it can work. I can't see why it couldn't work. But those farms that are near the cities: if you look at what's growing on those, what the farmers are using for those lands, I'm not so sure that you need to be – how do you want to call it? You have everyday concerns, you know, of your MLA. Eventually those lands – somebody said it on the panel – will become part of the city as well.

Mr. Evans: If I might, can I just make a – would you agree with me that there is, and I think we should be cautious about this, a conflation of municipality responsibilities and Legislature responsibilities? Many of the agricultural concerns and urban concerns with respect to rezoning or land use, those are city and municipality concerns – right? – so the farmer is going to go to their county or their municipal district; likewise, somebody living in the city of Calgary is going to be talking to their alderman. You're not going to your MLA on those issues, yet they seem to be conflated in our thought process here. Do you agree with that?

Mr. Wascherol: I do. I always say that, you know, there's a thing called the Municipal Government Act, and that's what gives the municipalities the authority to deal with all those issues like land use and land-use changes and development, of course.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you. Right.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Wascherol. I am taking away the distinction of you being the last presenter, unfortunately. I'm excusing you, and someone else has just stuck their hand up.

Mr. Wascherol: No problem at all. I don't know if there's any grace of being the last presenter, anyway.

Mrs. Samson: There is not.

The Chair: Thank you. Please have a seat in the gallery.

Mr. Andrew Stewart.

Mr. Stewart: Thank you, Justice. For the benefit of the record, Stewart, first initial A. Sorry; force of habit. I'm a lawyer in my free time.

The Chair: Oh, okay. Sorry. No extra charge for you signing up late. You pay the same rate as everyone else, and we'll give you 10 minutes.

Mr. Stewart: Thank you. I had simply appeared here today to observe proceedings, but I do note that there were a number of questions. I can indicate that I reside . . .

The Chair: Sorry. I just want to be clear. Is Stewart your last name?

Mr. Stewart: Stewart is my last name. Andrew is my first name.

I reside in the CA of Calgary-Hays. In the interest of full disclosure, I was a candidate for the Alberta NDP in 2023, so I have some knowledge of Calgary-Hays. Mrs. Samson, I don't know if to you – but to me that looks like a rifle. I don't know if that shape is weird, but it is a riding nonetheless.

Mr. Clark: I'll never unsee that.

Mr. Stewart: It's how I can explain it to the people that I was door-knocking. It's a very approachable shape.

As we had discussed earlier from Mr. Malkinson, we do have the riding split by Deerfoot Trail. What I can indicate is that there is a marked difference between the communities that are to the east and the west of Deerfoot Trail. In the west of Deerfoot Trail, closer to the Bow River, you have houses built on artificial islands consisting of millions of dollars' worth of investment into a single house. As you get into the east of Deerfoot, you have varying degrees of socioeconomic status, you have very dense housing in apartment buildings, you have very affordable housing projects in the riding, so there is a tremendous disparity between the very high and the very low. You also have – I don't know how long this will take; probably the heat death of the universe – the green line. We have people that are very supportive of the green line who reside on the east of Deerfoot versus less of a desire to see that on the west of Deerfoot.

My understanding is that Calgary-Hays has existed since about 2004. Dr. Martin, you had indicated previously with one of the other speakers that the Calgary-Elbow riding has elected multiple MLAs of varying parties. That is not the case in Calgary-Hays. A Progressive Conservative or a United Conservative member has been there. Ric McIver is a very long-standing member of the Legislative Assembly, and he has been in that riding for all but one of the campaigns in this riding.

3:05

Today I was just trying to attempt to answer any questions that people may have. I don't know if other members of the public have spoken about the riding of Calgary-Hays. It is a very compact riding. From one end to the other it's about a 15-minute car ride. My understanding in looking at the maps is that it's grown about 13,000 people from 2014 to 2024. That is one of the more significant areas of growth in just having a quick look at the maps that were provided in the back of this room.

Again, the overall theme and timbre of the conversations we've had today is to keep like with like. We have a very delineated boundary. We have a very clear group of people who have similar socioeconomic interests. Aside from west of Deerfoot, we have a similar desire to see a green line, a similar desire to utilize public transport, and the desires of this group may run contrary to the desires and needs and interests of people that reside on the opposite side of Deerfoot. When you are faced with the awesome task that is to apportion these ridings, these are some of the things that may be

of assistance to you in considering what it is a community of like interest.

I do invite questions from the panel because I think that's actually probably the most helpful to see where . . .

The Chair: First of all, thanks for stepping up because we haven't heard anything on this, unless I'm forgetting. I'm going to . . .

Mr. Stewart: To that point, Mrs. Samson, the very clear boundaries are that 130th area to the north. North of that is pretty much empty space, open space. Then to the south we have Stoney Trail. That's a major thoroughfare which provides that southern boundary. Then, again, you have part of Deerfoot Trail which provides the westmost boundary as it bleeds into the area closest to the Bow River.

The Chair: Okay. Now I forget what my question was.

Mr. Stewart: I'm sorry, Justice.

The Chair: I'm going to pass the buck to Mr. Evans. Any questions of this presenter?

Mr. Evans: I was actually just looking at trying to sort out the portion you were talking about that the houses are built on islands. That would be . . .

Mr. Stewart: If you'll just allow me.

The Chair: Feel free to go up to the map if you want. Grab the mic so that we can pick up your audio.

Mr. Evans: I was looking at it and seeing how it tied into Calgary-Peigan.

Mr. Stewart: It is this area that is the artificial . . .

Mr. Evans: Oh, I see. The lake.

Mr. Stewart: It's this area here, right? This is an artificial island constructed for the benefit of the houses that are placed on that artificial island. As you might intuit, it is a gated community. It has a high level of affluence, which is an outlier if you were to compare it to some of the other areas in the same riding to the east of Deerfoot.

Mr. Evans: Can you tell me about, following along the Bow River, the communities or the neighbourhoods that go along the Bow River moving towards the Douglas natural area?

Mr. Stewart: That's right. If you go north along Deerfoot, this river area, those are similar in socioeconomic scale. Maybe they're not artificial islands, but they are similar in age, similar in housing style.

Mr. Evans: Is there more affluence going along the river?

Mr. Stewart: Yes.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Everything that side of . . .

Mr. Stewart: Deerfoot.

Again, as echoed by one of my presenter colleagues, Deerfoot is a delineating feature of Calgary depending on what side of the road you're on as well as the Bow River and the . . .

Mr. Evans: What about Promenade Way? What's that community like?

Mr. Stewart: Yes. The Promenade Way area is single detached housing, but it is far more – I apologize. I don't think it's actually single detached housing; it's duplexes. It is more dense. [interjection] Mixed use, yes, but it is not the same quality. It is not a single detached; it is different despite its seemingly close geography to the area on the other side of Deerfoot Trail.

Mr. Evans: You'd be familiar with the reference case of the Supreme Court of Canada that we're dealing with? Okay. Can you identify in . . .

Mr. Stewart: Just so I have it, just briefly: the name of the case that we're discussing?

Mr. Evans: The Saskatchewan reference.

Mr. Stewart: Right. Okay.

The Chair: Well, Carter.

Mr. Evans: Yeah. I just want to know if you can identify for me, from your experience and your knowledge, any communities of interest that are dissected by the boundary.

Mr. Stewart: I would suggest that there is a bifurcation here, this area. This boundary bifurcates this area with that.

Mr. Evans: What would be the commonality there, the common interests that you would identify?

Mr. Stewart: The common interests, commonality would be high socioeconomic status. They're closer to the river. They are going to be less proponents of things like the green line, mass transit, compared to the communities that have a direct neighbourhood relation to the proposed stops along the green line.

Mr. Evans: I'm monopolizing time here, but I think we have time. Tell me in a thumbnail, you know, the arguments for and the arguments against the green line.

Mr. Stewart: I have to defend the green line? Well, okay.

Mr. Evans: No. As objectively as possible, for and against, just to inform me.

Mr. Stewart: My learned friend, Mr. Evans, the idea behind increasing the mass transit infrastructure is to reduce the overall level of congestion on major urban thoroughfares like Deerfoot, like Stoney. It provides a way for people that may not have a vehicle to get to and from work, the hospital to the south, the university to the northwest that may otherwise be very difficult for them. The idea of the green line, from what I understand, is that it is a massive transit corridor from Calgary all the way down to the Seton South Health Campus. Again, my understanding of the riding of Calgary-Hays is that there is a somewhat large health care constituency there because of the hospital being so close.

Mr. Evans: Right. So what are the negatives of the green line? People who are opposed to it say: we're opposed because A, B, C, D.

Mr. Stewart: Again, I don't wish to speak ill of the people that are opposed to the green line. My understanding is that there is always going to be a character argument that this is something that is not necessary, that we've had these existing modes of transport, that we've had these existing transit corridors that have functioned and are continuing to function. They see major upgrades and

expansions, and that seems to be doing well. Okay? That's my understanding.

Mr. Evans: Is that the same argument that they made against light rail transit way back when?

Mr. Stewart: Yes.

This is kind of the issue that we have. We have a major urban centre. We have a major urban centre that is growing all the time. We have a major urban centre that is very carcentric and has a mass transportation system which is lacking. You know, most traditional light rail is the X and the circle. We don't have that; we have kind of an X, maybe a Y. We don't have a mass light rail transit that gets to all corners of the city, and that butcher's bill is becoming due. The neglect of getting those initiatives done, put in the ground, has a consequence, and we are starting to see congestion, accidents, things like that that are as a result of a focus away from mass transit.

My lovely wife, who moved into the area – oh, I'm going to get in trouble for this – in 2013, 2014: they had promised a green line then. The idea was that, you know, she had moved into an apartment building that was going to be right on the green line. That was 10 or 11 years ago. These communities have been promised these mass transit upgrades that have never materialized. Again, there is a desire for this. We can see it in fits and starts in Calgary to have these things completed. It's just that there's always issues of intergovernmental jurisdiction.

3:15

Mr. Evans: Appreciate that. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Susan, do you have any questions?

Mrs. Samson: Yes. Thank you for your presentation. You are the first to talk about or to identify a gated community inside an electoral district. I know there are such things. Talk about like communities. Like, why don't we just move them?

Mr. Evans: They're on an island, after all.

Mr. Stewart: Well, they are on an island in some people's eyes.

Mrs. Samson: Like, they're locking everybody out.

Mr. Stewart: Mrs. Samson, thank you for that question. I think, in all fairness to this community, to any gated communities, there's a desire for security. There's a desire for exclusivity. There's a desire for a like group to maintain like, especially on something like that. They probably all know their neighbours.

This is one of the things that I wish to encourage, that other speakers wish to encourage with respect to keeping like communities together. We have potentially a system where, because of the constraints placed on you and the awesome responsibility that you have, some ridings may become rural-urban hybrids. Again, as best as one can do, the desire from the majority of speakers is to avoid things like that because of things like the sense of community, police response, fire response, where their children are going to school, what the major communal gathering areas are. When you start incorporating large areas of rural space into a former urban riding, that sense of community gets lost.

In this situation this is a very extreme example. What are we to do with it? We have to put them with – they cannot be their own constituency. That's not possible. But we have to put them with as similar as because their desires are similar to their surrounding

neighbours. They are not simply an island unto which nothing around them is the same. That's not true. They have a similar level of desire. They have a somewhat similar level of affluence. They have a similar desire to utilize services in a certain fashion, to utilize civic services in a fashion that is going to be different from other socioeconomic areas: the utilization of transportation, the utilization of hospitals, schooling, right? All of these things help build a sense of character into a community. Again, that is why we are trying to keep these communities together.

In this riding we have somewhat of an anomaly because of this disparity between literally this demarcating point of the Macleod Trail.

Mrs. Samson: Deerfoot.

Mr. Stewart: What did I say? I said Deerfoot, yes?

Mrs. Samson: Macleod.

Mr. Stewart: I apologize. Deerfoot Trail.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you again.
Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: No, thank you. This is very helpful. The complexities of living along the Bow are much higher than I would have thought although, you know, people will pay extra money to see water.

Mr. Stewart: No, and that is one of the . . .

Dr. Martin: It's a deep truth, so I could see why people pile up on the banks here.

Mr. Stewart: The other thing, again, as you bring to the attention of this panel: you have things like flood mitigation strategies. We know that being close to the Bow River potentially puts you at risk. We have seen flooding, so obviously the concerns about those sorts of things are going to be markedly different than the people who are east of Deerfoot Trail, where that sort of thing is a sheer impossibility.

Dr. Martin: Right. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Thank you. The Deerfoot is just such an obvious, you know, natural barrier. You're exactly right. I mean, it's great that we have someone here from Calgary-Hays. It's one thing to look at it on a map, but it's another to understand the literal lay of the land, right?

Mr. Stewart: Mr. Clark, it does, on first blush, look like a very contiguous, fair riding. The population is a little bit high, but you look at it and you're like: this is pretty square considering we've got all these geographic features. But as you develop an understanding of the communities, you have members of the city come forward and give their experiences, there are differences. There are discrepancies that need to be sussed out as you go about redistricting.

Mr. Clark: So what I'm hearing, then, is that in your opinion, then, notwithstanding that on the east and west side you've got something called McKenzie Towne and McKenzie Lake, those are quite different things.

Mr. Stewart: Do not be fooled.

Mr. Clark: Sorry. I guess I'll just ask: 130th Avenue, then, is also a substantial barrier. I'm just curious as we go further north and then west again all the way – is it Diamond Cove, Douglasdale?

Mr. Stewart: Yeah. Douglasdale is more contiguous with McKenzie Lake as it has proximity to the river; 130th, basically, is a major mall, commercial area. There's a strip mall that runs from Deerfoot Trail along 130th. It has a number of shops, a convenience store, grocery stores, things of that nature. Then north of that is relatively undeveloped, from my understanding.

Mr. Clark: Got it. Yeah. It looks very industrial. It's not going to be new houses. It's just taken up by . . .

Mr. Stewart: And the landfill and in the – yes. It has the Shephard landfill.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. I think that's a limiting factor on future residential development.

That's all I have. Thank you.

The Chair: I'm not clear, Mr. Stewart. Did you tell us where the green line was proposed?

Mr. Stewart: Yes. My understanding is that the green line – Justice, what version of the green line are we talking about?

The Chair: Oh, just give me two.

Mr. Stewart: My understanding, generally speaking, is that at some point the green line was proposed down 52nd Street, so that would be the second – sorry; if you'll allow me. Once upon a time I did live very close to 52nd, and there is a carved-out corridor sort of roughed in for this sort of expansion. Yes, there was this promise of stops along the way down 52nd to South Health Campus.

Now, with respect to the modern refactoring of the green line, I'm not exactly sure where that's going to come down or how far it's going to go. Again, these are other budgets and other fights.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you very much, and thanks for stepping into the gap and doing this. It's very, very helpful.

Mr. Stewart: I'm glad to shine a light on Calgary-Hays.

The Chair: Thank you.

Okay. I think that is all the presenters that were listed and that we could compel to come forward. Thank you very much.

We will adjourn the proceedings until this evening at 6:30. If you're not interested in watching television tonight, please return. We've got a fairly full evening, maybe three-quarters full, starting at 6:30. So we'll adjourn, but we will not leave, and we're happy to talk.

[The hearing adjourned at 3:23 p.m.]



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

Calgary

Wednesday, June 11, 2025
6:31 p.m.

Transcript No. 18

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission

Justice Dallas K. Miller, Chair

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Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Calgary

Public Participants

David Cloutier

Neelam Naz

Lorraine Robinson, President, Millican Ogden Community Association

Ian Walker

Mary-Anne Williams

6:31 p.m.

Wednesday, June 11, 2025

[Justice Miller in the chair]

The Chair: Well, good evening, ladies and gentlemen. We're going to start our evening public hearing. Welcome to Calgary's sixth public hearing, I guess, of our week. We spent a long day yesterday hearing from Calgarians and a full day this morning and this afternoon.

First of all, I want to introduce the commission to those who are in the gallery. My name is Justice Dallas Miller. I'm the chairman of the commission, and I also serve as a justice of the Court of King's Bench in southern Alberta.

To my left is Susan Samson, a long-time resident of Sylvan Lake, Alberta, an experienced municipal politician who also served a term as mayor of Sylvan Lake. Susan has volunteered throughout her time in Sylvan Lake and was recognized for that volunteer service by way of receiving citizen of the year award and the Queen Elizabeth II diamond jubilee medal.

To Susan's left is John Evans, KC, a lawyer with the province-wide firm known as Stringam. He works out of the Lethbridge office but does conduct trials throughout the province. John's legal ability was recognized by being awarded the KC, or King's Counsel, designation. John also volunteers as a member of the Alberta Judicial Nominating Committee.

To my right is Dr. Julian Martin. Dr. Martin is a retired history professor from the University of Alberta. He holds advanced degrees from Cambridge University. Dr. Martin has volunteered on many committees while living in Edmonton, and now as he lives in Sherwood Park, he volunteers as well. He serves on two provincial tribunals, the Surface Rights Board and the Land Compensation Board.

At the far end of the table is Mr. Greg Clark. Mr. Clark is from Calgary, an entrepreneur and consultant focusing on information and knowledge management. He too is a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II platinum jubilee medal. Greg brings many skills to this commission, and his experience as a one-term MLA in Calgary-Elbow is of great use to us as a commission. Greg also serves as the chairman of the Balancing Pool of Alberta and consults and advises organizations relative to proper governance.

We are your Electoral Boundaries Commission. We are a commission, an independent body, established by the Legislature of Alberta, and our task is to deal with the challenge of creating two new electoral divisions in Alberta and, if necessary, redraw some of the remaining 87. We're moving from 87 electoral divisions to 89 as a result of legislative changes.

It's of assistance to give members of the public some idea as to the timeline that we have as a commission. The commission was appointed by the Speaker of the Legislature in late March of this year. We met a couple of times in the month of April, started our public hearings in late May, and we are touring the province throughout the month of June. We will complete the first stage of public hearings in late June, and then we will deliberate. We will consider the information we received from public hearings, look at the population data, deal with the maps, and come up with an interim report in terms of the 89 proposed electoral divisions. That must be filed with the Speaker of the Legislature no later than late October.

Once that report is filed, it becomes a public document. The public can review it, respond to it. We will then have another round of public hearings and hear from the public specifically on what we initially recommended. Those public hearings will no doubt take place in possibly late November, December, and definitely January and February. We will then complete the final report, and we are

bound by the legislation to have it submitted by late March of 2026. So it's a one-year project, basically, for those of us on the commission.

As you are no doubt aware, Alberta will be divided into 89 electoral districts. One member represents each electoral district in the Legislature of Alberta. Voters, of course, in that constituency elect the MLA.

In order to give some perspective as to the numbers that we're dealing with and the approach that we will use, I thought it was helpful to review what happened at the last Electoral Boundaries Commission. That report was submitted to the Speaker in 2017. As you can see from the middle bar, the 2017 Electoral Boundaries Commission relied on a population of Alberta of just over 4 million people. We are faced with a much more expansive population. The population we will be using is 4.8 million, and I'll give you a few more specifics later. The formula used by the last commission was the population of 4,062,609 divided by the 87 members, resulted in a mean average of 46,697 for each electoral division. In Canada we don't have the strict principle of one person, one vote; rather, we have the term "effective representation" that provides a target for each electoral division. The target for 2017 was 35,023 up to 58,371. That was 2017.

Now, for our commission the population that we're using is 4,888,723. We've got a number of divisions of 89. That results in 54,929 as the mean average. Again, the target minus 25 is 41,197 up to plus 25, 68,661. That's the target we must be in for each electoral division.

In terms of population we are relying on the statistics and the direction of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act, that says we must rely on the most recent census. Unfortunately, the most recent federal census is 2021, but Statistics Canada regularly updates that information, and we have further validation and verification from the Alberta Treasury Board. The cut-off date for our population is July 2024. You'll see certain population numbers on the maps that we will show, and those numbers come from July 2024.

The task, therefore, of the Electoral Boundaries Commission is to hear from Albertans as to how best we can recommend to the Legislative Assembly boundaries that provide for effective representation. You'll hear that term probably throughout the session this evening. How we arrive at effective representation: we're guided by principles of, first of all, section 3 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, case law relating to section 3, and the legislation of the province. Factors we consider are relative sparsity and density of population throughout the province; common community interests and organizations; geographic features, typically more prominent in areas outside of Calgary and Edmonton, but geographic features even factor in in urban ridings; communication and transportation across Alberta. Those lines are considered.

Our ultimate goal is to come up with understandable and clear boundaries for the constituencies. There is a catch-all provision in the legislation that allows us to consider any other factors we as a commission deem necessary, and those factors, no doubt, will come about as a result of the information we garner through public hearings.

That's a background and a summary of our timeline, the type of work we're doing, what we'll rely upon. Now we want to hear from you as Albertans.

6:40

Our practice has been to – you may have received information when you signed up, when you registered to present. We limit it to seven minutes of presentation and three minutes for questions and discussion and dialogue. I'm looking at the schedule this evening;

I don't think I need to strictly enforce the seven minutes. We haven't enforced it strictly at any time or very few times this week.

I would call on the first presenter. I believe the first and second presenters are presenting together. David Cloutier and Neelam Naz, could you come forward, please? Please have a seat, identify yourselves, tell us what electoral division you are from, and proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Cloutier: Great. I'm David Cloutier, and I am from Calgary-Shaw.

Mrs. Naz: My name is Neelam Naz, and I'm also from Calgary-Shaw.

The Chair: Okay. Great. Please proceed.

Mr. Cloutier: Thank you so much. Thank you for your time, members of the commission, on this really important work. I was talking with one of you earlier, just remarking on how much travel there is involved with this, how long your days are, so I really appreciate your commitment to democracy in this work.

Again, my name is David Cloutier, and Neelam is going to be sharing some things with me today. Actually, part of the deal was that Neelam was a little nervous to share with the group, and I said, "well, why don't we do it together?" so we both have some thoughts we'll share throughout this. Neelam is an incredibly insightful and talented member of the community whom I thought would have some really interesting insights for this group, so I'm glad she's here.

I'll share some thoughts and then invite you to jump in.

Mrs. Naz: Great. Thank you, David.

Mr. Cloutier: I'm a bit of a policy nerd. You know, my day thing is that I'm a school administrator, and I'm really passionate about that work, but I'm one of the first people that will put my hand up when we're developing new policy and procedure. I studied some political science in university. I spent time researching electoral impacts of floor crossing, and I actually also had a chance to run in the 2023 provincial election. You know, this work of public service and public policy is very important to me on a theoretical, which became practical, level, too.

I've also been a lifelong Calgarian in specifically south Calgary. The furthest north I ever lived was Patterson – that felt very foreign from my roots in Woodlands – and I started my family in the growing community of Legacy. We've since moved into Bridlewood. I also work in south Calgary, so it's very much kind of my home.

What I really want to emphasize is that I think a really important part of the conversation in south Calgary is the significant growth that we're seeing. We're seeing this in several municipalities in Alberta, but there is significant population growth that has already happened since the last census. There is also significant population growth ahead. When we look at, you know, the new communities – I remember, when I moved into Legacy, it was only a third done; I think it's about two-thirds done at this point – there's a lot more housing, and then we're seeing other changes to that development plan as well. We're seeing in Legacy, for instance, on the southwest corner, it's called the Township development. It was originally slated to be all retail, and now there has been a significant change to add thousands of residential units in apartments as well.

I highlight that for a couple of reasons. I also highlight the West Macleod residual lands, which are including a residential component as well. Just a really important part, and I hope something the commission will consider, is that south Calgary is

growing really fast. You know, in that spirit of the other factors that might be considered and knowing that when the latest census data comes in those numbers are going to be growing significantly over the next several years, hopefully some of that work can be thoughtfully put together for that riding to allow for some of that growth in those areas.

You know, having talked to thousands of folks in the south, there's a great deal of diversity, but there's also a common experience of living in a municipality and some of the challenges that come with that rapid growth; certainly, not having enough schools and access to health care. There have been a lot of efforts on this front, but I do think it's important to recognize that there is kind of a common challenge that municipality voters face, especially in south Calgary and growing communities.

As well, I think, you know, when we look at the historical work in 2017, Calgary-Shaw was nearing that threshold. Knowing, again, just the change, I think there's some opportunity and there's also some challenge in your work of adding only two seats to a province that has had significantly more growth. We saw reflected in the numbers up here as well that the population representation sizes have increased significantly, a lot of that, again, happening in our municipalities.

One of the pieces that I think is important to highlight and was a challenge in the last electoral commission work was – I quote from the last report – that some of the urban ridings have been thrown substantially out of whack. That was in reference to the size of ridings and the disparity between some of the ridings where you had some with essentially a third of others. You know, some pretty extreme disparities: Calgary-South East having, I think, 92,000 about at this point and then Lesser Slave Lake hitting about 28,000, again based on numbers that are not currently up to date; there's some work on those. But we see this kind of disparity that I think is really important to highlight and look and think about.

That's really tough work, and I appreciate the complexity of the work for the commission because there are a lot of criteria and factors that you need to consider. But I certainly really want to emphasize, from my perspective, the importance of bringing those population numbers closer where possible and trying to eliminate those more extreme disparities. My hope is – certainly, we're seeing some new electoral divisions created or redistributed to allow that population to be well represented in south Calgary.

I think at this point I'll pass things over to Neelam.

Mrs. Naz: Okay. I am actually a realtor. I live in Somerset myself, so south is basically my main area where I work, and I have seen that population growth over the years. There is so much different demographics right now.

My important aspect and my take from this is that whatever way you distribute it, we have to make sure that it's represented properly and it doesn't hamper the existing riding. You know, those new population growths: they have a lot of different demographics. Some of them are even more out of town, out of province, so they are more neutral. That's very important to kind of not hamper the current Calgary-Shaw in a way that gives tilted on one side or the other to any candidate. It has to be very, very nicely done. I think that if it cannot be changed is the perfect one. If it comes to a change, then it has to be making sure that we don't get thrown in with some rural or something. Like, it has to make more sense. That's my take on it. Yeah.

Mr. Cloutier: We're happy to answer any questions.

The Chair: Okay. Great. Good.

Well, let's start at this end of the table. Mr. Evans, any questions or comments?

Mr. Evans: You're approaching it in pretty broad strokes in terms of your overall approach, and you haven't really dealt with any specifics as it relates to Calgary-Shaw. That's what I'm most interested in. When you're essentially espousing a concern, if I understand it, about urban and rural – you may be surprised by this, but it's not novel. Like, everyone has expressed the same concerns. What I want to know is: in this riding can you identify specific areas that you would consider problematic because they're not urban enough or the rest of it is not rural enough? Is there a homogeneous component here? I mean, what are your concerns?

Mr. Cloutier: That's a great question. Actually, one of the things I was considering – it's why I was kind of drafting what my response would be like here – is, you know: could I give you a sample map of what a future Calgary-Shaw might look like? I would say it's a very challenging task, and it's also a challenging task, I think, to think about, particularly as someone who ran, right? It's kind of like: who are you going to say goodbye to if you ever run again in the future down there?

6:50

Kind of parking that aside, I think what I would say and the reason I'm approaching this with, you know, some broader strokes is that one of the things that I hope the group will do is kind of that community analysis. Like, I spent as much time as I could to get the best data that I could. I know there are better open data sets out there, that would tell you community by community, to look at those numbers. But I think what's more important than thinking about specific communities I might change or boundaries I might draw in that area: having spent some time with other candidates in south Calgary, there is a lot of similarity to these new communities. I know that there's a lot of interprovincial migration into all of these communities, particularly into the new ones that are popping up. Again, I talked about the west, the Calgary residual lands, the growth in Legacy.

Mrs. Naz: Legacy, Walden, even Pine Creek, Belmont, you know, all those new ones, Silverado.

Mr. Evans: Those don't mean anything to me because I'm not from here, but maybe if you went to the map and showed where the developments are.

Mr. Cloutier: Yeah. A hundred per cent. Absolutely.

Mr. Evans: I'm interested in everything below Spruce Meadows Trail south, everything below south.

Mr. Cloutier: This is actually a really great map. Neelam might be able to speak to some of it better, but I will tell you, from spending some time down here, that when this was redrawn in 2017, like, this was all farmland, right? This was all farmland. Some of these lands in here are still, I would say, more rural-looking land, but they're part of this land development plan for south Calgary.

I don't know if we can zoom out a little bit more. Thank you very much. Again, down in here, down by the Bow River, these are all developed streets now, and as the developments are continuing, the more that are coming out are quite a lot higher density. From a population consideration it's just been a pretty massive expansion and growth in this area.

Again, I would say that there tends to be a lot of interprovincial migration here. There tends to be a lot of, you know, younger

families like mine. We chose Legacy because it was an affordable option for us to start out and buy our first house.

Mr. Evans: Where is Legacy there?

Mr. Cloutier: Legacy is down at the south here, 210th Avenue.

Mr. Evans: Okay.

Mr. Cloutier: Again, it's actually kind of nice the way this map is currently drawn. Like, it's actually the perfect boundary. I think we've used a natural kind of feature here to divide it. But all of these areas that perhaps, you know, look like rural or urban lands: that's all developed now. There are streets all throughout that section.

Mr. Evans: Let me just interrupt you for a moment. The population numbers we're working off: 68,648. That's a 25 per cent increase. But I think what you're telling me is that those numbers are probably low.

Mr. Cloutier: That is absolutely correct.

Mrs. Naz: That's exactly what – yes.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Above Stoney Trail south: if that part came out of this electoral district and it was just Stoney Trail south, do you think there would be more than 50,000 people in that with all the new development?

Mrs. Naz: Yes, I think so.

Mr. Evans: Thank you.

Mr. Cloutier: I could suggest one more. I don't have an immediate answer for this, but one very quick piece of research to go validate that would be that you could take the population of Shaughnessy and Somerset, which have not had new residential development, and generally remove that from the number of – again, knowing that the number here is probably bigger than that number presented. But, yeah, if you subtract it, you know, up in any of these.

If I could just give you a little bit more lay of the land. Like, Shaughnessy and Somerset have been here for quite a while. Development started in those, I believe, in the 1980s, so they're well established and don't have a lot of new construction and would not have any new apartment buildings.

Mr. Evans: It's saturated.

Mr. Cloutier: Exactly. Whereas everything south of here, even now along Stoney Trail just on the north side of Silverado, has had significant development. Yeah. The only other one that you might think about in your numbers as being saturated is that Chaparral has been saturated for quite a bit of time now, certainly since the last electoral redraw.

Mrs. Naz: It's also one of the oldest.

Mr. Evans: Right.

Mr. Cloutier: The only exception to that, just to make a quick distinction here, is that Chaparral Valley has had new development, and then Wolf Willow and such, and that's down by the Bow River. This is actually right in here – it's hard to see; again, not featured on here – a big bluff, essentially. Chaparral would be just one other in those three, you know, when you're looking at population numbers, that you could consider saturated.

Mrs. Naz: And especially this side – Silverado, Belmont, Pine Creek, and all this – it's still, like, a lot of development happening, a lot of people moving in. There's still a lot of growth happening there, too, which is still also undocumented, I would say.

Mr. Evans: Do they also call Stoney Trail Spruce Meadows?

Mr. Cloutier: I think they used to call it Spruce Meadows drive or something like that.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Now it's Stoney?

Mr. Cloutier: Yes. Correct. It was also 22X or Marquis of Lorne Trail, if you see references to that. When it became part of the Calgary Ring Road, when the southwest Calgary Ring Road was completed, it became Stoney Trail, so if you see references to 22X, Spruce Meadows Trail or drive, and Marquis of Lorne Trail, those would all be references to Stoney Trail.

Mr. Evans: Thank you so much.

The Chair: You answered about three questions right there. Susan, any questions?

Mrs. Samson: Yes. With the new communities coming on – I can probably guess – is there a preference between Chaparral, Walden, or Silverado where you're seeing the complete mix of different types of people, families moving in? Do you have any low-income or higher residential areas? Anything that would stand out that we wouldn't want to . . .

Mrs. Naz: It's more of, I would say, newer families, like first-time buyers and out-of-province migration. That's the kind of growth that has happened there because those were the areas that newcomers coming out of province could afford or the first-time homebuyers could afford. That's the thing, right? I think it's more people who have probably not been there for more than five years, I would say, after the last election. That's the kind of demographics that we are seeing there.

Mrs. Samson: Right.

Just one more. If the western part of Chaparral left, is that a logical dividing line, that main road going through there, without disrupting the communities, or is it even farther over? The line is called – what is that? – Sun Valley Boulevard southwest.

Mrs. Naz: I think it should stay.

Mrs. Samson: Like, that would be the dividing line if you wanted to separate Chaparral east and west?

Mr. Cloutier: I think Sun Valley Boulevard is actually in Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mrs. Samson: It is, but it connects. I don't know what it's called.

Mr. Cloutier: Yeah, so then it becomes – I'm not entirely sure – Chaparral Boulevard once it gets there. Yeah. That becomes Chaparral Boulevard. Would your suggestion be that you're saying west of it?

Mrs. Samson: Yeah, west of it. That would be the dividing line for the neighbourhood known as Chaparral.

Mr. Cloutier: Yeah. Actually, maybe I'll just walk up again just to clarify what's currently Chaparral. I'm not entirely sure. I think,

generally speaking, the electoral division boundaries in Calgary have been typically through a community, right?

Mrs. Samson: It can.

Mr. Cloutier: Like, it wouldn't typically have gone outside? Yeah, so Chaparral would include this section just slightly east of Chaparral Boulevard. But then this kind of blank space in here, that's the bluff, and that provides what this lower part is, which is Chaparral Valley.

Mrs. Samson: Okay. Good.

Mr. Cloutier: Chaparral all the way up, just a little bit past, and then Chaparral Valley is down the hill on the bluff. That bluff, just for the record as well, which might help with some of these other conversations, comes all the way through, if you look at it on Google Maps or something like that. Then on the lower part you have Chaparral Valley, you have Wolf Willow, and Wolf Willow kind of continues, and then you've got the Pine Creek waste-water treatment plant here. That's not changing, but generally speaking, that's a natural barrier there.

Mrs. Naz: And there is another one coming. I think it's called Logan Landing. It's still very much in primary. Yeah.

Mrs. Samson: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Dr. Martin?

7:00

Dr. Martin: Thank you very much. I love it when we get very granular.

Mr. Cloutier: I told you that I was being a policy nerd.

Dr. Martin: Will you characterize this area, south Chaparral, as a different housing stock than the area traditionally known as Chaparral?

Mr. Cloutier: Chaparral Valley?

Dr. Martin: Yeah. I mean, I'm interested in the different types of houses, wealthy houses, modest houses.

Mrs. Naz: Chaparral has a mix of all. Chaparral: from high end to, like, starter homes, everything is there. But I would say not actually starter; I would say more like, you know, mid-tier. Yeah.

Mr. Cloutier: If I could maybe just add one thing to that, I would say that there are a lot more wealthier houses in Chaparral than other communities. I would say that you would not find the same type of large estate houses. Obviously, Chaparral has a lake as well.

Mrs. Naz: Yes. Lake access.

Mr. Cloutier: That would, you know, characterize a fairly different kind of feel with some of the other communities like Walden, Legacy, Silverado, et cetera.

Mrs. Naz: The mid-tier homes in Chaparral are the ones which don't have the lake access. It's a clear divide between the two within Chaparral.

Dr. Martin: Okay. Very good. Thank you.

Mr. Clark: This is really helpful. Now nearing the end of our time in Calgary, we've started to sort of poke away at: what changes

could we make? As you can imagine, there's, like, a ripple effect, right? In some of what you've talked about, you've answered a question or sort of a suspicion I had, I guess. Somerset and Shaughnessy feel like somewhere else just in terms of the numbers, and I guess the question, then, about Chaparral and then 194th Avenue – yes. So Walden is the next one down. Is there much happening in Walden, or is that pretty much built out?

Mrs. Naz: Walden is pretty much, but Walden is still seeing some development happening.

Mr. Clark: Right. And then the . . .

Mrs. Naz: So it's still . . .

Mr. Clark: Sorry. Go ahead. Finish your thought.

Mrs. Naz: Yeah. Walden, like, I would say is still 25 per cent on the development side, and 75 per cent is mostly – yeah.

Mr. Clark: Okay. So what I'm hearing is that, in fact, even if we look at it on Google Maps, we can see the scraped earth, so there clearly seems to be a lot of development there.

Maybe I'll ask a different question. Just south of you we've got Heritage Pointe. Is there much interaction there between those communities?

Mrs. Naz: Heritage Pointe is a different story altogether. It's the elite area, right? It's a totally different area. I think that that is one thing which could be, you know, differentiated.

Mr. Clark: You feel like there's a fundamental – okay. That's great.

Mrs. Naz: Yeah. It's a very fundamental difference there.

Mr. Cloutier: It's a great question, Greg. It's certainly much, much larger lots, and certainly from a pricing perspective, like, you would have very different socioeconomic statuses of people living in, let's say, Calgary-Shaw proper than you would in . . .

Mrs. Naz: It's more an acreage kind of area if I can put it more precisely.

Mr. Clark: Okay. Good. That answered my questions. Thank you so much for being here.

Mr. Evans: Heritage Pointe is on the golf course, right?

Mrs. Naz: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. For a non-Calgarian is Heritage Pointe south of the city boundary?

Mr. Cloutier: Correct.

The Chair: Yeah. Okay. So 226 is the city boundary?

Mrs. Naz: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. Yeah. Now I have a visual. Drive in that way now . . .

Mr. Cloutier: Hundred per cent. Yeah.

The Chair: Yeah. Okay.

Any other questions or comments? We've made use of our time. We had two presenters.

Mrs. Naz: I also just wanted to thank you guys for giving me this opportunity, and I think it was pretty good. I am happy that I could make, you know, a difference and voice my opinion.

The Chair: Thank you. There's nothing like people that live in the riding and especially someone in your position, who . . .

Mrs. Naz: Yeah. I'm a realtor. I'm out on the roads all day, you know?

The Chair: By the way, any good deals in that southeast corner?

Mrs. Naz: Oh, yes. Lots of them. Just reach out to me. I can leave my card for you guys.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much. Much appreciated.

Mrs. Naz: Thank you.

Mr. Cloutier: Thank you very much, everyone, for listening tonight.

The Chair: If you can, we welcome you to stay to hear the rest of the presentations. What's happened in the past is that we've had some dialogue after because we've had some time.

Mrs. Naz: Yes. For sure. Thank you.

Mr. Cloutier: Thank you so much.

The Chair: Thank you.

The next presenter, Mary-Anne Williams.

Mary-Anne Williams: I'm going to approach this from a very different perspective, more of a philosophical perspective. I'm a psychologist. I live in Calgary-Klein, and I work in a public health care agency. I want to approach the topic of electoral boundaries from the perspective of maintaining a strong democracy.

As I said, I live in Calgary-Klein. This is an expansive and diverse district with a large low-income and newcomer population. These populations have unique needs. Many do not drive and are therefore highly dependent on public transit and public services. For both groups a public transit system with multiple access points is essential for getting to and from work, for getting kids to school, and for attending medical and other appointments.

For newcomers add to that having ready access to English language instruction, most of which takes place in Calgary-North East and downtown. Although English competency may seem low on the list of priorities to many, it is one of the most important tools for newcomers to integrate into Canadian society, become citizens, and eventually to vote.

Canada has always been considered a strong democracy. In practical terms that means that every vote counts, that all eligible citizens have the right to vote and are encouraged to do so, and that each of us has the right to express our opinions in a respectful manner. Strong democracies are even stronger when they offer safe venues for open dissent. This could include letter writing, e-mail chains, opinion pieces in the press, telephone campaigns, and protests. By safe I mean being free from physical harm or harassment by security forces, from fines and trumped-up charges, and from arrest. Sadly, in Alberta over the last 18 months these safeguards have not been observed. Protesters have been assaulted, charged, and levied huge fines.

In Canada we have always believed that our system of governance utilized fairness, honesty, and due process to ensure that the voting system was protected and free from outside forces.

The latter might include foreign interference, backroom deals, cronyism, and coercion. Sadly again, in Alberta both the procurement scandal and the cancellation of important municipal projects have shown us that cronyism and political one-upmanship are driving many decisions, decisions that have stalled the development of infrastructure and have resulted in the waste of precious public dollars.

Ideally, people from different cultures and political stripes can and should work together. By encouraging lively and diverse discussion, the end result is expected to be richer and more robust. The blending of tradition and new ideas allows us to maintain our historical identities while also incorporating innovation. This is how societies evolve. I have lived, worked, and studied in Canada, the U.S., and the Middle East, and I can say that the tolerance and diversity that we enjoy in Canada is, shockingly, absent in these countries.

Our approach to diversity has made us a refuge for those whose identities and ideas were discouraged elsewhere, but we are not just a refuge. Inviting those from other countries to study and work here has been to our advantage. These guests have excelled academically and in research and have brought new ideas to the world of business. By welcoming different cultures and religions and by ensuring that everyone, regardless of origin or identity, has a voice and is viewed as equal in the eyes of the law, we have become beacons of tolerance and security globally.

In today's increasingly polarized world diversity of opinion is under threat. We watch as countries around the world enact legislation that limits the freedom of targeted groups in favour of assumed general consensus. In eastern Europe and our neighbour to the south we have seen the weight of discrete political religious perspectives morph into legislation that has put entire communities at risk. In the U.S. gerrymandering, or the change in electoral boundaries that favours one political party over the other, has long been used to increase the strength of the Republican Party at the polls. What we are witnessing today in the U.S. is the final culmination of that process, a process that has resulted in the election of a party bent on dismantling the rule of law and privileging the few. The result has been social chaos and needless violence.

However, we are not here today to discuss U.S. politics but, rather, to safeguard our own political system against the same powerful forces. Yes, the forces of division are very much at work in Alberta. This is being done gradually; for example, by the introduction of bills to introduce political affiliation into the municipal arena, by removing the ability of voters to vote elsewhere if unable to vote in their assigned electoral districts, and by loosening campaign finance legislation. Changes like these are examples of the gradual erosion of electoral parity and an attempt to politicize procedures that were previously apolitical.

7:10

The latest attempt in this direction has been the push to remove the division between rural and urban electoral districts. Why is this of concern? Because in Alberta over the past decade the political climate has shifted. This has led to a notable polarization between urban and rural votes. The erasure of urban and rural boundaries may be a tactic to reverse this trend and return the province to its historical political distribution. This change flies in the face of ensuring electoral parity throughout the province. Ideally, democracy is strengthened to the fair distribution of electoral boundaries, thereby allowing each to maintain its inherent identity and giving voice to the entire electorate.

As someone who has lived and worked in both urban and rural Alberta, I can say that despite the political leanings that may

differentiate one from the other, the majority of Albertans want a government that is balanced in its approach to issues. Yes, there are special-interest groups that prioritize their unique needs and make them the focus of campaign agendas. However, I believe that all Albertans share a desire to live in a province that provides for the entire population equitably. In practical terms this means publicly funded hospitals and schools or clinics, schools with reasonable class sizes and services to address special needs, and homes for the elderly that are adequately staffed. They want politicians who can work together and look beyond the narrow lens of personal benefit. This can only take place if the system itself is fair and not victim to strategies like gerrymandering.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Clark, do you want to . . .

Mr. Clark: No question in particular. I just want you to know that, at least from my perspective as one of five commissioners, this is one of the purest forms of democracy that I've ever participated in. You know, we do things fundamentally differently in Canada than the U.S. I'm very aware of and share a lot of your concerns about what we see south of the border. It is distressing. I've lost sleep more than once with what's happening.

I also just want you to know your message about the importance of a diverse and multicultural community has certainly been received. It's part of what makes me incredibly proud to be Canadian. I think, just speaking for myself and just what I've observed in working with my fellow commissioners in this process and even just the mechanics of it, I'm confident that we are doing things differently than we see in the U.S.

Mary-Anne Williams: That's reassuring.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. But it's equally important that you're here and that you expressed your views. We very much appreciate your doing that.

Dr. Martin: Well, I think the fundamental difference between us and American electoral boundary creation is that they do it with elected politicians. We do it without elected politicians, so it's easier for us to be noncommittal on a lot of these issues. I mean, our requirements are quite specific about the factors we're to look at, the populations that we're allowed to look at, and the variation, high and low. It gives us a lot of latitude to consider what constitutes effective representation in these districts, and effective representation is a very important concept in Canadian law. We're struggling along, but I think we are paying due attention to the needs of the act to provide a balanced approach to building an electoral district.

Mary-Anne Williams: That's reassuring.

The Chair: Any questions for Ms Williams?

Dr. Martin: I don't think so. I think that the philosophical point is the significant one, if I might, and that, you know, we have contemplated gerrymandering, but we're not doing it.

Mary-Anne Williams: Okay. Great.

The Chair: The interesting thing about the points you've raised is that, you know, in a sense we're dwarves sitting on the shoulders of the historic giants. Alberta, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia have gone through a lot in the last 40 to 50 years in terms of drawing boundaries, and in that time period or just about that time period the

Charter of Rights came into effect. Section 3 is a constitutional guarantee. The Supreme Court has opined on that, and in their decision there is reference to the American situation, but they've rejected the American one person, one vote system that their Supreme Court has time and again emphasized.

So, yes, you can be proud as a Canadian and you can be proud as an Albertan, and certainly, I think, while it's hard not to watch the news, the last few months have made us all the more grateful for our Canadian birthright.

Mary-Anne Williams: Right.

The Chair: Sorry. That's unnecessary commentary.

Mary-Anne Williams: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Susan, any questions?

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

Ms Williams, I don't have any questions, but I want you to know that we had slightly over 180 written submissions, and this is week three of us travelling the province and hearing from Albertans. It's been most rewarding because it has given us a better understanding of the actual people who are here in the ridings and how they fit together or how they don't fit together. I truly believe that, with the guidelines that we've been given, we're going to come up with something that is fair and represents the voters and the people of Alberta. It won't please everybody because ridings will change, but it certainly will be to the best that we can do with the tools we've been given.

Thank you.

Mary-Anne Williams: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Evans: I would just comment as follows. I think that we should be cautious about the hysteria that seems to be generated by the media. For myself personally, I think I feel comfortable in trusting in our system, in terms of the government and how it operates. In the long term it seems to always work out, and I think that's the case now. I think the media as a business model needs to incite hysteria, and that's exactly what they do, so I think we should be careful about that.

I'll share with you from the Supreme Court of Canada's decision on the reference of the Saskatchewan case, which really underscores what we're doing here and, you know, has helped to frame our legislation. This is what Justice McLachlin said.

The history or philosophy of Canadian democracy does not suggest that the framers of the Charter in enacting s. 3 had the attainment of voter parity as their ultimate goal. Their goal, rather, was to recognize the right long affirmed in this country to effective representation in a system which gives due weight to voter equity but admits other considerations where necessary. Effective representation and good government in this country compel that factors other than voter parity, such as geography and community interests, be taken into account in setting electoral boundaries. Departures from the Canadian ideal of effective representation, where they exist, will be found to violate s. 3 of the Charter.

There's the protection that allows us to be able to do what needs to be done in terms of adjusting electoral boundaries to reach that ultimate goal of effective representation.

Honestly, we're doing the best we can. We appreciate everyone providing us with information, and thank you for providing us with, you know, the philosophy, the underpinnings of what we're doing. Always a good reminder.

Thank you.

7:20

Mary-Anne Williams: Okay. Well, thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Williams. You're excused. Please stay in the gallery if there are any other presenters.

Lorraine Robinson.

Mrs. Robinson: Good evening.

The Chair: Good evening.

Mrs. Robinson: Again, thank you. I know we could do written submissions, but it is different when you can do it in person, and just listening to the others speak, it really makes you reflect on the importance of this work.

I'm the president of the Millican Ogden Community Association. When you hear Millican Ogden, it doesn't appear in the city either as a community association or in the electoral – oh, I made a mistake here. We fall under Ogden. Basically, Ogden is this mixture. As you know, Ogden existed before Calgary existed. It came as a result of the CP. Then, of course, the Ogden yards played a critical role during World War II, and then with time you had the lower Ogden that got developed. Millican was actually called Millican Estates, and at one time it was the most expensive land in the city, once we got taken in by the city of Calgary and then, of course, Lynnwood.

I'm here just because it's an opportunity. I thought, well, if for some reason our boundaries get changed and we didn't take the chance to voice our concern, then it'd be rather frustrating, so I figured. I think we're safe where we are, but I felt it was important to take this evening off to be here.

Calgary about 10 years ago decided to group communities together to create local area plans. Our community, Ogden, which is Millican Ogden, got grouped. They divided the city of Calgary into 42 community groupings, and basically you look at the community associations. By the way, our community will be celebrating 70 years in June 2026. We've been around for a long time.

We were grouped in area 34. I highlighted it in yellow over here. Key communities with us are Riverbend, Quarry Park, and DouglasGlen. This is important in this presentation because you'll see that this area for communities: we're all part of the provincial riding of Calgary-Peigan. The city saw that we fell well into this grouping, and it's also the grouping for the electoral boundary of Calgary-Peigan. Like I said, it has Ogden, Riverbend, Quarry Park, DouglasGlen, in addition to Douglasdale, and the north part of McKenzie Lake. Again, for us it's important that we remain in this grouping, so I'm here on behalf of MOCA as president of the Millican Ogden Community Association just to indicate the importance for us to continue being in that grouping.

Also, we're all southeast ward. When you look at the wards in Calgary, there are a lot of northeast communities that are also grouped with us, but in the area plan that the city has now laid out, as well as with Calgary-Peigan, these are the communities we're with. Also, most of these communities are all on that line of the green line which is coming through, so we also have that in common.

Based on that, then, it's just to say that if there are reviews and boundary changes to be made, it is our hope, our community association, that Ogden will remain where we're at.

Just to add, we remain very grateful. We're very fortunate with the MLA that we do have. It is MLA Tanya Fir. She's very, very present, so she's well known in our community. She shows up. We're doing our second annual chili cook-off during Stampede. A

big sponsor is herself, and she is present. She'll appear at some of our MOCA general meetings. The last one was this past April. We had the Love Ogden Day activity, where a member of the community just decided: hey, there are some people that don't have the means to fix areas outside of their house, their steps or their landscaping, et cetera, so she found over 30 volunteers to come and work at 13 different homes. Our MLA was there, very impressed. Then, of course, Brian's Café, very unique, in the Mustard Seed Hub 29, created by a family who lost their son to suicide, so she was there. We're having the soapbox car rally this Saturday, and she'll be there as well to officially open it up.

Like I said, I think we're safe staying where we are, but there was an opportunity to come and speak, so I took advantage of it. I'm done.

The Chair: Thank you very much, ma'am. I appreciate someone that's deeply involved in a community association, in a group that I'm somewhat familiar. I have family that live in the Ogden area and have lived there for years.

Mrs. Robinson: We're pretty committed people in MOCA.

The Chair: Yeah. I hadn't heard of MOCA. I thought it was a specialty coffee, but now I know otherwise.

Okay. Any questions from the commissioners? Mr. Evans.

Mr. Evans: Thank you. Okay. Where exactly is the Millican Ogden Community Association located on the map?

Mrs. Robinson: He'll bring it up. So if this was enlarged, it's the whole city of Calgary.

We're a unique community. We're in the southeast, but we're bound. We've got Deerfoot, the river. We've got the train.

Mr. Evans: Is it right in that Ogden area, or is it moved towards Riverbend? Where's the community centre located?

Mrs. Robinson: It's in Lynnwood, up the hill. I have a hard time reading maps, but this looks like 66th Avenue. Then our community hall would be about here. Is that correct? Yeah. CP. Yeah, we go up 18th Street, so it's over here.

Of course, this is Lynnview Ridge overseeing the river. That's where there would have been in the past some Imperial Oil issues. Then down, of course, we've got the Ogden yards. Ogden and Millican rises are in there.

Mr. Evans: So everything on 52nd Street Southeast, going east: is that all industrial?

Mrs. Robinson: Yeah. We've got the whole Foothills industrial. Where would it go? Okay. CP. I know that the industrial is, like, over here.

Mr. Evans: Or is it even at Barlow Trail?

Mrs. Robinson: Well, you have access to the industrial from Barlow Trail. We don't have Barlow Trail up there, so Peigan Trail. There's a whole big industrial area. They have the big film studio, lots of business. That also belongs in ward 9. We're ward 9 for Calgary. That whole Foothills area is there.

Mr. Evans: Is all your population really, then, Barlow Trail west to the river?

Mrs. Robinson: I'm not seeing – oh, okay. Barlow Trail is there. Right, yeah. We don't have anyone in Barlow Trail. Really, 69th

Avenue – you see? – and the CP Rail: we're all on this. The residential is all over here. Like, nothing over there.

Mr. Evans: Right. Are there any residential developments that you're aware of?

Mrs. Robinson: We're a very, very old community. What's happening to a lot of the Calgary communities that are very old right now, with the blanket rezoning, is that you have developers coming in and buying some of the very old homes, and all of a sudden you're having townhomes with four units, eight units coming up. So that's a common trend that's happening in a lot of the older communities. We voice our frustration because we question the infrastructure. Is it there? And then it's changing the landscape.

It was a very, you know, typical bungalow style; very old communities. Many of those homes have been passed on from generations. Like, you can have up to four generations of a family living in our community. So there's that frustration. I'm sure if you have other older communities that do come and speak, you're probably hearing a lot of that frustration on how the look of the community is changing, and we have no control. We do get the development permits to review as a community association, but blanket rezoning doesn't – our impact has been taken away.

7:30

Mr. Evans: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Susan?

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. Mrs. Robinson, you're fortunate in your riding that it hasn't shown a tremendous amount of growth.

Mrs. Robinson: No, and we would have lost lots with the Imperial Oil buyout.

Mrs. Samson: Right. But the communities around you, in particular Calgary-Hays to the south of you: you might very well, in Calgary-Peigan, see one or some communities move up into your area just so that we get a balancing of ridings of equal size as opposed to some really small ones and some really big ones.

Your presentation was most informative.

Mrs. Robinson: Thank you.

The Chair: Can you answer this query of mine? When you referenced Imperial Oil, it brought to mind – that was quite a while ago. Those homes: have they been flattened? What's happened in that area?

Mrs. Robinson: In the big interior – I live in Lynnview Ridge. I'm in one of those homes. I'm one of those residents that chose to stay when Alberta Environment had Imperial clean to the standard that – the 11 remaining residents all have our letter from Alberta Environment to say that our land is at a level of the Alberta standard for property. Out of those 11 on the ridge, it seems like there's an empty lot in between each one of us. So if you drive Deerfoot and you look up, those were houses that they did buy and remove, and across the street close to 200 homes were all removed. They were collapsed. Then coming up on Lynnview Road there were some townhouses that all got demolished.

The Chair: Okay. So a small minority state.

Mrs. Robinson: Eleven of us.

The Chair: Yeah. Okay.

Mrs. Robinson: Or 11 households.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you. And thank you for your presentation. Dr. Martin, any questions?

Mrs. Robinson: Thanks.

Dr. Martin: Thank you. I am interested in the effects of the oil company's withdrawal. Did you say that the lands that they had been using went through environmental review and things like that?

Mrs. Robinson: Oh, yeah. The remediation was very, very detailed for us that stayed up on the ridge, the levels that they had to clean. Across it wasn't as aggressive, but it remains an open park. The city of Calgary has a lease, a 100-year lease, so it's an open park space.

Dr. Martin: Do you anticipate that pod being opened up for residential construction?

Mrs. Robinson: Well, Imperial Oil came in and did some testing last summer. We're curious to see why that was done. We tried to get information from our ward, and we're not getting any information, so who knows?

Dr. Martin: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much for coming in. Again, it's always so helpful to have folks who live in those communities. I mean, even if you're from Calgary, you know the city, it's always a bit – until you actually talk to someone who lives in that neighbourhood, you don't get a sense of it. So thank you very much for being here.

I look at Glenmore Trail, and I always feel like Glenmore Trail is kind of a big boundary, right?

Mrs. Robinson: Right.

Mr. Clark: Also, that happens to be the ward boundary – right? – between you and – what is the community south of you, you said?

Mrs. Robinson: Riverbend. Riverbend used to be in ward 9. Then when they did a review, they removed Riverbend and . . .

Mr. Clark: Right. So Riverbend is in ward 11.

Mrs. Robinson: Yeah.

Mr. Clark: It sounds like you tend to sort of think to the south, but do you ever sort of go across the river or north a little bit, often to the other side, I guess, where the other Ogden yard is? I mean, it's all industrial over there, but do you have a connection that way as well?

Mrs. Robinson: With the industrial yards? No. You know, you have to drive there. They're not involved with our community association. Well, we're working with Evraz Navajo because they have their pipe-making production, and now when they drop the pipes, they clang. And with the green line coming, they've made a tunnel – 69th Avenue, here, was the access to go into CP. Years ago when the new CP president came in, he said: well, it's ridiculous that in downtown we're paying to rent space when we have all that space, so they came and built huge offices, a gym, a cafeteria, and all. But the access really is 69th, and you have to cross the track, so it's a pain. Working with the city with the green line: that's coming right along. Then on 78th they've made a tunnel to go through, and that's going to close off. So then people will access the industrial area and the CP through a tunnel on 76th. With that tunnel now open, people living here hear the clanking of the pipes, so we're

working with Evraz and the green line to see if something can be done to mitigate that sound.

Mr. Clark: Okay. That's helpful. Thank you.

The Chair: Now, ma'am, I'm not sure you were here at the beginning when we went through some figures in terms of mean averages of each constituency. The average is 55,600, and you're right close to that.

Mrs. Robinson: In Calgary-Peigan?

The Chair: Yeah. You're at 52,103.

Mrs. Robinson: In all these communities, really, the growth has come and gone. Ogden and Riverbend. The growth that's happening now is not really growth; it's really knocking down older homes.

The Chair: Right, but it is going to create growth.

Mrs. Robinson: Oh, yeah. You'll increase population because, you know, you had the one house; now you might have four units with four suites.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much, Mrs. Robinson. You're more than welcome to stay to hear other presentations.

Is Althea Adams present? No.

Okay. Ian Walker.

Ian Walker: Hello.

The Chair: Good evening.

Ian Walker: Good evening. I may have misunderstood the purpose of these meetings, and I certainly don't have a presentation. I saw this as an opportunity for feedback when I saw that the meetings were being held.

The Chair: Just identify yourself and tell us which electoral division you're in.

Ian Walker: My name is Ian Walker. I live in Calgary-Elbow. I guess I wanted to express a few things. One was, you know, thanks for doing this. I think a lot of effort and time goes into this, and I appreciate your willingness to come out and hear from people.

I have no particular thoughts about Calgary-Elbow per se. I guess my plea or my request of you is that we think about electoral districts in terms of more than just geographic boundaries, right? Things that seem like natural boundaries – and I just heard somebody refer to Glenmore Trail as this natural boundary – there's nothing inherently natural about a freeway, much like there's nothing naturally bounding about the Elbow River, right? It's very easy to look down the Elbow River and say: okay, that's a nice clean dividing line. But if we think about districting in terms of its power to enfranchise or disenfranchise people, I guess my biggest worry with redistricting, and I've seen no real signs that it happens in Canada, is the tendency towards partisan gerrymandering, right?

7:40

If I had one request of the committee and your group, it's simply that we really resist any efforts to think about boundaries as they apply to political advantage. Those things will change over time, they are not necessarily as helpful as we think they are, but what they do do is disenfranchise people in a systematic way and take away their democratic rights and their ability to participate meaningfully in society. I think it is an incredibly harmful, insidious

practice, and I just wanted to support the fact that we don't seem to do that in Canada and make the plea that we continue not to.

When I think about how you put boundaries together: is it about creating areas that have natural commonalities? So similar concerns, similar demographics, perhaps similar worries, right? If you wind up with districts that are 70 per cent people that live in an urban environment and 30 per cent people that live in a rural environment, those 30 per cent of people become disenfranchised by that in the ability to have somebody who truly represents their voice.

When I think about things like the Elbow River as a boundary, people who live on one side of the Elbow River and the other side of the Elbow River probably have similar concerns and similar issues that they struggle with and similar requests of their representatives and of government. So I would suggest that we think about demographics as much as geography.

That's the extent of it. I'm much less sophisticated than the last speaker.

The Chair: No, no. You focused on an issue that's important. Too bad you weren't here at 6:30, because we had a bit of an introduction about the system and had some great conversations. So I do encourage you to go back and look at the transcripts, but thank you for that reminder.

Any thoughts, questions, Mr. Clark?

Mr. Clark: Just to reiterate, I think we do. You may have been here earlier when I mentioned that this commission, this panel does things a little differently than the way the Americans do and that the Canadian concept is just different, which is good, but I think your point is taken.

I guess I just want to dig down a little bit deeper on – you mentioned mixing rural and urban and then people who have kind of common interests in a community. Can you maybe just dig a little deeper into what you mean?

Ian Walker: Yeah. I've been thinking about it a lot for the last few days as I've been sort of preparing to come here. And, I mean, I think it is fraught, right? The easy distinction in Alberta is rural-urban. It's clear that people in those environments have perhaps different focuses, different concerns, but the same is true of people of higher income brackets and lower income brackets who live within half a kilometre of each other within the urban environment. The same risks exist there of limiting the voice of some subsections of our society. Balanced against that, though, is the fact that we can't just keep cutting the pie thinner and thinner and creating advocacy groups disguised as electoral districts or polls within electoral districts.

I'm not sure what the solution is, and I'm sure that the group of you have far more experience and have thought about this far more than I have, but I just wanted to put that concern on record so that it was there, noted for people who make these decisions. That was my only goal in coming today.

Mr. Clark: Mission accomplished. Thank you.

The Chair: Dr. Martin?

Dr. Martin: Thank you. And thank you. Very logical. A couple of weeks ago we were in southern Alberta, and a rancher who lives very close up tight on the foothills suggested that a community of interest was a paramount consideration and that it should be just the people in his town. This is rather the extreme condition, as it were, of how to build a coherent community of interest. Well, the effect of that is that we'd have 870 ridings.

Obviously, we have to do better than that. That's why we're probing all the time about the housing stock, communities of interest rather more broadly understood, and what constitutes a neighbourhood. These are all rather difficult and slippery, but that's the way we are probing where communities of interest may lie because just looking at the map isn't going to tell us. You know, in each of these factors that the legislation asks us to look at, with the exception of the overall population, each of them goes so far but not all the way, so we end up juggling four or five factors simultaneously. I hope that you will understand that we're doing our best, and you could pray for us because it's a tough one.

Ian Walker: I appreciate that, and I think that that's true. I think it's also a conceit to think that singular communities are monoliths – right? – in terms of how they think and what their concerns are even if they have, you know, identical demographics or familial histories, whatever.

I guess the plea is that, you know, if you're looking at a map that superimposes familial income on postal codes and you've got a pocket within Calgary that has lower income, there may be value in trying to keep that pocket together rather than if it borders or if it's in an area that could potentially border on two or three districts, right? If you slice it up into four chunks and send four pieces of that community into different corners, those people lose their voice functionally. It becomes very easy to not worry about campaigning in that area because it's only 6 per cent of our district or 8 per cent of our district, so we don't need to worry too much about them.

If you keep them together, they become a more sizable block. I agree. They may still not be monolithic in terms of how they think, but it does force the political parties to engage with that community because it forms a significant portion of whatever swing district it may be, right? We all know that swing districts get more attention from political parties. It's a way of leveraging that.

I appreciate how complicated your job is and thank you for doing it.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

The Chair: Well, you'll be able to give us a report card after our interim report is completed. Look at it, and then maybe come back and speak to us in the second round.

Susan?

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. Mr. Walker, thanks for coming out. Interesting points. I wanted to say that what I am tasked with and one of the tools I'm given is that when the electoral districts are changed or drawn up, they must have clear and understandable boundaries. We've heard from the public how difficult that can be when boundaries change, the chaos that comes with it. They go to the poll to vote, and it isn't just a matter of pop over five minutes later. When you go to the wrong poll and you're told that it's not the right one and you don't know where the right one is, and maybe you've walked or got a ride – you know what I'm saying.

7:50

When we talk about boundaries, sometimes those roads, those unnatural things are clear and understandable. They're probably one of the most common ways to have boundaries. I think one of the most important things that I've found over the last three weeks of travelling is that I live in Sylvan Lake, and I don't know Calgary like the people in this room that know Calgary and have shared with us what they've seen right in their own communities. That will greatly assist us in the decisions that we make, and that is so valuable and so important. We're not done yet, but when we are

done, it'll be based on what we heard or what you wrote to us. Really, thank you, on your part, for doing it.

Ian Walker: At the end of the day, I certainly defer to your judgment – right? – and your expertise. I just wanted to put my voice out there. Thank you very much for your time.

Mrs. Samson: You bet. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.
Mr. Evans?

Mr. Evans: Yes. Now that you're here, I'm going to use you as a resource – okay? – because you've got insight into your community that's going to be helpful, so I'm going to drill down on a few things.

First, the relevant considerations according to the legislation are that we're supposed to be looking in terms of determining effective representation as, first, sparsity, density, and rate of growth of the populations; second, communities of interest; third, geographic features; fourth, the availability and means of communication and transportation between the various parts of Alberta; fifth, the desirability of understandable and clear boundaries, and that's what Susan was talking about; and the catch-all, any other factors the commission considers appropriate. What I want to glean from you is on that point.

I would like you to think about any other factors we as a commission should be thinking about, but I want you to think about your riding, so Calgary-Elbow. What are the other factors that we should be thinking about as it relates to your riding and then, if you would like and if you can provide anything for us, any other factors that maybe we should apply to Alberta as a whole? You're here. You're a resource. I'm going to mine you.

Ian Walker: It's a shallow mine.

Mr. Evans: There's a diamond in there. I know it.

Ian Walker: I'm just thinking about it.

Mr. Evans: Let me help you out. You were focusing in and you talked about: we should be looking at demographics. People will understand that differently. For example, Dr. Julian would give you the exact, specific definition. I'm not going to be able to. What I'm more interested in is what you think it means, and then we can take that information and apply it to Calgary-Elbow.

Ian Walker: When I think about demographics, I think about income, other measures of social privilege, education.

Mr. Evans: Socioeconomic factors.

Ian Walker: Yeah.

Mr. Evans: Okay.

Ian Walker: Family size, educational background, you know, one-income versus two-income families.

Mr. Evans: Let's apply that to your electoral district. How would we group the different communities within that community group? Ultimately, at the end of the day, we're probably going to be ending up with some sort of community-of-interest component, right?

Ian Walker: Yeah. It's interesting. I mean, Calgary-Elbow is a bit interesting in the sense that it, you know, includes some very well-heeled areas in and around the Elbow River, Elbow Park, east

Elbow, but then it extends up into Lower Mount Royal, which is full of relatively affordable low-rise apartment buildings. It extends over into Erlton – or not Erlton. Oh, it does, doesn't it? It includes part of Erlton, yeah. Sorry; looking at my previous MLA.

It is a bit of a mixed bag, right? I think that largely the perception is that that riding is driven by its more affluent areas, but there is this fairly sizable lower socioeconomic status population within that riding. If I were to think about, you know, if there were going to be an addition into Calgary-Elbow, like, say that just to balance the numbers you had to expand it a little bit and you had the potential to, and the area that was being brought in was a lower income area and you were thinking about bringing it in versus putting it in another riding that was perhaps more uniformly high income . . .

Mr. Evans: Can you show me on the map what you would take, what you would add in?

Ian Walker: Oh, I haven't – not really. I hadn't been that granular in my thinking about it, to be honest. My thoughts were more philosophical. I was going to leave the logistics to the experts.

Mr. Evans: See; once you sat down, I told you I was going to mine you. Our philosophical threshold is just one, and that was taken up.

Ian Walker: Yeah. If you look at – let me just get my bearings here. Sorry.

Mr. Evans: What would you do with Lakeview, which is at the bottom?

Ian Walker: Yeah. I see it. Like down in here, you mean?

Mr. Evans: No. Over to the – you're right there.

Ian Walker: The south end is Crowchild. Yeah.

Mr. Evans: Or Glamorgan?

Ian Walker: You know, if I'm being granular and you're asking me – again, I say this with full deference to your expertise, not mine – demographically, I would say, just based on where my kids play basketball, the clubs they're involved with, where their friends are who went to the same school, that sort of thing . . .

Mr. Evans: Exactly.

Ian Walker: That area, for instance, is much more demographically similar to this area than this area.

Mr. Evans: Okay. What about Glamorgan?

Ian Walker: Probably somewhere in between. But, again, you know, it's one of those questions, right? Say you had this area that needed a new home. Bringing that area into Calgary-Elbow, I'm not sure how much of a voice those people get.

Mr. Evans: Right.

Ian Walker: Because their interests might be probably quite different than the people who live, you know, a mile away as the crow flies.

Mr. Evans: What about the empty space between Glamorgan and Altadore?

Ian Walker: You're talking about in here?

Mr. Evans: Yeah.

Ian Walker: I'm just trying to think what that is. That's Currie Barracks in there, isn't it?

Mrs. Samson: I think you might be right.

Ian Walker: I think that's Currie Barracks in there.

Mrs. Naz: Mount Royal University.

Ian Walker: MRU, I think, is actually . . .

Mr. Evans: In the middle area in there.

Mrs. Naz: Oh, okay.

Mr. Evans: Between Glamorgan and . . .

Ian Walker: Yeah. That's MRU. It's down there.

That also is probably very demographically similar, right? I think about where my kids' friends are, when they go to school, where I go pick them up. That seems like a very arbitrary distinction there in terms of being separate.

Mr. Evans: Okay.

Well, thank you, Mr. Walker. That's been very helpful. I appreciate it. Appreciate your help.

Ian Walker: I think you're being generous, but thank you for your time.

The Chair: Mr. Walker, thank you for coming, and please don't tell any future presenters that we interrogated you so much.

I believe that's all the presenters unless Naomi Salisbury or Althea Adams are present. Okay.

Mr. Evans: Well, after that interrogation they probably left.

The Chair: Yeah.

Well, thank you, everyone, for coming this evening and presenting. We know that on days like today you've got tons of other things to do, but your interest in civil engagement and the political process is so important. Thank you so much.

We will reconvene the public hearing starting tomorrow afternoon in Brooks, Alberta.

[The hearing adjourned at 8 p.m.]



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

Brooks

Thursday, June 12, 2025
1 p.m.

Transcript No. 19

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission

Justice Dallas K. Miller, Chair

Greg Clark

John D. Evans, KC

Julian Martin

Susan Samson

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Managing Editor of *Alberta Hansard*

Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Brooks

Public Participants

Arno Doerksen, Reeve, County of Newell
Norman Gerestein
Dan Hein
Stacey Vanderveen

1 p.m.

Thursday, June 12, 2025

[Justice Miller in the chair]

The Chair: Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to our Brooks public hearing for the Electoral Boundaries Commission.

First of all, I'd like to introduce the commission to you. My name is Justice Dallas Miller. I'm the chairman of the commission, and I also serve as a justice of the Court of King's Bench in southern Alberta.

The other commissioners. First of all, to my left is Susan Samson, a long-time resident of Sylvan Lake, Alberta, and an experienced municipal politician who served a full term as mayor of Sylvan Lake and operated a business with her husband in that community. Susan has been recognized by being awarded the citizen of the year award for Sylvan Lake and recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II diamond jubilee medal. She's a dedicated volunteer and focuses much of her volunteer efforts on the promotion and strengthening of public health care.

To Susan's left is Mr. John Evans, KC. John is a lawyer with a province-wide firm known as Stringam, and he works out of their Lethbridge office. John conducts trials across the province. His legal ability has been recognized by being awarded the King's Counsel designation, or KC. He also volunteers as a member of the Alberta Judicial Nominating Committee. John's other claim to fame is that he was born and raised in Brooks, Alberta.

To my right is Dr. Julian Martin, a retired history professor from the University of Alberta. Julian's advanced degrees are from Cambridge University. He is a proud capital city resident and has volunteered on many committees while he lived in Edmonton. He now resides in Sherwood Park and serves on a couple of provincial quasi-judicial tribunals.

At the far end of the table is Mr. Greg Clark. Greg is an entrepreneur and consultant focusing on information and knowledge management. Greg has served one term as a member of the Legislature for Calgary-Elbow, and he, too, is a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II platinum jubilee medal. He currently serves as the chairman of the Balancing Pool of Alberta and consults and advises organizations relative to proper board governance.

This is your Electoral Boundaries Commission for the province of Alberta. As you may be aware, we are tasked with a few things as a commission. The Legislature has amended the legislation in terms of the number of seats that will be in the Legislature for the next election and expanded it from 87 seats to 89.

In order to give you a sense of where we're going and what we have to do, I thought a timeline would be helpful. This commission was established in late March of this year by the Speaker of the Legislature. We met a couple of times in April as a commission to discuss process and policy and the calendar, and we started our public hearings in late May. We started in Pincher Creek, and we've been to Edmonton, Calgary, Wainwright, and several smaller centres. You can see our schedule on the website.

We conclude our hearings on June 23, and we will then start deliberations, taking into consideration what we've heard across the province. We must provide a report to the Speaker of the Legislature in late October. That report will be an interim report, and the public will have an opportunity to review it, and we are welcoming public feedback to that first report. We will then conduct a second round of hearings probably in late November, December, January, and February, and then we must compile a final report by late March of 2026. Then the Legislature will take our recommendations and pass appropriate legislation to enact the 89 boundaries. As you're no doubt aware, each electoral division or

constituency or riding has one elected MLA, and voters in that constituency do the electing of that MLA.

In order to give some context as to the other challenge that we have, not only do we move the number of seats from 87 to 89, but we deal with a huge population increase. To give you some historic context, the last Electoral Boundaries Commission issued its report in 2017. That report was based on a population of Alberta of slightly in excess of 4 million people. That commission took the number, the population of 4,062,609, and – the mean average is arrived at by dividing the number of electoral divisions. The target population for each electoral division is a range, and it's a range from as low as 35,023 to 58,371. That was the 2017 commission's report and formula and population.

This time around, for our commission, we have a population of 4,888,725 divided by 89 ridings, and the mean average for each constituency, then, is 54,929, just under 55,000. The target for us as a commission is to ensure that a population of no less than the 41,197 and no more than the 68,661 is in each division. The population growth, as you know, has not been spread evenly across the province. We have some challenges and are hearing from municipalities and areas where there has been huge growth on how we deal with that growth.

The ultimate task of this commission – we are not based on an American system of one person, one vote. Rather, in Canada, under section 3 of the Charter that protects voting rights and through judicial commentary in cases, we have a principle of effective representation. That's the principle that operates for the commission.

In order to arrive at a recommended riding map, the legislation that we are governed by gives us several principles that we must take into consideration. Those are, first of all, relative sparsity and density of population throughout the province in determining how large a constituency should be. Common community interests and organizations are taken into account as well. Geographic features are particularly taken into account in terms of boundaries. Communication lines and transportation routes across the province are also considered.

Our goal and our task as a commission is to come up with a report that provides for effective representation, ensures that each of the constituencies fit within the target population, and come up with understandable and clear boundaries for Albertans. There's a catch-all provision in the legislation which allows us to take into account any further information, and much of that further information no doubt will come as a result of the public hearings that we've held across the province.

At this stage we are probably over halfway or just about halfway through our public hearings. We just spent two days in Calgary, and we'll be heading to Medicine Hat for tomorrow morning. We're here in the city of Brooks to hear from you, and we do want to receive your input. We have a schedule of people who have signed up to present. We're flexible enough that if you haven't signed up but if you're here and you want to make some submissions or comments, you're welcome to address the commission.

In terms of the first speaker I'm going to call on Mr. Norman Gerestein to come up and present. Yeah. Just have a seat right there. Typically, sir, we have a time limit, but we've got, I think, a fair amount of time, so we're not going to be too hard on you and restrict you to a specified time. Just please identify yourself, tell us where you live, and begin your presentation.

1:10

Mr. Gerestein: Okay. My name is Norman Gerestein. I live in the city of Brooks and have lived here for the past 38 years, so I'm a long-term resident of the area. My first thing is that I'd like to thank

the commission for coming down to Brooks and hearing what we have to say because I think it's critical in the decision-making of boundaries for the electoral changes. Thank you very much for coming down.

I'll start off by saying that I don't believe that any changes are warranted in the Brooks-Medicine Hat riding. Basically, I've written down four reasons, and you have already touched on one of them with the population here. The population of the area has changed over the years, but it hasn't changed as much as the corridor from Lethbridge all the way up to Edmonton, so our increases in population are not quite the same. I believe that our population here within this riding is probably somewhere between 55,000 and 60,000 people. Again, there hasn't been a significant change.

The second point, the representative for the riding would see all perspectives of both urban and rural on issues, ensuring fair electoral representation.

Third, it gives the Medicine Hat portion of our riding two voices in the Legislature to talk about issues pertaining to the area.

One thing that is of critical importance, which is number four, and that goes back to my days when I was on Brooks' city council – I spent 14 years on that – is that we always worked very closely with the county of Newell. I think it's important that when we look at the boundary changes to keep the county of Newell and the city of Brooks in that portion of the riding as well as moving over to Medicine Hat and all the way over to the Saskatchewan border.

That's basically what I have for you today, so if there are any questions.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Gerestein.

We'll start with the hometown boy, Mr. Evans. Do you have any questions of Mr. Gerestein?

Mr. Evans: Good afternoon. Thanks for coming. It's good to be home.

I want to know more about the strength that you see in terms of – there are two things – the county of Newell and the city of Brooks being together. Then I'm interested in what you said about the advantage of having two MLA voices in Edmonton by virtue of having Medicine Hat split and why you consider that to be an advantage. That's something that's always being debated back and forth as we go through the various parts of Alberta. If you want to start first with the county of Newell and Brooks and the strength that you see there and then the advantages of the two MLAs.

Mr. Gerestein: Well, we've worked very closely in the past and presently with the county of Newell and the city. A lot of it has to do with recreation, has to do with housing, has to do with the community support services because, as you know, there is a fairly large meat-packing plant just on the outskirts of town which employs about 2,700 people, and they all live within the city of Brooks. You know, you get down to recreation. We like to kind of split out the recreation so that not all the facilities are within the city of Brooks, so that some of them can be put out into the county of Newell. I think all these things make us that much stronger as a community.

Mr. Evans: Is the arena out in the county, just barely, or is that still in Brooks?

Mr. Gerestein: Well, technically it would be in the county, but I think the property was assigned to us over 10 or 15 years ago. There are lots of arenas within the county of Newell that are utilized by the citizens of the city of Brooks as well.

You've got Duchess, Tilley, and a few others, Bassano, that are always used by the people of Brooks if need be.

Mr. Evans: And the advantage of two MLAs: can you speak to that?

Mr. Gerestein: When you're dealing with a larger centre like Medicine Hat, I always think it's an advantage if you have two MLAs there that can hear from different perspectives. We in this riding have a little bit of a different mix in our population. As you probably are aware, we're very culturally diverse here. I think it's good for whoever the representatives are that they hear different perspectives so they can make better decisions going forward on what needs to happen within both Cypress-Medicine Hat and Brooks-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Susan.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. Thank you for coming out today. It's important that we hear from people who live in the community. I was particularly interested because this is one of a few ridings that has two cities in the same electoral district, those being Medicine Hat and Brooks, and I often wonder how easy that is to represent the residents when the concerns of Brooks – do they align with Medicine Hat, or do you have two separate sets of priorities? But you're fortunate because you have two MLAs. Can you just clarify that or add to that component? That interests me.

Mr. Gerestein: Well, I have always found that the two big municipalities align very well in what needs to be done. I think that when you talk with the representative from Brooks-Medicine Hat or you talk with the representative from Cypress-Medicine Hat, of course, there are probably differing issues, but we all have schooling issues; we all have health care issues; we all have the mental health issues. I think that if we can talk to two representatives, it has a little bit stronger impact on what is happening up there in Edmonton. I think it's always a bonus. It's always been kind of a point that the southern area has been the forgotten corner, so to speak.

Mrs. Samson: Good. I'm glad to hear that because I wasn't sure how that plays out on the ground.

Mr. Gerestein: Well, I have found it to be excellent.

Mrs. Samson: Yeah. Thank you for that information. I appreciate that.

The Chair: Okay. Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you, and thank you. I wanted to ask a little further about the arrangements and alignment with the county to the town and also between the county of Newell and Cypress county. Those two large organizations must spend a great deal of time in broad-based planning issues. Do you find that to be the case?

Mr. Gerestein: Well, I can't speak to the county of Newell and Cypress county, but within Brooks, yes. You've got all your different elements that come into play with the development on the outskirts, et cetera, so that always comes into play. I think the working relationship between the county of Newell and Brooks has been an excellent one.

Dr. Martin: I'm glad for all of your sakes that that is true, but I wanted to press you further just to say that the planning arrangements

and conversations between the county of Newell and Cypress county: are they continuing in a mutually useful way?

Mr. Gerestein: I would hope they are, but I really can't speak a whole lot to that.

Dr. Martin: Right. I was just looking for the parallelism, as it were, between county to county as you describe city to city.

Mr. Gerestein: I would surmise that they have a very close working relationship because, like I say, there is an awful lot that goes on within the county of Newell that also goes on within Cypress county.

1:20

Dr. Martin: Okay. If I could ask a different question.

Mr. Gerestein: Yeah. Go right ahead.

Dr. Martin: You described this relationship as a useful and beneficial one. Back in the day you were connected with some other town. Let me see. What was it?

Mr. Gerestein: Strathmore at one time.

Dr. Martin: You've been around a very long time. You said that you were 38 years a resident here and for a very long time in an elected position as well. Perhaps you remember the days when Brooks was attached to Strathmore. I guess the hard question I'm going to ask, because it's an impressionistic thing, I guess, is: do you feel more comfortable and compatible with the present relationship than was the case with Strathmore back in the day?

Mr. Gerestein: Well, back in the day, and I would have to go back to my experience on the Bow River constituency as a board member, there were a lot of differences in – basically, Strathmore was more of the urban centre and, I guess I would say, the bedroom community to Calgary. The thoughts and ideas that they have in Strathmore are probably a little bit different than going the opposite direction.

Dr. Martin: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Thank you. You have a very unique situation here in Brooks-Medicine Hat with two cities and the rural areas. Maybe if you could, just help me understand. List one issue that's sort of top of mind in Brooks, one in the county of Newell, and one in Medicine Hat. What would each of those three places have as a top issue in each area?

Mr. Gerestein: I would boil it down to – if I had to say anything at the moment, I would say that it's probably mental health issues.

Mr. Clark: That spans all three. What's the, like, number one sort of issue that's on the minds of folks here in Brooks?

Mr. Gerestein: Well, it's always the economy, making sure that everything is functioning smoothly and trying to attract businesses into the area. That's always an important issue. Then along with that comes the housing, and along with that comes the development of the infrastructure to support whatever is coming into the community.

Mr. Clark: Would you say that Newell has similar issues?

Mr. Gerestein: I would think so, yeah.

Mr. Clark: And Medicine Hat, the portion that's part of this constituency: are they also struggling with those same types of issues, or is there anything else that's going on there?

Mr. Gerestein: Well, from what I can hear, yes, I think they all have those same topics of conversation, you know, that basically revolve around schooling, health care, and infrastructure. Those are really the top three issues that I would say are affecting all three.

Mr. Clark: Maybe we could just do a bit of a thought experiment. The previous configuration – it's fair to say that we've received a reasonable amount of written feedback from a lot of folks, in particular in Medicine Hat, who feel like they would prefer to have a configuration a little bit like Grande Prairie is right now, where there's an almost entirely urban constituency and then a hybrid smaller portion of the urban surrounded by county. Just as a kind of a bit of background there, as Justice Miller noted, we're working to a provincial average of 54,929. Is that right?

The Chair: Yeah.

Mr. Clark: Roughly 55,000. Medicine Hat is not of a size where we could do one constituency for Medicine Hat, nor is it of a size where we could do two even ones. Lethbridge, Red Deer kind of fit that. It's a little like Grande Prairie where you've got this sort of awkward 70,000 or so number. There's a strong push from a number of folks – we've heard different feedback from different places. I guess I'm curious. What is your perspective on that? What would you say to the folks who would advocate, "Let's have an urban Medicine Hat and hybrid Medicine Hat surrounding areas"?

Mr. Gerestein: Right now I would say to keep the riding the way that it is because the impact for both I think benefits one another. Right now the representative can hear the issues of the urban; it can also hear the issues of the rural and try to mesh them together so that the best decision could be made for both. If you were to go just to one riding, I don't think you'd get that kind of impact from the representative, whoever that may be, that might be in the best interests of the community.

Mr. Clark: That's great. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Mr. Gerestein, I have a couple of questions. One – pardon my ignorance – when did Brooks become a city?

Mr. Gerestein: Twenty ten.

The Chair: Twenty ten. Okay. And approximately what's the population now?

Mr. Gerestein: Estimated or actual?

The Chair: You know, I'm happy with estimated.

Mr. Gerestein: I would say that the estimate for Brooks would probably be in about the 16,000 range. I think officially the last census had it at about 14,500.

The Chair: So you appreciate that, following up with my colleague's question, you can't stand alone – right? – and there's not enough area around. Given the choice this is – I want to say that it's about eight years this electoral division has existed, right?

Mr. Gerestein: Since 2017, yeah.

The Chair: You prefer it this way as opposed to the Brooks-Strathmore area?

Mr. Gerestein: I would prefer it this way as opposed to the other because I think that the population densities of Strathmore and Chestermere are getting to the point now where that might be one riding all by itself.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you very much, sir. I'm going to excuse you. Please return to the gallery. Feel free to stay. We encourage people to stay to hear the rest of the presentations.

Mr. Gerestein: Thank you.

The Chair: Our next presenter scheduled is Mr. Dan Hein. I noticed, sir, you came in a tad late. We generally have seven to 10 minutes for presentation, and then we'll have questions from the commission directed to you and to your comments. Please identify yourself and tell us where you're from.

Mr. Hein: My name is Dan Hein. I come from Medicine Hat, but I was raised in Castor. I think you guys – did you have a stop in Castor?

The Chair: No. I drove by it.

Mr. Hein: Raised in, you know, a rural town, and once I came to Medicine Hat out of high school, I met and married the mayor's daughter there some 40 years ago. We got married and had our first kid in Lethbridge, then we had twins in Red Deer, and then in the late '80s we chased work opportunities to Ontario, where we had our fourth child in Toronto. When we were finished raising them in 2009, we moved back to the west, back to the Hat, and we've been back there since. I've been in the wealth management business for not quite 20 years. I started in Ontario, continuing that work now with BMO Private Wealth in Medicine Hat.

I've been actively engaged in, first, federal and, more recently, provincial politics since my neighbour in Ontario ran as a candidate back in 2004. That's when we kind of first got active as a couple. My wife always had me – politics was always there because she was like a campaign warrior since the age of nine or 10, you know, banging on doors and dropping flyers for her dad in municipal politics. Yeah, so we've always had a kind of an antenna and an interest for all this, and I'm very keen.

I read a transcript from your Lethbridge day, and I also read the first of the Edmonton transcripts just to kind of get a flavour of some of the things that are flying around, and I come to you today with kind of more of a philosophical angle that I wanted to bring to counter what I feel has emerged as a theme.

I just heard you, Mr. Clark, comment on it, this notion. You know, should we concentrate our boundaries so that we have urbans together and rurals together and, effectively, separate? I did a little bit of a counterstudy in the last few days. I just submitted it to Aaron by e-mail attachment on my way up here, and I do have a few copies. Essentially, I wanted to talk about – oh, sorry. That's my proposition, to blend or not to blend.

1:30

I wanted to address, particularly, the academic thought that's kind of out there. I saw in the Lethbridge presentation that these three presenters were proffered to you, and they're all proponents of what I would think of as the antiblend. It's kind of an arbitrary thing to look at, especially, our main towns, Calgary and Edmonton, main cities. It's a difficult thing to distinguish urban from rural when you think about how wide and how narrow at times the suburban belt can become.

I speak with an interesting little background on this. In a former life I was in the telecom business, and we had a little foray from Ontario back to Alberta in the early '90s. We kept our business going in Ontario. We came back and lived in Bentley for three years, and we started a telecom service in the Red Deer perimeter. The idea was that you could call our switch from Lacombe, get a Red Deer dial tone, and dial Bowden, for example, and not pay long distance, right? We called it a one-hop service. This had been coming about in Ontario. The idea was we'd charge people \$19.99 a month for all you can eat. As we developed that business, we also offered it to noncustomers who could use the switch to reach our customers. It was a fascinating little foray.

The way we decided on where to start the business: we did a market study of the Red Deer perimeter compared to the Calgary perimeter, compared to the Edmonton, and we'd also looked at Lethbridge and Fort Mac and Grande Prairie and Medicine Hat. Red Deer at that time in the early '90s had far and away more active phone numbers that were not in the calling core. Way ahead of Calgary, like, miles ahead of Calgary, and slightly ahead of Edmonton. We wound up putting our second switch in Sherwood Park, and that was our second service area, because Sherwood Park had the same calling reach as the Edmonton core. Ed Tel was still in play back then and some fun things.

My point is that the urban to the rural distinction is very much in flux at all times, and the cities of our province, at least 30-odd years ago when we did our market survey: it was dramatic to see how thick the perimeter population density was around Red Deer, like, greater than any other city, greater than Edmonton or Calgary at the time. I found that remarkable. But we got our business going, and unfortunately competition came about. I don't know if any of you remember this, but at one point Sprint Canada came out with an offer of \$19.99 a month for all you can eat in Canada. So we rolled up our carpets and went back to building our business in Ontario at that point.

But that was my little industry-level exposure to what I feel is a very difficult thing to quantify. The urban-rural divide is not as defined as people might think. Even this talk of municipal boundaries being something that should be perhaps sacrosanct and almost enforced in your considerations, I feel like that is also another arbitrary aspect. I would question its worthiness as a prime consideration.

My big thinking as a political observer – you know, I think most of us would agree that political sentiments have for some reason, for some combination of events become more and more acute. Political combat seems to be more escalated and more shrill and, frankly, more blood pressure inducing, I think, now than it was in the past. It seems to me that if we make this decided effort, a determined effort to isolate representatives to be urban or rural – the suburban is your kind of rounding error opportunity, I suppose. But I think if you do that, you're going to have a more incited, a more cranked up Legislature if your representatives don't spend time listening to voices in both of these environments. I would argue that the suburban is in some ways a distinct environment because people kind of – a lot of them have their toes in both. They want to work in the city, but they want to have a horse and some dirt.

That's kind of the gist of what I wanted to bring you. I just wanted to kind of articulate the four academic contributors to the pro-blend notion, that it is not without its proponents and its academic heft.

That's kind of it.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Hein.

I don't think this has produced any need for questions, or has it?

Mrs. Samson: Just one comment.

The Chair: Mr. Clark. Oh, I'll just start with . . .

Mrs. Samson: Yeah, go ahead.

Mr. Clark: No. Go ahead.

Mrs. Samson: I just wanted to know: what part of Medicine Hat are you, the Cypress or the Brooks?

Mr. Hein: I'm in the Brooks.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

Mr. Hein: I live north of the river.

Mrs. Samson: Okay. Go ahead. I just wanted to make a note of that.

Mr. Hein: I am very much in favour of our riding as it's currently constituted. In some ways I feel like the argument should be made to almost intentionally attach segments of city perimeters to rural districts to compel representatives to hear from all these different voices rather than live in an echo chamber. I think echo chambers are part of our biggest problem politically nowadays. I think, you know, having blended ridings will combat the sorry effects of an echo chamber.

The Chair: Greg, any questions?

Mr. Clark: No, nothing coming to mind right now. Thank you. I've made a couple of notes.

Thank you.

The Chair: Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you. And thank you for the – obviously, we'll have to read it later, this document. To pitch this at a more academical level as well as practical is very useful. Certainly, to my temperament, it's useful to hear you talk about a gradation of forms of life. You have urban, you have suburban. There's a gradation there. It's very difficult because people talk these terms quite loosely.

Mr. Hein: I think we binary-ize it.

Dr. Martin: Yeah, that's correct. You're suggesting that we have three if not a broad, gentle spectrum of different forms of life, and we shouldn't artificially separate one from the other.

Mr. Hein: Yeah.

Dr. Martin: Could you tell me again about why you think connecting them or gathering them provides more effective representation?

Mr. Hein: Well, I think a conscientious representative would want to make, you know, regular efforts to hear from all sides. I'm sure he'd hear from the rural, the suburban, and then the urban municipalities, the representative governments of each. Hearing all of that would create an opportunity for that representative to ameliorate his own priorities, his own biases, and hear those voices.

I don't know how representative I am, but some of my best friends are very opposite of me. In fact, I would consider my closest friends some of my biggest critics. I feel good about having those relationships and being able to sustain those and build those. I think

it might be in proverbs, the notion that iron sharpens iron. That's what friends should be or could be. Good friendships are that way.

1:40

In that sense, I feel like a representative can become a more effective voice at effectively stewing all the competing interests together to come up with, you know, reasonable alternatives, reasonable compromises that benefit and minimize the difficulties imposed on each of the groups. If you can have that in a representative, then I think your Legislature is going to have greater functionality and waste less horsepower on friction.

Dr. Martin: Thank you. I mean, MLA as steward is a slightly different metaphor, but I think it's helpful. Thank you.

Mr. Hein: Skewered or . . .

Dr. Martin: A steward.

Mr. Hein: Oh, a steward.

The Chair: Thank you.
Susan.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. I think that when we look at Brooks-Medicine Hat, the distance between Medicine Hat and Brooks is significant but not that significant when it comes to the trading areas between the city of Brooks and the city of Medicine Hat. People have an opportunity to choose either way to travel; therefore, the people that are travelling to those areas are, in fact, those rural. So I think we have a bit of a unique example here in the province where the people in the middle, which I will call the rural, have a greater affinity and connection to either the city of Medicine Hat or Brooks. Do you agree with me on that?

Mr. Hein: Yeah. I think there are some in the middle. I know some ranchers from the Jenner area that bring their cows to the Brooks market, but they get their equipment repaired out of Medicine Hat, so it depends where you're located, I suppose. They have some choices, and they can, you know, divide their loyalties in effect, at least their commercial interests.

Mrs. Samson: Exactly. And then, in the same breath, in the trips that we've made in the last two weeks, we have talked to some people who don't have that situation, who have to drive great distances to get to an urban centre, and they do it out of necessity but have no intention of ever living there and have a completely different set of concerns, priorities, and advocacy items. I agree with you that you have a very unique situation going on here, but also it is unique in the province. It is not common. There is a real urban-rural divide out there.

Mr. Hein: Divide in the sense of how you would think representation should be?

Mrs. Samson: Yes, exactly. Like, the people that have taken the time out to talk to us have clearly indicated that they want representation that talks about what their priorities are, not a mixed bag of what's happening in the city closest to me or the mid-sized city or whatever it may be: I've got something real hard-core I need; I want to build agrifarming; I want investment in the rural; I want better roads. You know, the theme is similar, but . . .

Mr. Hein: Sure. The interests, the priority sets are going to compete at times, but I would argue that the municipal levels of government: that is their bailiwick. The provincial representative needs to think about the province and a district that represents the province, and

they can't really do that if they're strictly urban or strictly rural. They're not going to be effectively thinking provincially. The argument, you know, in favour of the blend would say: let the municipal levels of administration and governance do their thing, and let the provincial represent the interests of the province.

I think that there's a lot to be said for pulling people out of their echo chambers and putting them together with people that are thinking and worrying about different things or, you know, wanting different things. It's good for us to spend more time outside our comfort zones, and that's what, I would argue, is going to shape better representation.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Evans, any questions or comments?

Mr. Evans: Yeah. I just want to follow up because I think you hit a very important point that has gone unnoticed by probably the majority, almost everyone who's appeared before us, and that is the distinction in terms of the responsibilities of the various levels of government. I want you to just maybe build out on that in the sense that if we look at the Municipal Government Act and we look at what really most urban individuals are concerned about when we're talking about things other than, say, schools, which again is a school board issue as well, but provincial funding comes into that; hospitals, the same sort of thing. But when we talk about zoning, streets, all of those things, those are municipal responsibilities, and I think people have conflated that.

What I'm interested in is that this particular riding is unique and is actually being used to model some other boundary changes because it's perceived to be working. I'm interested to know. You're in Medicine Hat, so you would have the urban perspective, and here we are in what some would consider the rural point of the electoral district. How do you feel your representation and your voice is being heard by your MLA? Just happens to be the Premier.

Mr. Hein: Right. I mean, it happens that she's unusually accessible, you know, in terms of town halls and appearances in the riding and things, which seems strange when I consider all the globetrotting and things going on at the same time.

I feel enriched when I see people bringing questions, you know, city people and way out by the border, those types of people that are an hour from any kind of – the people that live straight south of Bow Island or straight south of Medicine Hat, down on the border: I think it's like the best part of an hour to get to a gas pump for some of them. It's amazing how remote some of those stretches are down there.

But hearing these issues all being brought to our MLA and seeing her response and here's what we're working on, or we need to hear more about this: you know, this type of thing, being a sounding board and trying to incorporate all that, I feel enriched personally as a city person. I have a lot of friends and relatives that are still in agriculture. I'm happy when I see those issues being thought about and being put into, in our case, maybe some legislation or at least policy directions. I like that. I like that and feel very good about it.

If I can just steer a little bit into something that I maybe should have put into the report but didn't. It's just my own – I don't have academic backing for it. I do feel like the population growth problems you have in certain pockets – like, I saw how you guys were trying to understand Lethbridge in particular. Is it the west or is it the southeast? Where is the predominant growth? You're trying to get ahead of that. You don't want the boundaries you set today to be so far out of whack eight or 10 years down the road if it can be avoided.

I would argue that one of the great ways you can buffer on the perimeters of especially Calgary and Edmonton is to include more of the rurals that are less likely to explode, you know, at the rate of a thousand a month like some of these corners of the cities are doing. You could buffer that by subdividing those explosive growth areas and attaching them to something that is much less expansive. That would prevent some of the distortion. Do you have one that's like 110,000 right now?

The Chair: Close to it in Edmonton, I think.

Mr. Hein: Anyhow. I just thought I'd throw that in.

Mr. Evans: I have one more question. This doesn't relate to this particular riding, but I'm interested because you come from Castor. Aaron, could you put up Drumheller-Stettler?

1:50

Mr. Hein: Yeah. My mom is about to get a new Member of Parliament.

Mr. Evans: Is she happy about that?

Mr. Hein: She's fine with that, but she also got a new MLA when Don Getty became Premier and didn't have a riding. That was, I believe, Brian Downey who stepped down. You have Stettler constituency.

Mr. Evans: She's two for two.

The Chair: Castor is a magnet for political . . .

Mr. Hein: Well, did you guys hear that great quote from Ralph Klein about Castor?

Mr. Evans: Oh, yeah.

Dr. Martin: *Hansard* is recording all this.

Mr. Evans: That's an all-time classic.

Mr. Clark: Are you looking for the number?

The Chair: While you're doing that, Aaron, Dan, just fill me in. Is all of Redcliff in the Brooks-Medicine Hat riding?

Mr. Hein: Yes.

The Chair: But only part of Cypress county?

Mr. Hein: Correct. So all of Cypress county . . .

The Chair: Okay. Yeah.

Mr. Hein: Here we go.

Mr. Evans: So we've got Drumheller-Stettler. What I'm interested in, your experience . . .

Mr. Hein: Oh, look at that. Look at that growth. What's that, 64 people in 12 years?

Mr. Evans: Yeah. It's massive.

I want to know sort of where you would flow on your knowledge in terms of Castor. Where would somebody who's residing in Castor go for, say, groceries or whatever? Coronation, Veteran, Consort? Then if you can maybe speak to if you have any knowledge about Oyen and Youngstown and Cereal and those communities. Where do they flow?

Mr. Hein: Sure. Well, I can tell you that as a boy in the '60s and '70s in Castor we would make our major shopping trips to Stettler, but we were already going to Red Deer for a dentist. A carload of us would go at a time. I think that persists a lot. There are more physicians in Stettler now, more services, so there's more being done. Like, there are some babies being born in Stettler. Not so much in Castor. I understand my cousin's son has for the last year and a half become the resident medical doctor in Castor, which is very exciting.

Mr. Evans: What about Coronation and Consort? Where do they flow?

Mr. Hein: I think they tend to flow west, but Consort and Oyen also do things in Saskatoon a little bit. You know, there's some interest going across the border. Some Oyen people will come to Medicine Hat for their major shopping runs and doctoring and things. Medicine Hat has a bit of a magnetic appeal medically for knee and hip replacements and things. This same young man who's now a medical doctor: I ran into his mom and his granddad, who was from Killam. They were in Medicine Hat about 6, 8 years ago because he came to Medicine Hat from Killam to do a knee.

So it depends on the interest, but I would say that for this riding Red Deer is a primary magnet. There's a little bit of interest in the direction of Camrose. Stettler is more and more of a service centre. I've never known anybody who went to Drum. You know, my wife and I did live in Drum for a couple of years between baby number one and the twins.

Mr. Evans: And Cereal, Oyen, Acadia Valley, Empress: where do they go?

Mr. Hein: To my knowledge, they look south and a little bit – I don't know how many people are between. I can actually tell you that right where you have the wording "electoral district Drumheller" is where our family's homestead was from 1928. They were in that little hamlet called Spondin right in there. But the interest has always been Stettler and west for all the people I know well.

The people I now have come to know in the Oyen belt and the – I don't know many people along highway 9, but a lot of highway 9 does reach into Saskatchewan for certain things.

The Chair: Okay. That's where our jurisdiction ends. We can't get into Saskatchewan, so let's stop you there.

Mr. Clark, did you change your mind? You have a question?

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Sorry. I'm just listening to this. As you can tell, this is something we think about a lot, but we're hearing lots of feedback on it, and it's an interesting and important topic. I just want to say thank you for coming and for doing the work.

You've put together your report, so you've given some thought to this. I wonder if you can just maybe play a thought experiment with me. Let's imagine that Castor is not fortunate enough to be close to the beautiful Battle River but is two miles outside of the northeast corner of the city of Calgary. The numbers dictate that we need to create a blended constituency that has 50,000 people inside the city of Calgary, and the remainder of that constituency let's call 10,000 for round numbers, including Castor.

Mr. Hein: Sure.

Mr. Clark: That's one constituency now. How do you feel about that?

Mr. Hein: If I was living there or something, I would think that that's good. You know, I already have a lot of interest and I'd probably do a lot of business in that part of Calgary and probably have my lawyer or physician in there. It would make sense to me. You know, I'm a 60-odd-year-old guy. Yeah, I would like that. I would like that.

The dwarfing. I think what you're getting at is if you're, say, 90 per cent urban interests and 10 per cent or less rural interests, I can see how that would dictate how much time and energy and effort maybe that MLA could give us. But I think that rural people have in a lot of cases learned to be better at expressing themselves and approaching politicians, at least in my experience. I watched my mom and dad. You know, they were always involved in Social Credit politics in my childhood. I have a picture, that I'm very fond of, where my brother and I are eating pancakes beside Werner Schmidt, who was aspiring to become the Premier but didn't quite make it.

In any case, I think that even if you have a microscopic piece of rural in a predominantly urban riding, I would not mind being in the rural in that case, personally.

Mr. Clark: Okay. Good. I guess just a follow-up. Are there any other principles, if we have to blend, is there anything we need to be thinking about if we need to make some of those kinds of choices?

Mr. Hein: Well, I think one of the things that I just tried to slip in there at the end is that you can kind of future-proof your boundaries from getting kind of exploded out of all proportion. If you do that, you know, if you understand how much of a rural to attach and that kind of a thing, there's a future-proofing potential that you can try to incorporate. I think that most people that are rural and feel like they may not be heard are probably going to become more outspoken in that case. I think you can count on it, especially in a place like Alberta.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Hein. If you'd have been presenting in Calgary, you would have interrupted the refrain that we heard there. Thank you. You're excused. I have to . . .

Mr. Hein: Well, can I just add one little footnote?

The Chair: Yeah.

Mr. Hein: It seems to me that the antiblend voice is an organized campaign. If you just take the number of people who come with an antiblend message and the number of people who came with a pro-blend message, it's probably a runaway in favour of the antiblend. But I perceive that that is an organized effort, and I think that that is about echo chamber maintenance and protection, and I would strongly caution you to consider that.

Thank you.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much. We will be in Medicine Hat tomorrow, and we'll be looking forward to what we hear there.

Mr. Hein: Yeah. I tried to book there, but you were all full.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thanks for making the effort to come out.

Mr. Hein: Thank you.

The Chair: Our next presenter is Stacey Vanderveen. Introduce yourself, tell us where you're from, and begin your presentation.

Ms Vanderveen: I'm Stacey Vanderveen. I come to you from the rural riding, I'm calling it, but after hearing from our previous presenter I think it is one of those more diverse ridings, of Chestermere-Strathmore.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms Vanderveen: Life in rural Alberta is quite different from the large urban centres. People who live on farms, acreages, or in rural clusters rely on nearby service hubs for their everyday needs, whether it's going to work, seeing a doctor, sending their kids to school, picking up their groceries. These patterns: rather than thinking about urban versus rural, I'm looking at it as communities of interest that should be taken into account when drawing these electoral boundaries. I think it's important to keep communities with shared economic, social, and service ties within the same constituencies. There are three important examples of these natural communities in my district.

2:00

First, down in the south here, the hamlet of Carseland. I think that should remain in the same riding as Strathmore. These two communities are very closely linked. People from Carseland rely on Strathmore for schools, medical services. They go into Strathmore for groceries. The Strathmore handibus runs a shuttle between the two. Families from both places participate in the same sports leagues and community events. Separating them would disrupt strong community ties.

Second, up in the north just above Chestermere there is the area of Conrich. This, I think, should end up in a Calgary electoral district. It's officially part of Rocky View county, but in practice it functions as a Calgary suburb. It has no local service of its own. It's a bedroom community. Residents all drive into Calgary for work and worship, shop in the city, rely on the city's health care services. It's directly connected to Calgary by major roads. It more closely resembles the city's urban fringe than rural Alberta, so including that area in a Calgary district would result in more accurate and relevant representation.

The Chair: Do you know the name of the Calgary electoral division that it is proximate to?

Ms Vanderveen: I know it's represented by Mickey Amery only because my brother and sister-in-law live right there.

Mrs. Samson: Calgary-Cross.

Ms Vanderveen: Calgary-Cross. That sounds right. Yeah.

The Chair: Okay. So it's near Calgary-Cross.

Ms Vanderveen: Right.

The third example I have is my hometown of Langdon. It's somewhat of a hub on its own but is, right in the centre there, deeply connected to both Strathmore and Chestermere not just by geography but through shared school services and regional planning, sitting right in the middle of the two. All three communities are already working together to prepare for the De Havilland field development coming to Wheatland county, also right in the centre of that triangle. This historic project will land right in the triangle formed by the three communities. It's already driving aligned efforts such as aerospace career and trade initiatives and plans for residential growth. Keeping Langdon with Chestermere and Strathmore in the same constituency ensures unified representation.

When boundaries split up these functional communities, separating where people live from where they go about their daily lives, it makes representation less effective, in my opinion. MLAs are better able to advocate for their constituents when their ridings reflect the actual connections and routines of the people who live there. I would urge you to keep these three examples in mind when considering the new boundaries.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much. Thank you for your very concise, punchy presentation. I'm sure we're going to have some questions.

Mr. Evans, can I start with you?

Mr. Evans: Can you tell me about the De Havilland project? I anticipated, you know . . .

The Chair: Yeah. What's the workforce?

Mr. Evans: Yeah. And where is it coming from? Is it going to be staffed out of Calgary?

Ms Vanderveen: There's already a lot of talk. I'm seeing growth in Strathmore.

Mr. Evans: Maybe just tell us what it is and then when it's expected to be sort of operational.

Ms Vanderveen: See, it's been coming online for so long, it seems, that I have stopped paying too close attention to the timeline other than that I believe it's breaking ground in the next year.

Mr. Evans: It's like a cheque-is-in-the-mail kind of thing.

Ms Vanderveen: Yes. But they seem to tell us delivery is very soon.

Mr. Evans: What's it supposed to produce?

Ms Vanderveen: Aerospace something or other. I'm not super clear on what it's doing, so I can't give you further details on the development itself.

Mr. Evans: You can see that there's been a positive population growth of 11 per cent. From your knowledge, where would you say that that's primarily occurring?

Ms Vanderveen: Primarily in Chestermere, but Langdon is growing very quickly as well.

Mr. Evans: What would you estimate Langdon – is Langdon a hamlet?

Ms Vanderveen: Yes. Interestingly, because we have the population. I think we're between 7,000 and 8,000, so we could move to . . .

Mr. Evans: Sherwood Park is a hamlet. They never will change. There are some advantages.

Ms Vanderveen: Well, that's it. Yeah.

Mr. Evans: Which county or municipal district is Langdon in? Do you know?

Ms Vanderveen: Yes. Rocky View. We have one councillor that represents us in Rocky View.

Mr. Evans: You heard the previous presenter, Mr. Hein, talking about the advantages of – he used blended constituencies. Most people have talked about hybrid in the past, so either blended or hybrid. What's your perception of that debate?

Ms Vanderveen: I think we already have that in Chestermere-Strathmore in that we have those two urban hubs of Chestermere and Strathmore, and then we have the rural areas around it as well. Then we have some of those – it's hardly even suburban; it's urban and Conrich. I'm seeing there's benefit to the diversity, but there's also spreading the MLA too thin. Perhaps in a place like Brooks-Medicine Hat then we're just talking about Brooks and then rural area around it whereas I'm concerned about our MLA. She's talking Chestermere, which is more city. We're talking Strathmore, which is an agricultural technically a city but a town, and then we're Langdon, which is a blend of the two. So we're already talking about a lot of diversity, and then throw in the whole deeply rural area south around Carseland and whatnot. There is a point where it's a lot for an MLA to keep up with.

Mr. Evans: Are you able to articulate – you may not have thought about this. Are you able to, in your mind, differentiate what roles and responsibilities an MLA would have versus the roles and responsibilities of, say, a town councillor or city councillor in Chestermere and Strathmore or the county as a reeve or a county councillor?

Ms Vanderveen: Again, in these more rural-urban mixes in my speaking with constituents – I do some volunteering with the MLA – it becomes a blend because this highway is part of Chestermere, and then this highway right across becomes the MLA's responsibility. So there is a lot of overlap, in my opinion, and it's a little bit hard to differentiate in our communities because of how they're laid out beyond, obviously, schools, health care. That's easily set aside.

Mr. Evans: Thank you so much.

The Chair: Okay. Susan, any questions?

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. I wanted to ask – I missed it because I think I was dwelling on the Conrich point. You said that the De Havilland build is a triangle of three communities, one being yours in Langdon. What were the other two?

Ms Vanderveen: Chestermere and Strathmore.

Mrs. Samson: Okay. Thank you. I didn't pick up on that. Thank you. I'm good.

The Chair: If I can encapsulate what I hear you saying, ma'am, it's that you are of the view that you have a hybrid riding already, and communities of interest can be contained within a hybrid riding.

Ms Vanderveen: Yeah. I think it is.

The Chair: Your big concern is the, my word, stress of the MLA of juggling all the demands?

Ms Vanderveen: Somewhat.

The Chair: Okay. Good. Well, thank you.
Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you very much. As you can tell, we've been dwelling on this topic of hybrid or blended, call them what you will. You describe very usefully a situation in which you have a city, a

ruralish town, smaller villages and small towns, and rural area plus some significant industry that binds, in terms of workforce and the like, some of these pieces altogether. Well, that's very much to your advantage, and congratulations.

One thing we haven't talked about is everything below 22X. Now, how would you characterize that district? It's largely farming, I suspect.

2:10

Ms Vanderveen: It is. I guess Indus is just north of 22X, a small community. They come into Langdon, Strathmore, Carseland, and there's the Speargrass Golf Course there with another little suburban hub of itself. Those are the ones that drive into Strathmore. Some of them are hopping onto 22X for work, but you can get into Strathmore just as quickly and with less traffic headache.

Dr. Martin: By driving up 24?

Ms Vanderveen: Yes, or up 817 as well.

Dr. Martin: Yeah. Really, that's my only question. Thank you.

Ms Vanderveen: You're welcome.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much for being here. I guess a couple of things. De Havilland project: they're going to build those really cool fire bomber water planes.

Ms Vanderveen: I knew it was something that flies, but that's as far as I know.

Mr. Clark: If *Hansard* doesn't mind, I'm going to talk about airplanes for the next . . .

Ms Vanderveen: Fantastic.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. The Twin Otter and the Q400. I'm quite familiar with this project for a number of reasons beyond just being a bit of a nerd. Yeah. Starting construction soonish, and sort of '27-28 is about when that'll happen. It's a fantastic project.

Ms Vanderveen: Oh, it's even further out than I thought.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. They're building a whole airport. It's about a 10-year project. I mean, it's really fantastic, a huge win for the region, for the province. It's great. It's great for Alberta. I think it's a really exciting project.

With that comes population growth, as you've identified. One of the challenges Strathmore has is that your growth has ticked up, and you're actually quite a bit above average, I think 11 per cent, if I pull my numbers up here quickly. Yeah, about 11 and a half per cent over based on the numbers you see there. So I'm curious. I think you've given us some suggestions around Conrich. Any other thoughts if you did need to – you know, I look at Delacour at the very top there. You've given us some suggestions of what I think you'd like to keep together. Any other ideas on, if we needed to, as my colleague likes to say, nip and tuck a little bit around the constituency, what definitely should be together and what perhaps could move on to a different area?

Dr. Martin: Be bold.

Ms Vanderveen: Sorry?

Dr. Martin: Be bold.

Ms Vanderveen: Places like Dalroy have that option with that they either come into Chestermere or they head into Calgary because it's almost equal to get to Airdrie, Calgary. They have options. This probably isn't going to really future-proof against population growth, but tucked in – where is that? I'm trying to remember where the Prince of Peace community is, where it would be on this map. On the western side there. That's a retirement community.

The Chair: That's in this riding?

Ms Vanderveen: It is. It's called Prince of Peace.

Now, because it's a retirement community and there's a live-in seniors' home in Chestermere – there's also one in Prince of Peace – those two do remain somewhat connected. The seniors having lived there for quite some time tend to come into Chestermere for their services. It's a little quieter than in Calgary, but it is right on the edge there. The growth is so concentrated to Chestermere, Strathmore, Langdon that without lopping off one of those big ones – like I said, those communities living right in the middle, they go back and forth. So as far as future-proofing for population, that would be a tough one.

Mr. Clark: That's great. Thank you. That's very helpful. Doesn't make our job a whole lot easier, but I do appreciate the lay of the land. That's very helpful. Thank you.

The Chair: Yeah. Thank you so much. I would have paid a lot more attention driving out of Calgary this morning if I knew you were presenting this.

Ms Vanderveen: I'm sorry. I had to go for a drive, too. Worked for my schedule today better than Calgary.

The Chair: This is very, very helpful. You're probably the only person that's presented on behalf of this electoral division, so thank you so much. Please feel free to stay. We may have some time for some more general conversation, if you can. Thank you.

Our next presenter, Mr. Arno Doerksen. Good afternoon. Please identify yourself and tell us where you live and begin your presentation.

Mr. Doerksen: I'm Arno Doerksen. I live at Gem, Alberta, which is about 35 miles northwest of here in the northwestern part of the county of Newell. I've lived there pretty well all of my life. I think the matter of representation is a pretty serious thing and appreciate the fact that we've been well represented in many respects in this area over a long period of time, and I appreciate your interest and charitability to the subject area today that you're talking about for the last few weeks and into the next few months. It's important.

Personally, I've been a representative of cattle producers way back in the late '90s and early 2000s. I was the MLA for Strathmore-Brooks, that has been talked about as a riding, from 2008 to 2012. I'm currently the reeve of the county of Newell, but I'm representing today as an individual. I don't have a perspective based on discussions with the county of Newell council by any means, but I think the presentations you've heard today from Mr. Gerstein were significant and accurate. I also appreciate the presentation that you've just had with regard to the ...

The Chair: You know that territory.

Mr. Doerksen: I do know that territory a little better than I would have had I not been the MLA for Strathmore-Brooks.

I think one of the things that I want to point to, really, is one of the slides that you presented earlier, the charge to find clear and understandable boundaries. I don't think there's anything much

more important than that. When people are confused about where they should vote or who their representative is, that's a problem. So from that perspective, the work that you do is important.

I will recall that when I was an MLA, this riding of Strathmore-Brooks, as it was in the day, I think after the first report was chopped up into about four or five different ridings. It ended up staying as it was for the 2012 election. It was still Strathmore-Brooks, which was entirely represented by the boundaries of the county of Newell and the county of Wheatland. Everything within the boundaries of the county of Newell and the county of Wheatland was Strathmore-Brooks, and in the day that worked well for at least two electoral boundary divisions.

With regard to Brooks-Medicine Hat I notice that we're bang on what the target is in terms of population, so maybe your job is done here. I realize it's never quite that simple, but I would add, too, that if you look at the boundaries of the county of Newell, it's significant to keep that together. I realize that not every county can enjoy the fact that they're all within one electoral boundary, but I think, where it's possible, it's a good thing because people understand those boundaries.

The county of Newell encompasses the city of Brooks, the town of Bassano, and the villages of Duchess and Rosemary. We also encompass entirely the eastern irrigation district, which is one of the biggest irrigation districts in the province. We're served by a chamber of commerce that is shared with the city of Medicine Hat called the Southeast Alberta Chamber of Commerce, which is an affinity that is workable and relatively new. It hasn't been in place that long.

The Chair: Sorry. What's the name of it again?

2:20

Mr. Doerksen: It's the Southeast Alberta Chamber of Commerce, which has recently included the Brooks area and the county of Newell. Also, the Palliser Economic Partnership is well represented by the municipalities in this area.

I think that makes a lot of sense. If that doesn't need to be disrupted, it shouldn't be. Everyone who pays taxes and lives on the perimeter of a county knows which county they belong to because they know where they pay taxes. When you start changing boundaries for specific reasons, if you can use existing boundaries, whether it's rivers or municipalities, we should hang on to that and appreciate if that perspective is maintained. It's easy in this riding. You'll have more difficult challenges outside of the area, I expect.

I think the whole matter of understandable boundaries is significant. I appreciate this from the perspective of both a resident, as a municipal councillor now, but also there was a time when I was the MLA for the area. The fact that there were definable boundaries was significant. That makes it easier. I think, from a municipal perspective, you know, we have one MLA that we can meet with. We don't have to try to get two MLAs in the room to represent our area. That's good for us. Again, I realize that doesn't happen everywhere, but where we can maintain that kind of completeness, we should try to do that.

Other than that – I think that's my primary interest. It would be quite disappointing if this riding were to get chopped up too much because those kinds of changes and the uniqueness of this area – I mean, we're probably as diverse as any riding in the province because of the dynamic of the JBS plant in the county here. The number of people groups and language representation that that represents is probably similar to the city of Toronto except for the population is smaller, but the subgroups of people have melded into this community in a remarkable way.

I also want to speak to the fact, and this isn't really one of your primary considerations, that the municipalities work well here together, and there's a long history of that. When I was the MLA for Strathmore-Brooks, one of the significant things about the Brooks-Newell region was how well the municipal representatives worked together to get things done, the result of which is the fact that all of the smaller communities in this county are connected with paved roads. That's because neighbours worked together to get things done. I think that is evidence of good representation. I think that's what we all look for. We want somebody representing us who can connect with us in some way, and we've been well served in this area. I might be a little bit biased for a four-year period there, but for a long period of time, I would say, we've been well represented.

That's about all I have to say at the outset.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Doerksen. I knew I remembered that name from somewhere.

Susan, I'm going to start with you. Any questions?

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. A comment and a question. As we started moving around the province outside of Calgary and Edmonton, we talked a lot about clear, identifiable boundaries, and to that end we started using the overlay of the counties. You're absolutely right. The existing riding fits inside the county of Newell, so people would know where they vote. That's important, and that's a good point to make again.

When you talk about munis that work together, are you referring to the cities of Brooks and Medicine Hat and the county of Newell?

Mr. Doerksen: Yeah. More specifically the city of Brooks with the county of Newell because the county of Newell encompasses five different municipalities, including our own, but we work well with representatives of the city of Medicine Hat and also collaborate regularly with the MD of Cypress, the county of Wheatland, all of our neighbours. It just works better that way.

There are lots of examples of where if effort isn't put into that kind of a relationship, the taxpayers pay. I think it's in everybody's best interests for people of the surrounding region to work together where they can, notwithstanding the fact that there are differences from time to time, but that's life.

Mrs. Samson: There always are. Thank you.

The Chair: John, any questions or comments?

Mr. Evans: Yeah. I'm really glad you came today because you're wearing two hats that I'm really interested in asking you your experience in dealing with. As an MLA and as a reeve you should have vast experience both in terms of the roles of the MLA and the role of the municipal government or the reeve and the county. I think many people don't understand the differences, and they're set out in the Municipal Government Act. If you have trouble sleeping, that's a great read to fix that, if you wanted to do that. Could you talk about your experience and how you understand, in terms of carrying out both those roles, the differences and how people interact and really get their problems resolved at the various levels?

Mr. Doerksen: You're right about the sleep apnea. I've never got past the first chapter.

Mr. Evans: Oh, it's a beautiful cure.

Mr. Doerksen: That's an interesting concept and certainly one that I learned a lot about. I hadn't studied it ahead of time. I'm a cattle rancher for a living and was a representative with a focus on the

beef industry prior to becoming an MLA. I was drinking out of a firehose for a while after I became an MLA as with when I became a municipal councillor four years ago.

My experience as an MLA certainly informed the importance to me of good local representation for local government. It's often taken for granted. It shouldn't be because good representation at every level is really important. Certainly as an MLA you're looking at the larger issues that the province has some jurisdiction over, but it's the local government, the local municipalities that are boots on the ground and get things done and can act more nimble and more quickly than the provincial government can.

I'm not sure if any of you are familiar with the crop diversification centre south, that used to be called the hort station, in Brooks here, which has been a provincial asset since 1937 or so. The province has recently turned it over to the county of Newell with a 10-year lease to try to get something going in there again. It's been relatively quiet in the community whereas it used to provide jobs for up to 100 people. It'll be a challenge, but I think the local interest can move more quickly than the province can. There will be a chapter in my book on that someday maybe. But the ability of local government to get things done and move quickly is remarkable and important to delivering services to Albertans.

Mr. Evans: As an MLA how often did you get questions that you ultimately ended up directing those individuals to the municipal government, you know, to the county or to the city to get it resolved? As a reeve how often are you getting questions that you're having to direct people to the MLA because it's out of your scope or your jurisdiction? Can you speak to that?

Mr. Doerksen: Well, that happens quite regularly, but there's also a crossover. I think as a local representative of a municipality you have an opportunity to speak to the higher levels of government and to influence outcomes there. While the decisions may be made in a different circle, there's still opportunity to develop influence. That doesn't happen overnight, but it's important. I think vice versa, too.

I have to say that when I was an MLA I was greatly advantaged by the fact that the local municipalities in the county of Newell, the city of Brooks – well, Brooks became a city while I was an MLA. In this region the fact that people work together was a great advantage and a great help to me as the representative to the province.

I don't know if that answers the question.

Mr. Evans: Thank you so much. I appreciate that. Thanks for coming and sharing that.

2:30

The Chair: Dr. Martin, any questions?

Dr. Martin: Thank you, and thank you. Certainly, a pleasure to meet someone with the depth of experience in government and carrying the burden on your shoulders as often as you have for Albertans. Thank you for that.

I want to ask you further now that you've had a bit of time to reflect back on that experience. One of the earlier presenters here today talked about – how to put it? – that a parochial electoral district is something of an echo chamber. I think his general point was that the diversity or types of communities within an electoral district amounts to healthiness in the voice that the MLA can bring to the legislative Chamber. Would you agree, sympathize with that line of thinking?

Mr. Doerksen: I think if that diversity exists within the area being represented, it's accurate, but it doesn't need to be. I think the big

thing is that you actually represent the people that you were appointed and charged with representing. In the case of there being vast diversity, you have to learn to understand that. If there's a great deal of singularity in terms of a perspective, then that's what you want to represent notwithstanding understanding that there will be various varying views.

The big thing is spending the time to understand the perspective of the people you're trying to represent. That's also what really gives strength to the opportunity to represent, when you know you have somebody standing behind you, and I could tell some stories about that. It's important that as a representative you know you're representing something more than your own perspective. The exchange and the relationship that developed for me as an MLA with the people of the county of Newell and the Brooks area was that this was an area where I did business for many years, so that was relatively easy although much more diverse than I thought it was, you know, after I became an MLA but also the rich opportunity to meet and get to know the interests and the perspectives of the people in the Strathmore area.

The value is taking the time to understand what the perspective is whereas, you know, I think that can be accurate, but the big thing is representing the people that you are representing.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: Thank you. Great that you're here. Again, yeah, I recognize the name, and it all twigs now. Yeah. It is really – again, yes, your municipal and provincial experience is really helpful for us, and I wanted to just dig a little deeper into that. I've been thinking a bit about what you said earlier about municipalities working more quickly. Would you agree that that's probably because the sandbox you're playing in at a municipal level is smaller, and the issues are a little more tangible? You can kind of reach out and touch them as a resident.

Mr. Doerksen: Yeah. That's true, I think. Yeah. Typically it's roads and water and then other things that come up along the way and some economic development, but you can kick a lot of tires before you get much done on that level sometimes. You really want to stay out of the way of business in the local government area but also in the province, and we hear lots about that in terms of red tape reduction and all that kind of thing, right?

Mr. Clark: Certainly, in this part of the world, and back to the De Havilland thing, they did a pretty good job of picking up development if that's where they're landing, so that's good.

In that context, though, would you also agree that in your role as an MLA the issues are just bigger, right? It's a little more complex maybe between different jurisdictions or, you know, grant funding, or you're going to deal with different ministries. Is that a fair characterization of the job of an MLA, to try to navigate some of the big machinery of government?

Mr. Doerksen: Yeah. Absolutely. There are always competing interests that go all across the province and a limited budget. You have to, first of all, ensure that you're representing a legitimate position from at home and then grow support for whatever the initiative is. You know, the De Havilland project that you've talked about is significant. I would suggest that by the time that is developed to where it's going to develop, there will be growth in this area as well.

Certainly, the impact of Calgary and the urban areas around – you know, in the county of Wheatland, that we talked about a few minutes ago, the growth has been more rapid and significant and will continue to be that way, but I expect we'll see more growth in this area over a 10-year time period as that develops. I think there's a fair indication that there will be business moving east from that at some point, too, which is good.

Mr. Clark: I certainly hope so. Yeah, it's a huge project and all the spinoffs.

It makes me wonder, then: is it beneficial, then, as an MLA to have some focus where you've got communities that are kind of like with like? I come back to your earlier comment of saying, you know, the county of Newell and Wheatland county were both – kind of that was the four walls of your previous constituency. Did that allow you to focus better and better represent your constituency, do you think?

Mr. Doerksen: Well, it's the only thing I have to compare to. I don't know if it was better, but it certainly was a good mix. You know, I think there was impact from that. As you move further west, closer to Calgary, it was a more urban-influenced area. From that perspective, probably Brooks and Medicine Hat today have a little bit more in common than maybe Brooks and Strathmore although not really either. I found them both to be communities that were heavily impacted by rural perspective. I've often said that the money is made in the country and spent in the city, right? The dynamic of rural Alberta is pretty significant all across this province, and that's a significant thing.

Mr. Clark: One last question if you'll indulge me. Looking back to numbers, at the end of the day, a lot of this, not all of it – it's not purely a numbers game, but unfortunately there are certain parameters we have to respect. We can't do it all. We can't have both Wheatland and county of Newell together and keep this current constituency of Brooks-Medicine Hat. Do you have a preference? If we could put back together – and I did just a little bit of cocktail napkin arithmetic here – all of Wheatland, all of Newell and Brooks and Strathmore and Siksika, if we put that all together, it all adds up to about the right number, give or take, just based on some brief Google searches that I will be ready to stand corrected on if I didn't quite get it right. But that seems like – just hypothetically, that's a viable constituency. Do you have a preference on if we could put that back together versus keeping Brooks-Medicine Hat?

Mr. Doerksen: No. I'd leave Brooks-Medicine Hat the way it is. I think, from the numbers, you're going to be making some changes around Calgary in the area that includes the county of Wheatland. This is a riding here that can stay the same. I think the growth pattern here is probably closer to – and that's evidenced by the number, right? I think this riding is within 15, 10, or something of your targeted average. I think it indicates that growth has been relatively steady with what the average has been in the province in this area. So I wouldn't put – I didn't come here thinking it should be put back together. It was good in the day, but growth happens where it happens, and you've got to make the adjustments that you make.

Mr. Clark: Perfect. Really helpful. Thank you.

Mr. Doerksen: I think the dynamic of – you know, there's been some talk about the difference between urban and rural. There is definitely some, but there are a lot of similarities at the end of the day. My family has had the privilege of direct marketing products

right in the city of Calgary, beef in particular. The dynamic of that relationship when it develops, where a primary producer gets an opportunity to connect with the consumer in the city of Calgary who doesn't know where this region even is, is pretty significant and dynamic. People want to know where their food comes from, and that's only increasing. That's a bit of an aside. I think we can all, like, understand each other's perspectives if we want to. The important thing is not to live in a silo, and that applies to all of us.

Again, I want to thank you for the work that you're doing and appreciate your inquisitiveness after two weeks already. That's awesome.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Doerksen. Your presentation is very much appreciated. My list says that you're the last presenter.

Is there anyone else here? We won't charge you extra for not registering and presenting. Anyone else want to come up and present and say something to the commission about the electoral boundaries process, this riding in particular? Anyone else?

Okay. Well, we'll adjourn our hearings until Medicine Hat tomorrow morning, but we'll hang around. If you want to talk informally, we're happy to do so.

[The hearing adjourned at 2:40 p.m.]



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

Medicine Hat

Friday, June 13, 2025
9:01 a.m.

Transcript No. 20

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission

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Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Medicine Hat

Public Participants

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Gilles Blouin
Griffin Bray
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Darlene Dee
Jim Horsman
Donald B. Knudsen
Rob Renner
Marle Roberts
Stanley Sakamoto
Holly Turnbull
Bob Wanner

9:01 a.m.

Friday, June 13, 2025

[Justice Miller in the chair]

The Chair: Well, good morning, everyone, and welcome to our last public hearing of the week, the Medicine Hat public hearing of the Electoral Boundaries Commission.

I want to introduce the commission. First of all, my name is Justice Dallas Miller. I serve as the chairman of the commission, and I also serve as a justice of the Court of King's Bench.

To my immediate left is Susan Samson, a long-time resident of Sylvan Lake and an experienced municipal politician. She served a term as mayor and some terms as councillor of Sylvan Lake. Susan volunteers in the community and for that volunteer activity has been recognized as citizen of the year of Sylvan Lake, and she's also a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II diamond jubilee medal.

To her left is Mr. John Evans, KC, a lawyer from a province-wide firm known as Stringam. He works out of their Lethbridge office but does conduct trials throughout Alberta. His legal ability has been recognized by way of receiving the King's Counsel designation, or KC. John also volunteers as a member of the Judicial Nominating Committee of Alberta.

To my immediate right is Dr. Julian Martin from Sherwood Park. Dr. Martin is a retired history professor from the University of Alberta, with all his advanced degrees received from Cambridge University. Dr. Martin has volunteered on many committees in his community in Edmonton and Sherwood Park over the years and has served on some quasi-judicial bodies in the province of Alberta.

At the far end of the table is Mr. Greg Clark, an entrepreneur and consultant focusing on information and knowledge management. Greg is from Edmonton, and we benefit from his experience as he was a former MLA for the riding of Calgary-Elbow. He, too, is a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II platinum jubilee medal. Currently Greg serves as the chairman of the Balancing Pool of Alberta and advises and consults widely with organizations relative to proper governance.

We are your Electoral Boundaries Commission, and we can tell you that this is our third week on the road. We've covered much of southern Saskatchewan, starting in – wow. It's a long three weeks. Southern Alberta. Yeah. We're not extending into Saskatchewan. We didn't get the funding approval, unfortunately.

We started in Pincher Creek, Lethbridge, and we've been to Edmonton and parts around Edmonton, Calgary this week, Brooks yesterday, and here we are in Medicine Hat today, the most beautiful part of the province, I've tried to tell my fellow commissioners. We've seen some highlights in Medicine Hat yesterday, which we truly appreciate. By the way, when I was thinking of my introductory remarks two weeks ago, I was hoping to congratulate the city of Medicine Hat, unfortunately. But congratulations for a fine showing at the Memorial Cup. It wasn't completely successful, but you certainly put the city on the map the last several weeks. So we are your commission. Next week we have our final week in northern Alberta, and we conclude on June 23.

Let me walk through the details of the days ahead for us. The electoral commission is bound by the electoral commissions act, and in that legislation the Alberta Legislature has expanded the number of seats. Currently there are 87. They've authorized this commission to draw boundaries for a total of 89 seats across the province.

The timeline for our commission is helpful for the public to know. First of all, in late March of this year the Speaker of the Legislature appointed this commission, and from the time of appointment going forward, we are on a clock. In April we met for a couple of weeks as a commission to decide process, talk about

schedule, and then we started our public hearings in late May, and, of course, all of June we are travelling the province.

When we finish our public hearings in late June, it's our task then to deliberate and to consider the information we've heard from public hearings, consider the population data that we have, consider the existing boundaries, and then, in turn, come up with what's come to be known as an interim report. The deadline for that interim report is late October. That will be filed with the Speaker's office, and it will be made public. You will then be able to look at that report and grade us, in a sense, and give us feedback. We then have a further round of public hearings throughout November to February, and we take the input from those public hearings and work on a final report, which must be submitted to the Speaker by late March of 2026.

Of course, I'm not telling you folks anything new. You're obviously engaged and interested in the process. In Alberta we have currently 87 ridings – soon to be 89 ridings – and one member per electoral division, and the individuals living in that division elect that particular MLA. It's helpful for us to get some perspective as to what happened the last time there was an electoral boundaries commission. Of course, as you probably know, every two election cycles, or every eight to 10 years, the province of Alberta is obligated by legislation to conduct a review of its boundaries through the Electoral Boundaries Commission process.

In 2017 the previous commission issued a report, and that report was based on a population of Alberta of just over 4 million people. We are now basing our report on a population of 4.8 million people. I'll talk about the population and how we arrive at it and how we ascertain or determine the population in a second. In 2017 the previous commission dealt with a formula, as you see on the screen right now. They took the population of 4,062,609, divided it by 87 ridings, and the mean average is shown there at just under 47,000. That's not the target. The target is a range of minus 25 of that average or plus 25. That's the target under Canadian law that we are authorized to use. We do not operate in Canada on the principle of one person, one vote. That's an American concept. Rather, we have a slightly different approach.

So that's what happened in 2017. What we're looking at this time around for our Electoral Boundaries Commission, the population we're using is as of July 2024. Now, the act requires us to rely on the most recent decennial census. That census, the last census, was 2021. It's not really reasonable to just rely on that census. The feds do a census by the Constitution every 10 years, but practically they do it every five years, so the next census wouldn't be until 2026. We can't wait that long, so we take the 2021 census, and what most people don't realize is that Statistics Canada updates that regularly, updates that information regularly across the country, and the Alberta Treasury Board also does its own assessments and validates the figures from the federal government. The best figures that we have in terms of population, in terms of verification and validation are as of July 2024, and that's the figure: 4,888,723.

9:10

I know that there are news reports that have come out since we've assessed and looked at the population numbers, that have said Alberta's population may be over 5 million. All estimations or all census data is, in a sense, an estimation, but we are relying on that figure of 4.8 million. When you look at the average over 89 constituencies, it's almost 55,000 per constituency. Again, the target rate is minus 25 to plus 25. So those figures are the target rates that we'll be relying on.

With the intense population growth in the province, the challenge for us is that the population hasn't grown equally across the province. So we have to sort out how we deal with the boundaries

and take into consideration that population growth. As I said, we do not rely on the principle of one person, one vote; rather, section 3 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms that deals with democratic rights and, as interpreted by the Supreme Court of Canada, talks about Canada as having the principle of effective representation. We'll talk about how we arrive at that in a second.

The legislation provides several principles for us as a commission to come up with the goal of effective representation. First, the relative sparsity and density of populations: obviously, we take that into consideration. We also take into account issues of common community interests. I've noticed in some of the submissions that people really focus on that, and that's an important factor as well. Geographic features. Particularly for constituencies outside of Calgary and Edmonton, geographic features are something that we take into consideration and utilize in order to do our job. Communication and transportation lines across the province are also a consideration for us to determine boundaries.

Our goal is to ultimately come up with a proposal that provides understandable and clear electoral boundaries for Albertans. Finally, the legislation does give us the ability to take into consideration other factors that we may think are important or necessary or add value to our ultimate recommendations.

That's where the public comes in. Albertans, we want to hear from you. We want input locally. We can't be in every constituency. I'm not sure how many cities or towns we've been in, but we have done our best to canvass the province and hear from people. I have to say that of medium-sized centres, the attendance here tops the charts. We have more people in the opening session here than I think we've had in any of the Calgary sessions. So hats off to Medicine Hat. You obviously are engaged, and it's been a fantastic exercise for us. We have learned about the province. We've heard contradictory and conflicting submissions. We've heard very interesting submissions. We've heard and learned so much about the province, and we're not even close to being finished. So kudos to Medicine Hat for having the turnout you have.

This is the current map of electoral divisions in Alberta, and we will bring up the local constituencies here in a second. Our task is to take that map, create 89 boundaries where there are currently 87. This is part of the process of us hearing from Albertans. We want to hear from you.

We've got a full list this morning. Again, probably not only the most well attended but the best subscribed of presenters. So I'm going to start right away. Those are my comments. I've introduced the commission to you. We ask the presenters to come up when I call them. All I ask is that you introduce yourself, tell us roughly where you live, and begin your presentation. We do have a bit of a time limit. You've probably been told that it's a seven-minute time limit, with three minutes for questions and discussion. There is a light there. Our administrator of the commission, Aaron Roth, who will wave – if you have any written submissions you want to leave with us, leave them with Mr. Roth. He's administering the time. There's no trap door, but I will be forced to cut you off if it goes on too long. Thank you, everyone.

Our first presenter is Holly Turnbull. Holly, would you please come forward? Have a seat at the nonlaptops because we may need help every once in a while from the tech people.

Holly Turnbull: Okay. Good morning. Thanks for hearing me this morning. It's exciting to have you here. I want to start with a brief intro maybe to give you a sense of who I am. I live in Cypress county, but my business is in Medicine Hat. I'm a mother of four, and I'm a registered psychologist. I have experience working with the Canadian Armed Forces as well as experience with both the province and the feds, so a bit of a diverse background.

I'm coming to present to you this morning, though, as a mom and a business owner. Our four children have attended in multiple different school divisions from Prairie Rose to the city of Medicine Hat to the Catholic division. We have some really wonderful people in this part of the province. It is truly spectacular. What I would love to highlight for you is just that I understand that when we look at the data, the diversity: on paper it doesn't look like it's a very diverse part of the province. But the people here are truly unique. We get everyone from legacy farms to those who have been unable to inherit and take over those farms and have been forced to innovate and create something bigger. It is really inspiring.

I'm an optimist, so I see Medicine Hat growing exponentially in the near future. When we first moved here, the 120, south of the city, was destined to be the ring road. People laughed when I took that into account when I chose where we were going to live, but it's going to happen. We will grow eventually, and it will one day become the ring road. Not many people are aware of that plan here. I don't know if that still is the plan moving forward, the 120, but right now it's South Boundary Road that is used as the south boundary for a lot when we reference things.

The other thing I foresee is that is we ended up choosing to raise our family just west of the city on the 523. It barely shows up on the map right now, but there is a substantial group of community out there, I would say probably 250 people, within five miles of where our house is located. So when we do need to mobilize – the most recent issue was when they were going to put a greenhouse the size of aurora just adjacent to all of our houses, and we were like: this is not appropriate; you can't cover irrigated land with cement, and nothing against greenhouses, but this is not the right location. There are lots of us there. Most of us live in the county and work and have businesses in the city, so when we take into account both the geographic, the map, I guess, and different transportation routes that offer a relatively logical boundary, I'd love to see highway 523 become one, down to highway 3.

And the other part of this is that when we look at the interests of Hatters – it took me some time, but I officially now consider myself a Hatter even though I live in the county because I am allergic to lineups. If there are more than two people in that line, I'm not going, and that is unique here. In Calgary we would spend half an hour waiting to get gas at Costco; that does not happen here in Medicine Hat. We go elsewhere. When we take into account the culture of the people in this part of the province, it is very different. Just because we live in a city or very close to a city – within 13 kilometres is our house – it doesn't really mean that we have the same culture as other cities in Alberta.

Then, I guess, the last piece that I wanted to offer to you is just that people who live in this part of the province, we're used to driving a lot. We've got kids in swimming, in hockey, and in basketball. We don't like to waste our time trying to figure out maps, so making this very simple and making it logical I think is in everyone's best interest.

9:20

The city of Medicine Hat, if it continues to grow the way that I foresee, I think that we will – I didn't actually realize that the goal was for 54,000 plus or minus 25 per cent, so that is a bit different than the numbers I was working with to make a recommendation here. But if we go from the 120 on the south end up 13th Ave up to highway 1, the Trans-Canada, follow it moving west, and then we make a split, I want to say, we carry the 41A, which nobody knows of here as the 41A highway – it's Gershaw Drive – that takes you to downtown. If we then follow that to Division North up to the river, then moving forward, everything north of the river can fall on

one side and everything south of the river and east can fall on the other.

I do think it's important to separate Medicine Hat from the outside areas of Medicine Hat because – I don't know; I'm a pretty big optimist – I do foresee our population down here growing substantially. We have the most hours of sunlight of anywhere in Canada, and we've had so much innovation in this part of the province, just in the last calendar year.

It's nothing formal, but that's my two cents.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Ms Turnbull.

I'm going to turn it over to the commission, but just so I have a mental picture. You're suggesting highway 120 up 13th Avenue as a boundary. Where do we go from the end of 13th Avenue then?

Holly Turnbull: To the number 1 highway.

The Chair: Oh, just to the highway, just to number 1, and then over to Gershaw. Okay.

Holly Turnbull: Yeah. What it ends up giving us according to – it was hard for me to find population data for each of the subcommunities within the city of Medicine Hat. But that would give us 31,858 for the north side of Medicine Hat, 31,160 for the south and east portion, which divides the city pretty much in half. I didn't include the numbers for that collection of individuals who live on the 523, between 523 and highway 3, but there are lots in that area as well.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you very much.

I'm going to turn it over to Mr. Clark. Do you have any questions?

Mr. Clark: I do, yeah. Thank you very much for that submission. You know, as Justice Miller noted, part of the arithmetic challenge we have with Medicine Hat, maybe a little unlike Lethbridge or Red Deer, which have sort of a nice population that allows us to have two urban constituencies – Medicine Hat is growing; it's not there yet. So inherently we need to have some sort of carve-out of Medicine Hat itself one way or the other. Right now it's split down the middle, not quite at the river, this interesting notch here in the south side, of which we have received some feedback and perhaps we'll receive some more. I don't want to anticipate, but some of the written feedback has been rather specific on that, so we'll take that as a given.

I guess I'm curious. Just to make sure I'm hearing what you're saying, you're saying: let's have an urban, quote, unquote, Medicine Hat that is sort of contiguous and then kind of a blended Medicine Hat and somewhere else. I mean, interestingly, that's how Grande Prairie is. First off, that's what I heard, but I just want to make sure that's actually what you're saying.

Holly Turnbull: I consider myself a Hatter, but I live in the county.

Mr. Clark: Right. Okay. Would you say that is specific to your proximity to Medicine Hat? You've talked about the ring road, and you anticipate at some point that's probably Medicine Hat. Is that what you're thinking?

Holly Turnbull: My grandchildren are, like, buying houses, absolutely, by then. I foresee that will happen within the next four years. They're not going to make the 120 into the ring road. However, I do think it's important that we make those boundaries logical, and when we're accounting for future growth, that helps frame everyone's concept of what this constituency – that's not the right word, but this group of people where we live. I'm 13

kilometres from my office right now. I could bike there if I wanted to. The same distance as how far I worked from my home when I lived in Calgary, but right now I'm considered a resident of the county, and I own a business and operate it.

Mr. Clark: If you don't mind, maybe just grab the microphone that's on the table there. Would you mind just going to the map and kind of pointing at what you're talking about, just so I get a mental picture, please? Where highway 120 is.

The Chair: You have to bring that up a little bit, Aaron. Sorry. Cypress-Medicine Hat. Oh, right there.

Mrs. Samson: It's not detailed enough.

Mr. Clark: There it is. There we go. Zoom in on the top part.

Holly Turnbull: I could redraw it.

Mr. Clark: Yeah, just sort of point at it. There we go.

Holly Turnbull: Yeah. Okay. If you go south of Dunmore, there is a road that will bring you down to the 120 – it's about here-ish – and it will take you all the way back. It's like a back road. For any of the Eagle Butte students, they can take this back road up to highway 3, and lots of them live out here, between the 523 and highway . . .

Mr. Evans: Is that the highway that connects 3 with 1?

Holly Turnbull: Yeah.

Mr. Evans: And that's the 120.

Holly Turnbull: Yes.

Mr. Evans: Okay. I know which one it is.

Holly Turnbull: It doesn't directly bring 3 to 1, but it is the back road. There was something happening in the city, that's where . . .

The Chair: It's just south of here?

Holly Turnbull: Right.

Mr. Clark: Okay. So really you're saying that the south and west portion of what is the city of Medicine Hat would be sort of a natural kind of area that likely over time – and is that the direction Medicine Hat is growing, would you say, or is it sort of growing equally everywhere?

Holly Turnbull: I don't work in construction, so I don't really know, but I did used to inspect in the area of construction when I worked with the province, and in the south area, so South Ridge, Southlands, it has been exploding considerably. I will say that there are lots of areas within Medicine Hat that are being revitalized as well, but the growth of new houses certainly on the south end of the city and just outside of city limits is substantial.

Mr. Clark: I'm grabbing my phone here not to check a text, but I just want to do some quick arithmetic on something.

Again, I apologize, Chair. I just want to ask one more question. Alberta is growing incredibly quickly. What we think about is both absolute growth, how fast somewhere has grown from 2016, 2017 till now, but also relative to the rest of the province. This is the math that I'm trying to figure out. Medicine Hat has grown about 7 or so per cent in this time, and I think the province has probably grown slightly more. When Medicine Hat, both the constituencies were

conceived, they were a little bit above the average, and now they're bang on exactly average. So the province itself has grown a little bit quicker than Medicine Hat. That's actually not a good or a bad, necessarily, but just where we're situating ourselves in terms of one of the considerations but by no means the only one. I just wanted to maybe share that thought with you as well.

Holly Turnbull: Absolutely. I think that is definitely known and is mindful of those who move here in particular. So knowing that we will be represented is important. When we are trying to attract doctors, professionals to move to our community, it is really difficult when they get the sense that half of our voice is trying to speak on behalf of the more rural population versus those who live in a more urban setting. There are fundamentally different priorities for those populations.

Mr. Clark: I suspect my colleagues will probably ask you a little more about that. So I'll turn it down the road.

The Chair: Fellow commissioners, we've got a full schedule today. I'm going to have to hold the gavel a little bit. So one question, clear and concise and to the presenter.

Dr. Martin: No queues: sounds very attractive.

I'm struck by the fact that you live outside the town per se and travel in. So for you in your life experience it is a very permeable boundary, and you suggest that's true for many people that you know?

Holly Turnbull: All of my neighbours immediately surrounding us.

Dr. Martin: That suggests to me that Medicine Hat has a permeable boundary and shouldn't try to be considered as a thing in and of itself.

Holly Turnbull: Well, drive 20 kilometres down the road to the best bakery in Alberta, in Bow Island, and it's very different.

Dr. Martin: Oh. No, I don't doubt it at all. You know, people living out of the town and working in the town is a very common feature, and at the same time you want, somehow, to have a riding that's just the Hat.

9:30

Holly Turnbull: Somewhat, yes, but my concept of what is the Hat is very different from what is on the map.

Dr. Martin: Well, thank you.

Holly Turnbull: Thank you.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for your presentation today. It's a difficult situation in Medicine Hat because the population isn't there. The growth is there, but the growth rate is not. You know, to build in the growth, we're going to take up a lot of the rural. I think the interest today to best serve the needs of this commission and its decision-making is: how much of the rural beyond the city of Medicine Hat is a good fit, like communities? I've heard Bow Island mentioned by you. Would that be something you would like to see in the riding? What about Foremost? What about Forty Mile?

Holly Turnbull: I think that those populations are also beautiful and unique groups of people, but they are also distinctly different from those who are interested in living and working in Medicine Hat.

Mrs. Samson: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Evans: Thank you for coming forward and bringing this proposal. I know where 120 is, township road 120. I know where 13th Avenue is. Then you would go up 13th Avenue to highway 1, and then you would go south or west? Like, you would go towards Gershaw?

Holly Turnbull: It ends up being, like, a northeast curve on the 41A, where you would come off highway 1. It kind of winds that highway to take you through downtown, but if you follow 41A to Division Avenue and take it north, that will bring you to the river. That offers a natural, more distinctive, more well-known road in this city for people to understand where the delineation is.

Mr. Evans: Okay, so 13th Avenue to Dunmore, following Dunmore down towards the river: everything west of that would then be – what are you thinking that that's going to be? Is that going to be Cypress-Medicine Hat?

Holly Turnbull: Yeah. So 13th Ave to highway 1, going west to 41A, and then Division Ave to the river. If we choose those as the division, it ends up splitting the city in half. In my mind, the city of Medicine Hat has two areas. One of those areas expands a bit beyond the city of Medicine Hat to account for usual activities, I guess, of people who live there, and then everything outside of that, the Brooks-Medicine Hat southeastern corner of the province, becomes one other big constituency. I don't think that's the right word.

The Chair: Yeah. That's right.

Okay. Mr. Evans, last question. We've got to get going.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Yeah.

What do you think happens to the rest of what's in Cypress-Medicine Hat right now? What happens to that? It goes just into someplace else?

Holly Turnbull: Its own, so between Brooks and Cypress-Medicine Hat: all of that becomes another.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you. That helps me understand.

The Chair: Ms Turnbull, thank you very much. It grieves me. It's the first time I've had to cut people off. We've got such a full schedule. Thank you for coming. We welcome you to stay, because we are happy to talk after as well, but you're excused. Thank you.

Holly Turnbull: Thank you.

The Chair: Not only have we had the best turnout of any community; I think we've got the most honourables as well. Our next presenter is a former Speaker of the House, the hon. Bob Wanner.

Mr. Wanner: Mr. Chairman, welcome back. Thank you to each of you for your time and service to our province. My name is Bob Wanner. I had the privilege and honour to serve as the Medicine Hat constituency MLA and to also serve as the Speaker of the Alberta Legislature from 2015 until 2019. Prior to that, I served as an executive officer with the city of Medicine Hat.

Medicine Hat's name as a constituency goes back more than 142 years as the original 25 constituencies, including back to the North-West Territories era, in 1883, when the railway arrived, and prior to that, the Blackfoot name of Saamis as the medicine man's hat.

In the 2017 boundary commission report Medicine Hat was the only major city in Alberta to be considered secondary in the naming process. Medicine Hatters cannot find their city's name under the letter "M" in the alphabetical listing of constituencies. When the name representing the largest portion of the population is diminished, one's sense of recognition and our confidence in fair representation is weakened.

The current boundaries do not reflect or respect our municipal boundaries, our communities of interest, our transportation systems, nor our geographical features. Brooks, Taber, and surrounding counties to us for our distant west are very good neighbours, but they are separate regional communities. The north-south artery along number 36 highway might be taken more seriously into consideration in that area.

The total population of the city. Medicine Hat and southeastern Alberta: who are we? The total population of the city and region within the boundaries of Cypress and Forty Mile as the western boundaries is approximately 90,000 people. The city population has grown approximately 5 per cent in recent years to about some 68,000-plus people. The population of the counties and communities within those boundaries is a total population of approximately 22,000 people. The population is aging, with one of the biggest, highest percentage of 65-plus persons in the province. Therefore, mobility and transportation access to elected officials are important questions. In 2021 according to Stats Canada less than 13 per cent of Medicine Hat was what was identified as a visible minority compared to 50 per cent of the much younger Brooks population.

Medicine Hat is a major health centre for all of southeastern Alberta, including Cypress county and county Forty Mile. To provide air ambulance service in this region, southeastern Alberta has to rely on a charitable donation for its own HALO with very marginal provincial contributions. The STARS service cannot serve our region without a refill.

The Medicine Hat College is a major regional advanced education centre. Main industries and employers in Medicine Hat are petrochemicals, agriculture, energy production of gas and renewables, defence and aerospace, municipal government, health care, education, and our community college. The Medicine Hat public utility exists as a stand-alone, self-sufficient service that does not rely on provincial utility providers and is exempt from most provincial regulations. The robotics and the drone industry in Medicine Hat has developed and is a significantly emerging industry in southeastern Alberta.

Improved representation. If the solution for constituencies was simply population, your job as commission members would be to simply divide Alberta population by 89 seats. We all know that does not represent genuine representation. Within similar regions we can ensure more genuine representation based on some shared interests amongst adjacent constituencies. The test for new boundaries will need to meet, as reasonably as possible, each of the principles in the legislation as follows.

Communities of interest. The largest concentrated population is Medicine Hat, which has a common interest. Medicine Hat shares commerce, health care, cultural events, and regional transportation systems with our very close neighbours, Cypress and county Forty Mile. The shared interests with Brooks and Taber regions are much, much less. At the centre of the Palliser Triangle we are primarily short-grass dryland country, ranching, and farming, supplemented by St. Mary's irrigation system. The South Saskatchewan River and the creeks from the counties are our lifeblood. Water kept us here, along with occasional floods and droughts.

9:40

Communication and transportation. The current boundaries ignore the connection of the northern section of Cypress county along highway 41 to Medicine Hat. To get to Brooks, you come through Medicine Hat. Communities like Schuler in the north: there is no viable realistic transportation system from that eastern boundary of Brooks-Medicine Hat. Highway 3 starts in Medicine Hat and has always connected Forty Mile and Bow Island to Medicine Hat. The expansion of number 3 will magnify Medicine Hat as the major crossroads centre connecting to the Trans-Canada highway.

Desirable and understandable clear boundaries. The city of Medicine Hat and the north section of Cypress county were carved up and Forty Mile separated to solve what one must assume was a population problem in the area beyond the Cypress county and Forty Mile western boundaries. The erratic notched line dividing Medicine Hat's city centre remains completely confusing to residents, who cannot even determine if and why they are in Brooks-Medicine Hat.

Boundaries determined by self-identification. Effective democratic representation is much, much more than a financial trading area and ought never to be used as the single reason for effective representation. As we all know, the U.S. has been our major trading partner for some time, but our sense of shared interests and effective representation is very different from our southern American neighbours. At the Lethbridge hearing a person cited the Brooks-Medicine Hat riding as an example of what created the southeastern economic opportunity authority as a natural trade area, a trade area which means a location where customers live and the distance they travel to another location. I respectfully suggest that his example and illustration was incorrect. The southeastern Alberta economic authority was formed by the communities of the city of Medicine Hat, Cypress county, county Forty Mile, towns of Redcliff and Bow Island, and the village of Foremost. Brooks is not and was never considered in that trading area.

It is therefore recommended that for more meaningful effective representation the Medicine Hat city be provided with at least one urban constituency. It is also recognized that the people of Cypress county and Forty Mile's sparse population cannot be abandoned on their own – effective representation does not mean necessarily the exact same location number but equal in some shared interests – that the southeast region of Alberta be represented by two constituencies, representing a total population of 90,000 people, averaging – averaging – 45,000, which is within the 25 per cent formula; that one constituency be named Medicine Hat-North, with the city of Medicine Hat boundaries north of highway 1 representing approximately 48,000 people, and Medicine Hat-Cypress-Forty Mile, including Medicine Hat south of highway 1, Cypress county, and Forty Mile county, with an estimated population of 42,000 people.

I thank you for your time here. I'm pleased that we have so many people out here today. Thank you for taking the time.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Wanner. Your opening about the naming was not lost on the chairman when I reviewed the 2017 report, I can assure you.

Mr. Wanner: It was never lost on me either.

The Chair: Far be it from me to cut off a former Speaker; you did go a little over.

Very quickly, questions. Mr. Evans, any questions?

Mr. Evans: No. Thank you. That was a very thorough presentation. Thank you for the suggested solution and arming us with the information.

Mr. Wanner: Thank you.

Mrs. Samson: I have the same problem as you identified. I live in Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. Thank you for that point on naming.

The Chair: Okay. Dr. Martin, any questions?

Dr. Martin: Just perhaps a footnote on the population numbers that you're using. Obviously, we're using the July 2024 numbers, which put, you know, the Brooks-Medicine Hat on the one hand and Cypress-Medicine Hat – you're right about the naming. But you put them together; it's 109,000. The numbers that you were using were something in the 90s, right?

Mr. Wanner: Yeah, the 90s would represent three population bases, and I estimate . . .

The Chair: It's taking out Brooks, I think.

Mr. Wanner: So our boundary . . .

Dr. Martin: It's taking out Newell county, basically.

Mr. Wanner: Pardon me? The north boundary of the new proposed constituency for Medicine Hat-North would be the west boundary of Cypress county. The city itself would be a separate north Medicine Hat and then the area of Cypress county, which includes Suffield and county of Forty Mile and around to the east . . .

The Chair: Largely similar to what was before the 2017 . . .

Mr. Wanner: Very, very similar to what was before but recognizing that Bow Island and Forty Mile do almost all of their business in Medicine Hat. They don't go to Taber.

The Chair: Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: Yeah, that was actually almost exactly my question. Just to be a hundred per cent clear, you're talking about grabbing a little portion of county of Forty Mile including. . .

Mr. Wanner: Taking the entire county of Forty Mile.

Mr. Clark: The entire county of Forty Mile.

Mr. Wanner: With Cypress county, and they have very similar – I made a point when I was MLA here, in spite of just representing the city – agriculture in this region. I agree with my previous speaker that we have threads that tie us together. We are uniquely different, but we have common, shared interests and we can't abandon that sparse population in the east. That's why one rural riding and one urban riding, I urge you to seriously, seriously consider.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Clark: Great to see you.

The Chair: Our next speaker I don't believe is here: Bill Cocks. No.

Okay. Elizabeth Aitken. Elizabeth Aitken, present? We may have a bit more time then.

Again, the hon. Dr. David Carter. Speaker after Speaker.

Mr. Clark: We don't stand a chance up here.

Dr. Carter: Two is enough. We're a stereo system.

The Chair: What I failed to mention at the beginning: everything is recorded here, and it will be up on the website in a matter of days, and *Hansard* is transcribing the written version, and I have no editorial powers, so be assured everything's on there.

Mr. Carter.

Dr. Carter: Duly, duly warned. Thank you.

First, I would point out the fact that, yes, I'm David Carter, and you'll find in my comments that I have a bit of a split personality. I preface my remarks by saying, to some people's amazement, that I'm a child of Medicine Hat. I came here in 1949, so I have had considerable background experience, with my father being a clergyman and the whole outreach of his ministry being far beyond either of these boundaries. The same is true of mine.

Now, I also point out that by the time your report is tabled, the population of Alberta may well be 5 million. Part of the background challenge for you all, Your Honour and esteemed members of the panel, is to what kind of distortion is likely to happen, although you cannot have a crystal ball, by the time the next redistribution comes around.

Again, as a split personality, I own property in both constituencies. For example, this morning I travelled 55 kilometres from where I have property and where we have restored the Anglican church and cemetery. It's open to everybody, including being dead. Fifty-five miles through four different weather systems – four different weather systems – between Medicine Hat and where I reside on the south side of the hills, where any water there eventually drains through the Milk River, to the Missouri, to the Mississippi, and empties into the Gulf of Mexico.

Mrs. Samson: Point taken.

9:50

Dr. Carter: So a little bit of that. Very quickly, I have the presentation which I have sent to you previously. Let's go through this. I reflect another aspect of the redistribution, including a former member from Calgary. With respect, my comments are as one who's been an active participant in constituency delineations since the beginning of 1979. I was nominated and elected in March of that year for the Calgary-Millican constituency, which extended from the south bank of the Bow River, including Chinatown, Victoria Park, Stampede grounds, to Ogden and the southeast limits of the city of Calgary.

In 1979 there were significant constituency realignments in part caused by rapid population growth, which you've noted, and considerable in-migration of residents from other nations, not limited to nor specifically identified: Vietnam, China, India, Pakistan, and other jurisdictions. Many of these new Canadians understandably wished to live in close proximity to similar cultural identities.

In 1982 I was elected in the Calgary-Egmont constituency, which is to the southeast of the city core, which included Kingsland, the west side of Macleod Trail east into Acadia, Fairview, Willow Park, and Maple Ridge, with the extreme east side limited by Deerfoot Trail and on the south side at Anderson Road. Kingsland was removed and transferred to the riding of Calgary-Elbow, which was curious as Kingsland was an integral portion of the original boundaries of Calgary-Egmont.

From '82 I served as deputy chairman of the all-party Legislative Officers Committee, which supervised the officers of the Assembly such as Ombudsman, Chief Electoral Officer, Auditor General. This umbrella committee was mandated to report to the Speaker, who in turn was responsible to release the report to all members of

the Legislature, not just to the government. In each report there was no provision, nor should there be, to communicate or report to or with the government, the opposition, or any other entity, including the Speaker, prior to the release of said document.

In 1986 I was elected in Calgary-Egmont again. I was elected for that term and at that time elected as Speaker of the Legislature. In March 1989 I was elected for the fourth time and subsequently elected for the second time as Speaker. I served until September '93; for personal reasons I chose not to run in that year.

I retired to Eagle Butte, southeast of Medicine Hat, and continue to own and occupy this site, which is located in Cypress county. In addition, my wife and I occupy a condo in Medicine Hat within the constituency of Brooks-Medicine Hat, where the current MLA is indeed Premier Smith. I am eligible to vote in both constituencies, but in elections since 1993 I cast my ballot in the constituency of Brooks-Medicine Hat. My wife, who is ill – I just got her out of the hospital. In the condo we're up on the upper part there. Yes. We're on the top floor of one of those three large condo units overlooking the city. That particular large condominium complex includes three large blocks. The total population of this site is larger than the combined populations of Hilda, Schuler, and Burdett.

I will leave some of the definitions here. I again salute Speaker number 13 for his incredible experience having been with the city of Medicine Hat. He has all those kind of background images, which he carefully elucidated. The fact that . . .

The Chair: The red light doesn't mean anything.

Dr. Carter: Well, not necessarily.

However, I should like to go on. There is this other comment here. I'm very concerned – here we are. In 1986 I supervised the renovations and upgrades of electronic capability, handicap and hearing access, fire and evacuation readiness even from the Chamber, including the adjacent areas, specifically the Confederation Room and the rotunda of the building. I noted and understand where the necessary wiring and configuration of the risers and seating positions were apportioned.

Aaron kindly let me know this morning that there's a massive renovation supposedly under way.

Nevertheless, the addition of these two seats gives me great concern. This is going to result in increased crowding. Increased. The number of independent members already causes crowding. How many more want to leave one caucus or another? Heaven only knows. This means including potential hindrance in the event of scrambling evacuation from the Chamber. In my opinion these additional seats are ill-advised intrusion by the government and the Chamber and should be regarded architecturally as the absolute limit to the number of seats within the Chamber. I recommend this be noted in your report. I ask that with due respect.

There does need to be in the province full account of the continuing rapid growth and immigration. On that point, to see the profile of Medicine Hat, stop, go shopping at Superstore after six o'clock at night. You will suddenly see a whole difference in the evident profile face to face in Medicine Hat. By goodness, many of them work at Brooks, many of them work in the greenhouses, and come from all around the world. God bless us. Our own community, our community, whether it's north or south of the river, are indeed enriched culturally. The whole surge of – within that group, you have a higher rate of children being born. Watch how they quickly assimilate into this area.

In all of that, I do regard with great concern – I've listed it in my document. The evacuation of the Chamber is a nightmare. If a sudden event happened, we'd never get everybody out. It's that

simple. In order to exit through the main door, you'll have to then lift out the chair for the Sergeant-at-Arms, take away the bar of the Chamber, and then some of the MLAs exiting behind the chair to the right or to the left, they then end up being pushed into this.

I know intimately from someone else who worked there. I double-checked yesterday, and there's never been a fire drill.

Now, there's been advice to the whole building. If you can somehow get down the main staircase, stumble down that, and then go beyond, you still have another level down through steps in order to get out, and there is indeed a marshalling point.

The difficulty again is – part of what I took note of in the renovations, let alone the electrical, was to make the place, the Chamber and the galleries, wheelchair accessible.

Now, if you have any of those things happen, you can imagine the chaos. Again, I'm coming back to this item of overcrowding. No more seats in the Legislature, please. It's just a – I'm sorry. I don't want to use the word. It's a slightly disguised gimmick to try to say we've got enough rural seats to help whichever government in office to be able to then try to compensate for that increased amount of population, which in terms of not only Calgary or Edmonton, where it really gives headaches when you're trying to carve these sliver kind of pizza slices to be able to pull in the rural areas to then offset that overcrowding.

10:00

You know what it is? It's very difficult for many people to grasp the notion. I remember five years ago a cougar killed my Norwegian elkhound behind my house in the Cypress Hills. From then my family told me no more walking at night in the cemetery or in those hills, to which my reply was: what self-respecting cougar would want to take down and start to eat someone who's both an ex-MLA and a clergyman?

The Chair: Dr. Carter, thank you so much. We actually wish we had more time, I know.

Dr. Carter: I love the notion of being cut off. It's only my wife that can do that.

The Chair: Well, I'm in an elite group, then. Thank you. Please stay there.

I'm going to start with Mr. Clark, who I'm sure will have a question, and we'll go across the commission. Yeah.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Mostly I just want to say thank you for coming and sharing your perspective with us. You know, now that you mention it, I had remembered some of your past constituencies. We've just come from Calgary, so a lot of the neighbourhoods that you've mentioned are within our consideration. It's just interesting that the history of both the electoral boundaries – there is nothing new under the sun. It may not be exactly the same, but it certainly rhymes with the previous commissions. I just want to say thank you for coming and providing us with a submission.

Dr. Carter: Well, thank you. The difference between my esteemed colleague 13, which I regard as a lucky number, is the fact that here he as Speaker was still the MLA whereas in Calgary – and you and I have met before over the years – I was able to hide as one of 16. Now, I still could do all my work, but again, the other 15 members of Calgary, no matter what pockets they were, were then able to represent certain issues in terms of the ridings of the whole city.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now I'm going to turn over to Dr. Martin, who is a historian, to question you.

Dr. Carter: Oh, good.

The Chair: We may have to have lunch brought in.

Dr. Martin, any questions?

Dr. Martin: Well, I feel intimidated; a judge on one side and the Speaker in front of me.

I merely wanted to comment a little bit on the work of building a census. Much confusion about this. It's a fascinating story. I won't bore you with the details, but no census is empirical ever because people move, they die, they are born, and so on. But the attempt to make a reasonably accurate census occupies the lives and careers of hundreds of demographers, and, as I say, it's fascinating. But the 2021 census: the minute the federal government puts out a 10-year census, they start revising the numbers the next week because it's all a great pastiche of estimates.

The long and short is that, yes, we can have estimates that are more current than the date we have chosen, but those estimates are highly volatile because they're subject to the maximum number of revisions. We found a more stable number that actually distributes into all of the 87 electoral districts, which is one of the criteria in the act, that you can use census data if it gives you numbers all across the province. We felt that July 1, 2024, was a stable basis for our work.

I think that that's all I want to say. There's nothing nefarious about us not using the bleeding-edge numbers, as it were, but they're the least stable.

Dr. Carter: Okay.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

Dr. Carter: Thank you. As a fellow historian I salute you.

The Chair: Susan.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you, Dr. Carter, for coming out. I wanted to share with you that for me this whole trip to date has been – I have learned more than I think I've contributed to date. I want to thank you for your most informed presentation, which also included that element of humour, that is so important to me.

Thank you.

Dr. Carter: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Evans.

Mr. Evans: Which number are you? We have number 13.

Dr. Carter: Nine.

Mr. Evans: Nine.

Dr. Carter: Yep. I followed a very great Speaker in Gerard Amerongen, and then I inherited the first most complicated House in Alberta history. Today I still represent 40 per cent of all decisions made by Speakers within the province of Alberta. It was a very steep learning curve for the House and certainly a very steep learning curve for me. The very first day, as with Bob Wanner, you get there and your knees are shaking.

Mr. Evans: I don't have any questions. Thank you, number nine and number 13, for your service.

Dr. Carter: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Dr. Carter: Your Honour, part of my submission is that I have my personal photograph of when I was charged with renovating the Chamber, the whole Chamber, at the higher level and down to the rotunda. Some people have said, and it's falsely imputed in some biographical instances, that I lived in the Chamber, in the Speaker's office. Not true, but I did stay all night, including 3 o'clock in the morning, keeping an eye on all the renovations. These two pictures here show what I pointed out about it. The Chamber is already overcrowded. In your wonderful presentation you begin with a very key phrase that I noted: effective representation. In the end, after an election it depends on who the MLA is and how that person functions with respect for all parties, whether they voted for that person or not.

Again, thank you for your patience as well as the patience of the people sitting there. I'm almost afraid to turn around.

The Chair: Thank you. Far be it from me to be a promoter, but did you bring any copies of your book with you, *Behind Canadian Barbed Wire*?

Dr. Carter: Thank you, my friend. Of the 20 books I've written, that was the one that has sold the most, over 16,000 copies. *Behind Canadian Barbed Wire*: about the prisoner of war camps not only here but in your constituency of Lethbridge plus Wainwright. I mean, the whole – but thank you again.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Well, due to a couple of absences, we're still on time, so that's good. Our next presenter is Darlene Dee. Please come forward.

Ms Dee: Well, I will be much less intimidating. I'm not quite as important as some of the other people here.

Good morning. My name is Darlene Dee, and other than being born in Calgary, I have lived most of my life here in Medicine Hat. My husband was born here and raised here, and together we raised four sons and have been voting ever since the voting age became 18 and we were able to vote. We've been very active in our community over the years doing some volunteer work and just enjoying living here in general. We both love our city and are very proud of it.

I worked as an elementary school teacher until 12 years ago, when I retired. My husband is semiretired. He owned his own business but is now sort of doing jobs when he gets called, which is why he's not here today and would have been otherwise, so some of my comments will be reflecting what he feels as well.

We became concerned, a little confused in 2017 when the electoral divisions changed and we found that the area of the city we lived in – we would now be voting in the Brooks-Medicine Hat riding. Now, we do understand that the population numbers have determined the boundary divisions, but we could not see such a large portion of our own city having to be paired up with Brooks. That was sort of confusing to us.

10:10

I have to admit to you that that year when we were first voting and we were making a financial contribution to our candidate at the time and we were at the rally, we naively wrote our cheque out to Cypress-Medicine Hat, not even realizing we were not in that riding; we were in Brooks-Medicine Hat. About a week later we got a call from our candidate saying: Darlene, do you realize you sent your cheque wrong? I hadn't. I hadn't realized that. That all got fixed and switched around, but that's fine. Just to show my own naïveté or ignorance or whatever you want to call it. We were thinking we were voting on the other side.

Medicine Hat is a city of 65,000, I believe up to almost 68,000 people now. It's understandable, of course, that we needed to be divided in half because of the numbers, the way they've been represented. Brooks is a city of, I think, approximately 15,000 – it might be a little under that – one hour west of Medicine Hat. I believe the two cities have very distinct and separate concerns and needs. I would like to suggest that it may be an unfair disadvantage to have Medicine Hat and Brooks banded together as a voting constituency. We would like to see the city – because of Brooks being far more rural than we are, I consider us an urban centre.

I hadn't really had a recommendation, nor did my husband, but after listening to Bob this morning, I love your suggestion, Bob's suggestion, of the two regions that he was proposing. Both of those, then, would be urban regions, and we in the area that we live in, Medicine Hat, would be voting with people like minded and with similar concerns.

Really, that's all I had to say this morning. It was more of a personal thing of not really liking where we're situated as voters.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much, Ms Dee. I do want to correct your original comment that you aren't as important. For the commission members Ms Dee is probably one of the most talented theatre persons and actresses in the city. Don't undersell yourself.

Ms Dee: Thank you. I just do that for fun, you know. That doesn't make me important.

The Chair: Mr. Evans, any questions or comments?

Mr. Evans: Which constituency or electoral division do you live in?

Ms Dee: We're in Brooks-Medicine Hat and have very little, I think, in common – I'm just going to speak for myself and my husband. I have very little in common with Brooks. By the way, we're not happy that we would even have to share an MLA, not that our MLA lives in either of the two cities. That's a whole other topic. I believe our MLA should be living in one of those districts. It didn't work out that way. We just feel that we don't have a lot in common voting with Brooks, yet that's where we're placed, and that's where our vote lies.

Mr. Evans: Where do you live in Medicine Hat?

Ms Dee: Where do I live? At 122 Division Avenue South.

Mr. Evans: What did you think about not number 13's presentation and proposal but – I love that we number the speakers – Ms Turnbull's presentation in terms of her proposed changing of the boundaries?

Ms Dee: Oh, I liked that as well. I preferred number 13's solely because it made more sense to me. Yes, I like Ms Turnbull's suggestions. I hadn't thought of that, but yes.

Again, it's up to you people to take all of these comments and decide what really would be best. I know you have to do the divisions. They have to be done, of course. Personally, I would love Medicine Hat just to be voting as one big city, but because of our numbers that cannot happen, and I respect that.

But I did think her ideas were really good as well.

Mr. Evans: Thank you.

The Chair: Susan.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for your presentation and coming out today. How do you feel about the South Saskatchewan being a natural, clear boundary between both halves of the city? Right now there is this sort of triangle piece on the south side. I think we can all agree that we can't have a stand-alone electoral division, so if we have to divide it, could we comfortably use, in your opinion, the river?

Ms Dee: That makes sense to me. I do think that, of course, on the north end of the river we'd have to include some north regions, same with the south. I kind of like that. It is a natural division.

Mrs. Samson: Good. Thank you very much.

Ms Dee: Thank you.

The Chair: Dr. Martin?

Dr. Martin: No. I was just calling for water, actually.

The Chair: The suggestion of the river made you thirsty, did it?

Ms Dee: Oh, that was it.

Dr. Martin: Perhaps that's it.

Ms Dee: Now everybody's going to run to the washroom.

Mrs. Samson: Now that you've said that, yeah.

Dr. Martin: Your notion, then, that you don't have much in common with the people in Brooks probably would extend to the entirety of that county.

Ms Dee: Most likely because their county is more rural, and I consider us very urban. Not that we don't have some things in common. Like I think the previous speaker – I forget which – said, they're not shopping in our area. We're quite separate in how we operate, so it just seems strange to me that these two cities, or part of our city and their city, were put together.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: Can you tell me a little bit about Redcliff?

Ms Dee: About Redcliff?

Mr. Clark: Yeah. I have a tremendous disadvantage not actually being from Medicine Hat. I look at it on a map, and that's one very narrow, very flat way of looking at things, really. Do you have just any thoughts or comments on sort of Redcliff?

Ms Dee: Well, to me, Redcliff is very much a part of Medicine Hat. I would call it a bedroom community. That's, in fact, where my husband did own and run his business for many years. I would assume Redcliff would be included in one of those constituencies. They don't have any major shopping centres there. We are their city. Yeah, they're part of us. Yes.

Mr. Clark: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, again, Ms Dee. Much appreciated. Please, we welcome you to stay, if you could, for the rest of the presentations.

I'll call again Elizabeth Aitken. Not present.

Mr. Bill Cocks? Not here.

Stan Sakamoto? Don't see him, either.

Marle Roberts? Okay. Please come forward. This will be the last presentation before our break.

Ms Roberts: Good morning.

The Chair: Good morning.

Ms Roberts: I would like to extend my gratitude to you, the members of the boundary commission, for the work you have committed to ensure, that the electoral boundaries reflect effective representation to all of the current 87 ridings, possibly going to 89.

I grew up in this great city, and I lived here for most of my life. The only time I moved from Medicine Hat was when I went to postsecondary education in Calgary, and I returned shortly after I received this education because I absolutely loved Medicine Hat and wanted to raise a family here.

When in university I had some unique opportunities, and one of them was that I worked with an archaeologist company excavating along the south side of the Trans Canada highway just before Irvine. There were numerous teepee rings found there – I'm kind of dating myself now – and they needed to be excavated before the twinning of the Trans Canada highway. This was an opportunity and a job that I remember fondly. After I graduated, my next adventure in life was as a laboratory technician at the city of Medicine Hat's waste-water treatment plant. In the later part of my career I was president of CUPE Alberta, representing 36,000 members across Alberta, and I became very familiar with effective representation of these members.

I want to go back to my job at the waste-water treatment plant, and since everybody is adding some humour, I would like to add some as well. When my son was two years old, we camped, and we camped at a lot of dry campgrounds with just outhouses. My son used to say: mummy, where do you work? And I used to say: son, I work at the waste-water treatment plant, and to you that means that when you flush the toilet, I'm actually at the end testing the water to make sure when we discharge to the South Saskatchewan River that the water is good, and we take care of the environment.

10:20

So we're camping, and we're out at Reesor Lake, and we go to the outhouse. My son is two years old. I can see him kind of looking around, and I put him on the toilet, and he's got this puzzled look on his face. I said to him: what's on your mind? And he said: my mummy no work down there.

I am married, and I do have one grown son living in Calgary. I live in the Cypress-Medicine Hat riding. Through my experience, the first thing I want to talk about in regards to connections that we have and what is very important in the Cypress-Medicine Hat riding is the water. That is my passion, working with water for many years at the waste-water treatment plant. We depend on water, and we depend on runoff from actually Cypress Hills from that area as well as water coming from the Lethbridge area and the Bow River. That is a huge connection because water is so important for Cypress-Medicine Hat and, well, for all of Alberta, but in regard to Cypress-Medicine Hat the agricultural crops we grow both irrigation and non-irrigation.

One of the reasons I became very interested in the electoral ridings – and it was in 2017. I don't know where I was before this time in regard to electoral boundaries, electoral ridings, besides probably just living my life and thinking: oh, what does that have to do with me? I learned soon after 2016, 2017 that that has a lot to do with me, and it has a lot to do with communities, and it has a lot to do with effective representation all through Alberta, not just

Medicine Hat, even though Medicine Hat is a special, unique, wonderful corner on its own. I can't emphasize how much I love living here, and I'm glad I returned here.

As I stated or as I'm referencing, I wish I would have been more knowledgeable earlier than 2017. I can tell you that when I saw what was happening with the city of Medicine Hat and the split that was done – and I say it's a significant Brooks-Medicine Hat split – I would have been at the table making a presentation then. I can't believe I missed this opportunity, but it's okay. I'm here now.

It's encouraging, very encouraging, and not surprising to see the population of Alberta growing. With this growth mainly in urban areas I can understand why the rural areas are often concerned regarding their effective representation.

When I reviewed the submissions initially proposed in 2016-17, because I had to do some groundwork, I noticed a few recommendations of the following proposals. Now I'm going back into history, and I do believe history – well, as we know from number nine and 13, history is very important. Four electoral divisions in that time were actually going to be combined into three in the northeast area of the province, five electoral divisions into four in the central area, and seven into six in our eastern corner here. Now, this is my opinion, just from the readings – and this is only my opinion – that this was done to compensate for the growth of urban areas surpassing that of the rural areas. As I say, this is my opinion.

I also noted that many municipal, provincial, and federal elected officials made submissions recommending that the ridings in the corner of southeastern Alberta remain the same. When I say remain the same, I mean Medicine Hat as one urban riding and Cypress-Medicine Hat staying as what they were. Well, actually, that's not true. Cypress-Medicine Hat was expanded more. There were submissions saying that that was a lot of territory to cover. That was in the initial 2017. These submissions included individuals from Medicine Hat, Cypress-Medicine Hat, Strathmore-Brooks, and Little Bow. In the final report of 2017 Cypress-Medicine Hat, I'm going to say, and I think it's fair to say, was not changed significantly, but that was not the case for the Medicine Hat electoral district.

I want to go on to say that Medicine Hat is the sixth-largest city in Alberta. By changing the city of Brooks into the Brooks-Medicine Hat electoral boundary, effective representation of the communities of Brooks and Medicine Hat, I feel, has been diluted. Brooks and Medicine Hat do not share the same community interests.

I also want to point out that in respect Medicine Hat is the central hub for this wonderful, splendid, sunniest city southeast corner area. That's not just the city; it's the rural area as well. Between those – I'm talking Cypress-Medicine Hat – we share complex infrastructure, diverse economic activity, provide education for this area. Health care services are huge.

I just heard somebody say: southwest Saskatchewan. Yes, we have more in common with southwest Saskatchewan. Thank you for that.

Dr. Carter: You've got great hearing.

Ms Roberts: Thank you, number nine, for helping.

Dr. Carter: I'll just shut up.

Ms Roberts: No, no. By all means. You know I love your sense of humour. Very entertaining. I'm trying to step it up, but I'm not going to match you.

Health care services. We are definitely a central hub for health care services, and that is with Redcliff and the county of Cypress.

There's a little overlap with the county of Newell and the city of Brooks. It is important to note that the Brooks intermunicipal development plan is an agreement between Brooks and the county of Newell. Medicine Hat's intermunicipal development plan is an agreement between Medicine Hat, the county of Cypress, and Redcliff.

I would also be remiss if I did not address that the stand-alone urban Medicine Hat electoral boundary is important due to the public ownership of our utilities here, something that we are very, very proud of, something that has served our community well and will continue to serve our community well, even though there are some discussions regarding that, and I think I'll get involved in that as well.

I mean, as all the presenters before me have referenced, the population of Medicine Hat is not large enough to do two urban ridings. I also think, with the connections that we have in Cypress-Medicine Hat, that it would do disservice to the communities around us. Our transportation corridor is very, very much highway 3, with the county of Forty Mile, Bow Island. That transportation and communication corridor is very important. Knowing and talking to people in Medicine Hat, I do know, and the previous speakers have talked about, that they may work, they may live in Cypress county, but they actually consider themselves Hatters. I'm sure that you're getting to understand from the presentations that we consider ourselves Hatters and the Cypress county area.

With the population figures and relative population density that I looked at on the site, the Alberta boundary commission site, I see – I think I also agree – that it's going to be over 5 million here shortly. Historically the split between Medicine Hat, Cypress county, and Redcliff: I offer that that urban-rural split is effective representation. Am I in agreement with urban-rural splits? I am in agreement with them if they work and if they have the same interests and the same what I went over. If they do not, though, I think that they should not be urban-rural splits.

10:30

I also think that Medicine Hat down the road with the growth – I'm not presenting this right now, and I do realize that it is slower than Calgary, Edmonton, some other communities, Innisfail, Red Deer, all of those communities. I do realize that they're growing quicker than Medicine Hat, but Medicine Hat will get there. We will get there, and then I would be recommending two urban ridings. But right now what I am suggesting – I think you can complain a lot and you can go out there and you can talk a lot, you know, but I think you also have to come forward with solutions. That's one of the things in my careers, all of the careers that I've been in, that you have to come forward with solutions, and you have to work together to get there. If you don't, you don't get anywhere, so we really need to work together.

Historically, as I said, I think that Cypress county – that's including the county of Forty Mile as well. That is not what has happened in the past, but I do think the county of Forty Mile and Medicine Hat have very common interests as well. One of the solutions I offer is that we go back to the split that we had previously, to 2016, 2017, more like the 2010 split. That's one of the recommendations that I'm referencing, that Brooks is then combined with communities that they moor for their effective representation.

That being said, I was going to come forward with all these figures and data and everything, and I worked on it for two days. I commend you for having to do this. I was going to come forward and say, "Here's what I think," and I thought, first of all: "Why am

I doing this? That's why we have the boundaries commission." You guys have got a lot of work ahead of you. But I was pulling my hair out, and I was grey already. I was really pulling my hair out, and you know what? I wish you all the best in these deliberations and what you bring forward, because I really couldn't do it.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Roberts.

Ms Roberts: The other recommendation I have is what number 13 brought forward, which I did not think of. I do thank number 13. Using the north of the number 1 highway: that is the other recommendation. Due to common community interests I think we do need one urban Medicine Hat. I really strongly believe that we do need that, so I'm asking that you take that into consideration and change Brooks-Medicine Hat to Medicine Hat.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Roberts.

Ms Roberts: You are welcome.

The Chair: Obviously, you've done a lot of work and put a lot of thought into this.

Talking about pulling our hair out, I'm going to ask Mr. Clark if he has any questions.

Mr. Clark: I don't stand a chance against any of this. I'll just say thank you, and know that your submission has been heard. It's certainly something we're actively considering and thinking about, and we'll take all that information. Like you say, the arithmetic is challenging, but this sort of submission and all of your active participation really does help frame the report, so thank you.

Ms Roberts: Thank you.

Dr. Martin: Thank you for your presentation. Yeah, the numbers are confusing. You know, if we look a little dazed up here, it's because numbers and boundaries are floating past our eyes every day of the week and in our sleep as well. It's quite an obsessive kind of sport.

I wanted to ask you about Forty Mile. You mentioned it on several occasions. You can see a comfortable configuration that includes Forty Mile in some respect. Is that correct?

Ms Roberts: That is correct.

Dr. Martin: Yeah. What are you trying to do by that? To bulk up the rural numbers? I mean, I know you're trying to make enough space for the Hat, but it's too big to be easy. Is that the problem that you have?

Ms Roberts: I'm trying to, yes, in one thought, bulk up the numbers.

My second thought, though, is that they do share a lot in common in regard to people in the county of Forty Mile, namely Bow Island. They do share businesses here in Medicine Hat. They have businesses, they have common interests connected to Medicine Hat, and I think that was more of a consideration than bulking up the numbers. I originally looked at just the common interest, that transportation corridor, what they share with the county of Cypress as well. That was more important to me.

Dr. Martin: Okay. Thank you very much. Like an earlier speaker today, she lives in Cypress county and works in the Hat. She said that's a very common situation, so it's a permeable boundary, this thing called the Hat. It's not only a geographical boundary but a psychological one that's quite permeable.

You know, we've been to some towns where they just want to lift up the drawbridge and not let the county in. There's quite a different attitude here I think on where people live and how they interact. Of course, it makes our life more confusing, particularly when the numbers – the next commission may have an easy time finding the solution you want, but we're in some sort of transitional space that isn't quite clean in that way, so I sympathize and empathize with your struggles with the numbers. Thank you.

Ms Roberts: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Martin.
Mrs. Samson.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. And thank you for your presentation. I was glad that you talked about the counties of Forty Mile and Newell because their boundaries are not that apparent on the maps that we're working with. We now have a county map that we're doing an overlay with, so thank you for that additional information to assist us in our decision-making. Thank you.

Ms Roberts: You're welcome.

The Chair: Mr. Evans.

Mr. Evans: Just to be clear, you live in which electoral division?

Ms Roberts: Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Evans: Okay. When you were talking about the intermunicipal agreement plans, you mentioned where Brooks was aligned, and then you mentioned that Medicine Hat was aligned with the county of Cypress and whom else?

Ms Roberts: Redcliff.

Mr. Evans: Redcliff. Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you again, Ms Roberts.

We have been going now for quite a while. We have a break schedule. We're going to take a break now. I noticed some of the people that were not here when I called are here now, so we'll have a full rest of the morning after. We'll reconvene at five to 11.

[The hearing adjourned from 10:38 a.m. to 10:53 a.m.]

The Chair: Okay. We will reconvene the public hearing.

You know, sometimes when things go wrong, they end up turning out right. We missed a presenter before the break, but we'll start with that presenter now if he is here. Oh, sorry; Mr. Stan Sakamoto, you're here. We'll start with you. Please come forward.

I indicated at the beginning that everything is recorded and transcribed; *Hansard* is making a record. We try to stick to a limit of seven minutes per presenter – we haven't so far this morning – and we'll have a few minutes for dialogue and questions. Please identify yourself, where you're from, and begin your presentation.

Stanley Sakamoto: Thank you very much. Hello. My name is Stan Sakamoto. I live in Medicine Hat. I was born and raised and created a business here. First of all, thank you for allowing me to speak to the Alberta boundaries commission regarding our new electoral division boundaries in southeast Alberta. My presentation is going to be brief. It's not going to be seven minutes. I just want to read some notes that I had written, and I want to thank you for allowing me to express my opinions.

Most importantly, Medicine Hat and Brooks have separate identities geographically, culturally, economically, and historically.

Brooks and Medicine Hat each have distinct college campuses, both have immigrant populations with separate community concerns, and both should be represented by someone with knowledge and interest specific to their community. The distance between Brooks and Medicine Hat prohibits sharing cultural and trade opportunities.

Brooks residents perhaps do a portion of their trade in Medicine Hat, but they are a trade entity unto themselves. Brooks and Medicine Hat are not the same economic area. In the past Brooks residents may have shopped in Medicine Hat, but their retail base has grown, and residents can support local businesses. Both Medicine Hat and Brooks deserve effective representation, separate from one another. Representatives must understand the community's specific and different needs.

This might not happen currently, but my thoughts are dividing Brooks as a separate entity with the ridings including Ralston, Suffield, Bow Island, and the Bassano area. Medicine Hat should have two ridings split by natural boundaries. The South Saskatchewan River or the Seven Persons Creek would split the north and south boundaries in Medicine Hat. The north should include Oyen and Redcliff. The south should include Seven Persons, Dunmore, Cypress county to the U.S. border.

The criteria outlined in the legislation: genuine, democratic, accurate, and fair representation must be considered. Natural boundaries and geographic features must also be taken into account. The best interest of our southeastern Alberta population cannot be forgotten.

Thank you for listening to my recommendations for the southeastern Alberta boundaries.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Sakamoto.
Mr. Evans, any questions?

Mr. Evans: Just a couple of quick ones.

Mr. Sakamoto, thank you. My understanding is that there's been a new chamber of commerce area created that now is called southeastern district chamber of commerce, which includes Brooks, Medicine Hat, Redcliff, et cetera. Are you aware of that?

Stanley Sakamoto: Yes, that's correct.

Mr. Evans: How far does that extend beyond Brooks, beyond Bow Island?

Stanley Sakamoto: It would include the area around Brooks, you know, the Duchess area and Patricia.

Mr. Evans: Does it go as far as Bassano?

Stanley Sakamoto: No.

Mr. Evans: My understanding is that with Costco arriving in Medicine Hat, there's been a significant change in the trade flow into Medicine Hat from that Brooks, Bassano area going towards Medicine Hat as opposed to going to Lethbridge or Calgary.

Stanley Sakamoto: You're probably correct. I also see a lot of people from Saskatchewan coming to the Costco area.

Mr. Evans: Right. I think even down into that – well, certainly Foremost and whatnot.

Also, can you comment on the draw of health care? It's my understanding that, again, if you're in that Brooks area, you're coming to Medicine Hat for health care. I don't know. Certainly Bow Island, I would assume likewise, and possibly even into southwest Saskatchewan.

Stanley Sakamoto: Yeah. I think for major operations, like knee or hip operations, definitely they would come to our hospital in Medicine Hat.

Mr. Evans: You indicated that there are separate campuses, Medicine Hat and Brooks. I think the Brooks campus is a satellite of the Medicine Hat College.

Stanley Sakamoto: Yeah, that's correct. I was just thinking that they are separate campuses, and they have their own distinct student bodies.

Mr. Evans: Thank you. I appreciate that.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for coming out today. I did read your and your wife's submission, and it brought to my attention that triangle on the south side of the river. Did I hear you say that you would prefer a cleaner, more concise boundary that is the river as opposed to what we're currently seeing now?

Stanley Sakamoto: It's divided along the First Street that's included, and I think it should be just a natural boundary as opposed to dividing the districts into streets.

Mrs. Samson: Right. You mentioned Seven Persons Creek, and I'm afraid I don't see that on my map. Is it in the south side of downtown Medicine Hat?

Stanley Sakamoto: Yeah. It flows through under the Trans-Canada dip, and it flows into the South Saskatchewan River.

The Chair: Just below the teepee.

11:00

Mrs. Samson: Okay, then I can find it. Now I know where to look.

The Chair: We stopped and got our picture at the teepee yesterday.

Mrs. Samson: Yeah. Okay. Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

The Chair: Julian.

Dr. Martin: Well, thank you, but no questions, because Susan took my question, really. I mean, it was precisely about what is the most effective boundary in the middle of town, so I'm fine.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, but no questions. Susan took my question about the triangle as well. We also read your submission and appreciate it very much.

The Chair: Yeah. Thank you. It's always helpful if we have, in advance, a written submission.

I have a question: naming of the constituency. How do you like it so far?

Mr. Sakamoto: Well, my proposal or thoughts for Cypress county would be that Medicine Hat-Cypress would be south, and we have to figure out a new one for the north division.

The Chair: Yeah. Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Sakamoto, and please stay and hear the rest of the presentations if you have time, and sometimes we have informal dialogue after. Thank you.

Mr. Sakamoto: Once again, thank you for doing what you're doing, but I do have a business and caterer to run, so I'm running. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you so much.

Our next presenter is Mr. Jim Black.

Mr. Black: Good day, and thank you. Stan mentioned some of the things I was going to bring up about the differences between the two communities. In full disclosure, I ran for the Alberta Party in the last election, and when I looked at the new boundaries of the new constituency of Brooks-Medicine Hat, my thoughts went back to my time sitting on the children's services board and on the health board, which were sort of coterminous with that new constituency. When I looked at the responsibilities of an MLA, which are to represent your community and advocate for your community, those were basically the same tenets when I sat on the children's services board and the health board, and I can tell you, from my experience, it's very hard to do when you're representing a distinct community in Medicine Hat, north and south, and a distinct community in Brooks, north and south.

As Stan pointed out and I'm sure others have pointed out as well, historically and commercially and socially and familiarly, the trade routes and the movements here are north and south. They're not east and west. The same thing is true in the Brooks area. I can tell you, from having coached and refereed sports for years, that teams from Medicine Hat don't go to Brooks. The draw to Medicine Hat is from Oyen, Maple Creek, Bow Island. The draw for Brooks is to Lethbridge, Strathmore, Calgary, and Taber.

I'll give you a couple of examples, if you'll indulge me, on how difficult I found it to be a representative for the western portion of this constituency versus the eastern portion. I was the principal of the outreach school in Brooks, and some of our clientele were students that were on drug rehab. There was a proposal that came to the Palliser health board to open up a short-term stay room in the Brooks hospital in a vacant room that the old hospital board had closed. It was right across from the reception, so monitoring would have been easy, and they wanted a place to put students who were starting to show signs of regression, as opposed to sending them to Medicine Hat. That request was turned down by the board; send them to Medicine Hat. The resources are in Medicine Hat. The funding is in Medicine Hat. So that's one example of how Brooks, in my opinion, was subservient to the needs of Medicine Hat.

In the area of even something as simple as representing teachers in southeast Alberta at the Annual Representative Assembly, most resolutions that came from Medicine Hat were put on the floor to be debated. Most resolutions from Brooks were put in a block with other small locals. The rationale was: if it's bigger, it must be more important. So again you can see where the Brooks area was put aside to the interests of a larger area.

My concerns – and this gentleman here, Mr. Evans, brought it up, about health care. There are three incidents that I can relate to that inform my opinion of how there's an uneven distribution between Brooks and area and here. We had a full-time pediatrician in Brooks who wanted, in the same room I was describing for the drug health care, a small pediatric room where newborns who were experiencing a form of jaundice could take therapy called blue light. Again, right across from reception, easy to monitor. Perhaps they would need short-term intravenous. That was turned down. Send them to Medicine Hat. As a result of that, the pediatrician left Brooks. They haven't had a full-time pediatrician since then. She believed her interests were not being met, the members of Brooks, families were not being met. Why would you inconvenience them

to go to Medicine Hat if you can do the therapy right here in the hospital?

Further to that, another plan came to us. I was on the physicians advisory committee, so that's how I know about these things. The doctors in Medicine Hat sent a representative to do basic chemotherapy, like monitoring chemotherapy in their offices, which at that time was, I think, fairly new. I'm not sure how new it was, but it was something they wanted to do. Again, to keep people from moving to the Hat, they could do it in their office, look after their patients. That was turned down by the board. Again, monetarily, send them to Medicine Hat; we have the services here. As a result of that, a doctor left Brooks because he felt that his needs weren't being met, and he would move somewhere else.

But the most extreme example occurred when we had to find some funding in 2004. We were not given an increase in funding for the board, so we had to find some, to quote the government, efficiencies. One of those efficiencies was to cut the acute-care beds in Bassano in half. Well, those acute-care beds were actually quite vital when you consider the highway 1 route and the accidents that take place there. I know it was instrumental on several occasions of providing that golden hour of care to people in accidents. My brother-in-law was an RCMP officer in Bassano and could testify to the fact that the hospital was actually vital in the treatment and care of these individuals.

It's interesting. In the *Medicine Hat News* this morning there was a picture of a lineup of people protesting down the Crownsnest Pass. That's reminding me of what we met when we went to Bassano to explain to them why we were closing some of their acute-care beds. It was very emotional at times, somewhat hostile. Again the theme was: we're being left out; we're being subverted to Medicine Hat. Why are you doing this to us? Why does Medicine Hat always take precedent? We dealt with that. It was quite a meeting, actually. It went on for about three hours. Again, it's back to that – when you created this constituency, I think you divided it into two different constituents' concerns that, as Stan pointed out, can be problematic in the long term, based on my experience.

If someone had asked me in 2017 what I thought would be a better mix for Brooks, I would have said to you: county of Newell, Brooks, MD of Taber, and Taber. They're similar for ag business. They interact naturally sportswise, recreationally. The gentleman here asked about the Costco in Medicine Hat. In my experience it didn't dissuade people from Brooks going to Lethbridge or Calgary to shop at Costco because they go for other reasons. They don't come here for those other reasons. They come here strictly to shop, turn around and go back home.

That's my moment to be a Forrest Gump and tell you that that's all I have to say about that. Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to say about that. I feel quite strongly that you've divided this part of the country into two different constituencies, and as a backbencher MLA I'm not sure how you would meet the needs of both constituencies. The Premier might be able to, but I'm not sure how a backbench MLA could do it.

The Chair: Well, it wasn't us that did it. I just want to put that on the record.

Mr. Black: No. I realize that. I realize that.

The Chair: Mr. Black, where do you live? Do you live in Brooks?

Mr. Black: I've lived in this area for 44 years. I lived 23 years in the county of Newell and 21 years here in Medicine Hat.

The Chair: So you know the area well.

Mr. Black: Yeah, very well. I was a representative for teachers and on the health board.

I came here for a rather self-centered reason. I love to play ball, and Medicine Hat has the best senior slo-pitch league in all of western Canada, not just Alberta.

11:10

Mrs. Samson: I didn't know that.

The Chair: And gold medallists out of Utah, as I understand.

Mr. Black: Yes. A couple of times.

I'm the only one from the western side of the constituency that's ever come here. The rest, when they retire, they go to Strathmore, Calgary, or Lethbridge. That's my motivation for coming here.

Mr. Evans: To play pickleball.

Mr. Black: No. We don't like senior slo-pitch guys playing pickleball because they hurt themselves.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Evans, any questions or comments unrelated to sports?

Mr. Evans: Mr. Black, thank you for the amount of information, you know, first-hand information you're able to give to us. There was a lot about the Palliser health region, and that extends out how far?

Mr. Black: Well, in those days we went from Oyen over to Bassano and then down to Bow Island. That was the area we covered. Someone said that it was the size of Switzerland, the area that we covered.

Mr. Evans: Without the beauty.

Mr. Black: Yeah. Well, there is beauty. The river valley is kind of pretty.

Mr. Evans: True.

If I understood, it seemed like everything – as is most often the case with health divisions, they tend to gravitate or throw everything into the biggest centre and that's what was happening. Did I understand that you're saying that Brooks is going to be better represented away from Medicine Hat than it currently is?

Mr. Black: That's my belief, based on my experience. Yeah.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Yeah. I just wanted to make sure I understood that. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Okay.

Mrs. Samson.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for your presentation.

Mr. Black: Sylvan Lake, right?

Mrs. Samson: Yes. Sylvan Lake. Well, it's Innisfail-Sylvan Lake; I'm struggling with that.

Mr. Black: I taught at Spruce View for seven years. I fished at Sylvan Lake quite often.

Mrs. Samson: Ah, yes. That's a part. Thank you.

Mr. Black: It's grown a lot.

Mrs. Samson: It has. We're 17,000, too; same as Brooks.

My question is: with Brooks not being Brooks-Medicine Hat – we had a previous presenter who talked about a north-south alignment as opposed to . . .

Mr. Black: East-west.

Mrs. Samson: Yeah. Brooks, instead of going like it previously was to the Chestermere-Strathmore area, would it be a better alignment going as far down as Taber-Warner, taking in Taber?

Mr. Black: I believe it would. I mean, it would be north-south, like Cardston-Siksika, but in my experience, again, as a coach and a referee, everything tends to go north-south in that area. For minor ball it's always Taber, Vauxhall, Lethbridge. It's not Medicine Hat. Unless you play on a varsity volleyball or basketball team or the Rangeland football team, you don't come to Medicine Hat. You go to Strathmore, Hanna; you go that way. So the north-south avenue would be more in line with what already happens anyway.

The Mormon and Mennonite communities from the county of Newell go south and then they go west. That's a major draw. In sports, for example, the Mormon community tends to go to Taber, Vauxhall, Lethbridge, Cardston. And if you referee those sports, that's the way you tend to go as well. So I think it's a more natural fit than the east-west we have now, in my opinion.

Mrs. Samson: Right. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay.

Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: I don't have anything to say other than that I am quite taken with your description of the north-south orientation of a lot of activities, but there just isn't the population in that kind of package. I can't think that there would be the population, so you have just made our problem worse.

Mr. Black: May I respond? By my count, the county of Newell, Brooks, MD of Taber, and Taber: I think that there are somewhere in the range of 38,000 people, which is 25 per cent of your mandate, which is 50,000. The other point I would like to make is that agribusiness is pushing up against the energy business now for revenue. In fact, I think in 2018 it was about \$400 million more than energy. But that's only going to grow, and if you expand highway 3 to a four-lane highway, it's going to grow even more. If you look at that highway 3 corridor, the amount of agribusiness that's been developed down there just in the last seven years, it's huge. Those areas are tied agriculturally, and I think there's only a potential for growth down there. I don't think that's going to be a rural constituency that's going to shrink, in my opinion.

Dr. Martin: Okay. Thank you

The Chair: Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: I'll build on what Dr. Martin had said. The idea of a north-south alignment I think just in concept: I can understand that flow. That's exactly the sort of information we're interested in, is sort of: who goes with who? You know, where does that all land? Arithmetically the math probably doesn't work, unfortunately, in terms of it because we're working to a 55,000 average – 54,929 – so around 41,000 is our bottom limit. We need to be mindful of that, and also we're trying to avoid the absolute edges.

As Justice Miller said in the intro, it's not just a math exercise either; we're thinking about effective representation and making sure that various parts of the province are adequately represented.

You can't just pop this into an AI algorithm and say: give me a bunch of places that add out to the mean exactly in the middle.

With all that kind of context, if we needed a piece of Medicine Hat, or I guess the question is, if we didn't make any changes because the two constituencies are already pretty much exactly at that 54,929 average, give or take – they're pretty darn close; among the closest in the province, actually – I guess two questions. If it didn't change at all, would you be okay with that, perhaps with a slight tweak around the triangle south of the river, or is there another recommendation that you would have? If we can't do your specific recommendation, would you be happier with it the way it is, or would you make another suggestion in terms of how you might put it together?

Mr. Black: Well, your second question first. If you're asking me my opinion, I'd say go back to the way it was before you made the changes. Then the other part of the question: Medicine Hat has always had two votes in the Legislature. When they were Medicine Hat-Cypress and Medicine Hat, they had two votes. When you now split Medicine Hat-Cypress, Medicine Hat-Brooks, they still have two votes. If there's an issue in conflict between Brooks and Medicine Hat, Medicine Hat wins out all the time because they have the majority vote. And so that's again part of my thinking about how I believe it would be a better fit to go north-south through Taber and perhaps down into Warner. I'm not sure how you would work that out. As His Honour said, that's your job this time, not somebody else's to deal with. So I leave that to you.

That's my opinion based on my experience. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to it, and good luck to you.

The Chair: There's a reason commissions aren't reappointed.

Dr. Martin: I mean, everybody says, "good luck" to us. We're getting increasingly nervous.

The Chair: Mr. Black, thank you so much. Your presentation is very winsome. Thank you.

Mr. Black: Thanks.

The Chair: Our next presenter is Gilles Blouin.

Mr. Blouin: I'm maybe going to read a little bit from my notes.

The Chair: Did I pronounce your name correctly?

Mr. Blouin: You did remarkably well.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Blouin: Yes. I also go by Gil if that's easier for you.

The Chair: Okay. We're in Alberta now.

Mr. Blouin: Yeah. Well, it depends what part.

I'm actually a fairly new resident in Medicine Hat. I've been here over three years. I grew up in a little hamlet just south of the town of Peace River and was raised on a grain farm. We farmed as much as nine sections, which was quite a bit at the time. I graduated from Fairview College with a diploma in agricultural management and livestock. During that time I purchased my father's grain farm, but I yearned to see more of the world, and that took me to different parts of Alberta, central Alberta, and southern B.C., where throughout those times I gained the journeyman partsman ticket working farm machinery as well as construction equipment.

11:20

Over the years I've worked in different areas where there was, in some places, grain farming, mixed farming, industrial equipment, construction equipment, as well as materials handling, like forklifts, which gave me a real idea of the pulse of the commerce and industry in each of those areas. I draw on that experience to speak to you today. Then I did a career change and went back and got a bachelor of social work and worked in child protection and guardianship for 20 years. Again, I was keenly interested in service delivery and how communities organized and how it functions.

I also want to mention that I have two adult children living in Medicine Hat. So while I was living in other areas, I was coming here a couple of times a year, at least, for 20 or 30 years, and now I've moved here full-time to be near my children.

Having been here for a while and having travelled the highways – highway 1 and highway 3 – numerous times, I kind of see the south of Medicine Hat and the southeast corner of the province as an island in the middle of a sea. I use the sea analogy to describe the surrounding area because seas are somewhat amorphous. You know, you look at them on the map and you don't know where this sea starts, that sea ends, or whether it's part of an ocean, or how that works. I believe this area is a bit like that.

The island obviously to me is the city of Medicine Hat and, including the commercial and industrial areas on the northwest edge leading into the Redcliff commercial area, there really is no – there is a boundary, but there's no boundary. It's kind of one area. Of course, Redcliff itself, as somebody else mentioned, is one community with Medicine Hat in many ways.

The sea around Medicine Hat I would see as Cypress county, Forty Mile, including Bow Island. Notice I don't include Brooks in that area. To me, it doesn't take long living in the area or driving down the highway to see that there is sort of a boundary just past Suffield. There's not much there for a while, and then it goes up to Brooks. For me, I see different types of agriculture on either side of that, and I see, frankly, the same thing going west on highway 3. Once past Bow Island there is sort of a little boundary there, and then you get into the agri-industrial complex near Taber. I would comment, and this is just me observing it, not having lived here for a long time, that I see Brooks, in terms of its agriculture, having more in common with Taber and that area going towards Lethbridge.

One of the aspects of that is that Medicine Hat doesn't have a lot of irrigated land relative to those other areas, so the agriculture is obviously different. If you go south from here, the southwest corner, you see a lot more dryland farming and ranching, so it is a slightly different version of agriculture from what I can tell.

I'll just end with a couple things that don't make sense to me, if I could. One of those is about having Brooks and Medicine Hat in the same riding. I believe it was a creative way of making ridings fit, making the population more or less a uniform size, but I think in doing so it really disregarded natural connections between the communities that exist. In some ways other speakers have talked about how there's a disadvantage, that the current situation is a bit of a disadvantage for the citizens of Medicine Hat.

I say that because I've lived in Crescent Heights for a couple of years, and I drive by the MLA's office almost daily, and I hardly see it open. I looked into it. The reason for that is that this is a satellite office of the Brooks constituency office, so I can count on one hand the number of times I've seen that office actually open. I point that out not to slam the MLA, but to say that I think that's a function of the structure of the riding. It is more useful in some ways for the MLA, perhaps, to have their office in Brooks than it is in Medicine Hat.

I'm a proponent of not having this particular organization in terms of Brooks-Medicine Hat, as you can probably tell. I would favour a mostly Medicine Hat riding, with another one of Medicine Hat combined with surrounding areas. I'm aware that you'd have to split Medicine Hat in some way. I would see one of those ridings, probably the southern part or however you divide Medicine Hat, to include Cypress county, Forty Mile, and Bow Island.

Also, just another thing that doesn't make sense to me. I see the existing two constituencies in Medicine Hat and that the boundary between them is quite arbitrary. I've lived on the South Hill, which is close to downtown, and that area is split in two by this boundary, which does not make any sense to me. I think that needs to change. I would favour a more natural boundary such as the South Saskatchewan River, or the Trans-Canada Highway, or some other configuration.

And that's it.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, sir. Much appreciated.

Mr. Clark, any questions?

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Thank you very much. Thinking about your suggestion to carve out Brooks from the Brooks-Medicine Hat constituency, and recognizing it may not be feasible to connect with Taber based on the comments we made with the previous presenter, would it make sense to go north and west toward Strathmore? That was the way it was before. Is that kind of a common direction as well for the folks of Brooks?

Mr. Blouin: I couldn't really comment on that. I'm not that knowledgeable of Brooks. It would appear to me that way, but that's without any real knowledge on the subject.

Mr. Clark: Again: good luck. We need to make those decisions ourselves.

Mr. Blouin: Yes. You're on your own.

Mr. Clark: That's what I'm reading between the lines. My words, not yours. Thank you for that.

The Chair: Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you. I'm really quite taken with your gift for poetry. I wonder how that came to you. Having spent so much time as a grain farmer, maybe there's time left over to think poetically.

Mr. Blouin: You sit on the tractor for many hours; you have to do something.

Dr. Martin: It's a very striking metaphor: Medicine Hat as the island surrounded by a sea of grass. I love it. It reminds me: I hope everybody in Medicine Hat has read *Wolf Willow* by Wallace Stegner. It's the most poetical description of this whole region of the Cypress Hills over time. I know this is being read into *Hansard*, and so it should.

Mrs. Samson: Is this homework?

The Chair: Yes.

Susan.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for your presentation, but you've just really messed it up. What are we going to do with Brooks, really? I don't know what to ask because I don't see a clear solution. We're going to take in the information and we're going to figure it out. Thank you.

Mr. Blouin: If I could comment, I think you're being put in a very difficult position by only adding two seats in the province.

Mrs. Samson: Yes. I hear you.

Mr. Blouin: I think that's part of the problem. There may be nothing the commission can do about that, but I would suggest that as somebody else mentioned – I'm still in contact with a lot of people in Peace River, and those ridings are unmanageable in size, right? I read an article that, you know, the population has doubled in Alberta in 20-some years, but there are only four more seats or something to that effect.

Mrs. Samson: Yeah.

11:30

Mr. Blouin: I would suggest or offer that maybe the commission should speak on that matter. If they're not able to add more seats, they perhaps could describe the situation and whether it's amenable or not, maybe towards the future.

The Chair: If we do that, we can't let Dr. Carter read our report.

Mr. Evans: We have to keep it secret from number 9.

The Chair: Mr. Evans.

Mr. Evans: I just wanted to echo the same thing that Justice Miller said, that we have to keep any additions secret from number 9, because he's not having it.

Thank you for your helpful submissions. I think you made the problem easier to solve. We're just going to make Brooks an island.

Mr. Blouin: More islands is good.

Mr. Evans: That's right.

The Chair: Thank you very much, sir. Please stay for the rest if you can.

Griffin Bray.

Mr. Bray: I would like to wish a good morning, approaching afternoon, to the commission. I feel a bit out of place here, both age- and prestige-wise, but I hope that gives me a unique perspective. I hope to come at this from a perspective of the youth and young adults of Medicine Hat, where there is a very vibrant community which I've been very privileged to work with quite closely, although some youth centres have been closing down and such, but that's a different concern, not for the board.

I personally feel that Medicine Hat needs better representation apart from Brooks, particularly with Redcliff as well. It's been brought up that Medicine Hat and Brooks have very different concerns, urban and rural respectively, and many different populations. Medicine Hat has, as I said, a very unique population as far as the amount of seniors we have, the youth community as well as many different minority groups, both ethnic, religious, and sexual and gender, particularly the last two within which I have a lot of friends and within which I identify personally. The representation there, I feel, is very important.

As far as the population goes, I think that it should be split into two urban ridings: Medicine Hat-Cypress and, if you need a name for the north one, Medicine Hat-Redcliff, I think, has quite a nice ring to it, personally.

I think Brooks has a lot of unique concerns that they need their own MLA for, and I think it's really difficult for the MLA to have to balance between north Medicine Hat and Brooks, especially because, you know, we have a satellite office here and such.

I think I'm just going to keep it short here. I think it would be very good for both of us to have a riding for Brooks and then Medicine Hat has two urban ridings instead.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bray. To encapsulate your presentation: it was a trial marriage, but we should split up. Is that what you're saying?

Mr. Bray: Well, putting it that way, sure.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: I won't comment at all on Mr. Evans' vocation as it relates to that sort of thing.

Mr. Evans: I will solve that problem.

Mr. Clark: First off, I just want to say a huge thank you for coming out. You know, what's been so gratifying about this whole process I think for all of us, certainly speaking for myself: I think this is the most pure form of democracy I have ever been involved in. This is far and away the most engaged crowd, I think as Justice Miller has noted. What's so satisfying is to see such a wide range of different perspectives and people and citizens really reflecting, I think, the breadth of what Medicine Hat and region is all about. I just want to say, mostly, thank you for that.

Also, thanks for the suggestion. If we do end up with some sort of – the Redcliff-Medicine Hat connection I think is really, really helpful. I guess I would just ask you to think about it like this. I mean, part of the feedback that we've received around – I'm just trying to think. What I'm trying to come up with is a thought experiment to kind of go the opposite way, right? Can you tell me why the two constituencies as they are, where Medicine Hat is roughly split in half and combined with its rural – and, you know, Brooks is obviously its own sort of unique urban area as well. Why or why not are there benefits or challenges in splitting it up that way? Does it actually create a need to kind of cross boundaries that exist, both actual municipal boundaries but also cultural, lifestyle, rural, urban? Is there a benefit in that, of bringing that kind of different perspective together in one area?

Mr. Bray: Yeah, I would think so, particularly for Medicine Hat. I live in Crescent Heights, always have, for the past 22 years or so. I think I remember my own age. Brooks is very separate, I feel. Medicine Hat, especially because of Suffield, we have a very unique position. Even on the global stage, when I've been to southern California, even there, they go: oh, yeah, Medicine Hat; we've heard of that because of the Tigers and such. Or if I talk to some friends in Great Britain, they tell me: oh, yeah, we've been to Medicine Hat because of Suffield. So trying to engage us with Brooks seems a bit troublesome when we're kind of very clearly our own community.

Personally, I feel like the boundaries, if you were to split them, on the south side should stretch to Forty Mile and some parts of Bow Island or maybe even all of it, and as far as the north side I think Redcliff should be represented properly as well as Suffield.

As far as, you know, the different cultures and such I find it's very difficult to try and campaign for the MLA that I feel like represents my and my friends' interests the most as well as the interests of the different communities in which I partake, doing all the campaigning that I can, only for the vote to be incredibly influenced by Brooks and the rural community, which need just as much representation. I'm not trying to say that they don't matter as much, obviously. But, quite simply, they're not accessible to people

my age, people around me and such. A lot of my communities simply don't exist there, especially, say, the Métis community, which is very urban within Medicine Hat. I feel like the different cultures are very different within the city and then surrounding.

Mr. Clark: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: No questions. Thank you.

The Chair: Mrs. Samson.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for coming out today. I don't have a question, but I just wanted to share with you that I think it's really important that people of your age come out to things like this. Like, we just struggle in all aspects of democracy to engage your demographic, your age group, so for me it's been really refreshing to see you here. I don't know if everybody would concur, but I think you're the youngest person that has addressed us in the three weeks that we've been on the road. That's how monumental this is for me, so thank you very much for coming.

Mr. Bray: Well, if you will allow me, a lot of people my age feel very disenfranchised with politics. We feel like we have next to no control over what happens, no representation, really. I feel like trying to split the boundaries properly into more urban ridings – youth are primarily in the urban areas, from what I've noticed. Even if they're rural, they will come here for culture because, well, you don't have much culture with cows and such, I assume.

Mrs. Samson: You're right.

Mr. Bray: Obviously, I don't have much connection to the rural community, so correct me if I'm wrong on that.

But for the most part, you know, youth just naturally connect to the urban community, so splitting that into urban ridings would help us feel more represented and perhaps allow more people my age to come into politics.

Mrs. Samson: Great. Great answer. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Evans, any comments or questions?

Mr. Evans: No questions. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Bray, thank you so much for coming out, and I echo my colleague's comments.

I should indicate that Electoral Boundaries Commissions are terrible at prognostication, as I've looked through the historic ones. Just as an example, the 2002 Electoral Boundaries Commission predicted that Alberta may very well have a population of 4 million people by 2030, if you can believe it. As we go through – and this is no criticism of the previous. We know that years from now we're going to be severely criticized for our work, I'm sure. We are lousy predictors.

But your comments are helpful, and your perspective is very interesting. Thank you so much, and thank you for sitting throughout the whole proceeding. I'll excuse you to the gallery, but please stay if you can.

11:40

Mr. Bray: Sure thing. If nothing else, I just really like the name Medicine Hat-Redcliff for the riding. Personally, I feel like it makes it less confusing.

The Chair: Yeah. Thank you.

Our next presenter is Jim Horsman. I actually introduced previous members as "the honourable." I misspoke. Sorry. The hon. Jim Horsman.

Jim Horsman: Well, thank you. I'm here very simply to endorse the proposal advanced earlier on by Bob Wanner. I thought that his presentation was thoroughly – he went through it very carefully and made these proposals. I must tell you, then, that when he gave me his submission, I said: this is going to be very hard for me to support, a submission by an NDPer. But I do because I recognize his experience both in municipal governance and in the Legislative Assembly process as well. I thought it was an extremely useful presentation, and I'm here as a supporter of that proposal rather than to advance anything on my own initiation.

I do want to say, though, however, a little bit about the history, my history. I ran on seven occasions, the first two under the Social Credit regime, and lost handily on both first occasions. Then when I finally won in 1975, I won by 130 votes, and at that time it was Medicine Hat-Redcliff. Interestingly enough, of my slight majority most of it was achieved by having had Redcliff support strongly for me, so when they decided to move Redcliff out, I was disappointed. But I didn't run anyway after that.

So that's really what I'm here to do rather than to advance anything new on my initiation, to say that I thought that Bob Wanner's presentation was so thoroughly and carefully developed. That would be my presentation to you today.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Horsman. Your bipartisan spirit has been a hallmark of your career throughout, so I acknowledge your endorsement of Mr. Wanner's presentation today. I have to say that as part of this job I've had to look through *Hansard*; when you and Pam Barrett dialogued at committee stages, your bipartisan spirit shone through then, and you know the task that's before us. Thank you for your eminent fairness.

Questions. I'm going to ask Mr. Evans to start. If you have any questions or comments that relate to Mr. Wanner's presentation and to what Mr. Horsman has said.

Mr. Evans: No. Your willingness to be bipartisan and to support a good idea regardless of it coming from number 13 is a great example for this committee and this commission. That's what we're striving to do as well, to put partisan politics aside to come up with a solution, the best solution we can come up with and, hopefully, to have it a unanimous one. So thank you for your example and your service.

Mr. Horsman: I could just add a little something to that, if you will, about what takes place during the Legislative Assembly itself. I was the Government House Leader in the Legislature, Pam Barrett was the leader of the NDP Party, and the Liberal representative: we would all meet every Monday morning along with the representative from the Speaker's office to determine what the agenda of the Legislative Assembly would be for that forthcoming week. I must say that Pam Barrett and I had a great deal of difference philosophically and so on, but when it came to trying to advance the legislative session and do it in a civilized manner, we worked together very carefully. I think that was an example, I might add, that you might like to reignite during the course of the present Legislative Assembly. But that's not something that you're here to hear or here to direct.

The Chair: Mrs. Samson, questions or comments?

Mrs. Samson: Just a comment. Thank you so much for coming out. It's really made the morning enjoyable, the diverse dialogue we've

been having, and you've been part of it. You're in the record forever again.

Thank you.

The Chair: Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Again, thank you very much. I don't have much to add other than I am glad that you're such a strong Medicine Hat advocate. You know our problems with the numbers, and shuffling things around the board may be possible, may not be possible; it may get left over to the next commission, some of it. But we're in a game of incremental alterations if we are to change things into two ridings that have just about the perfect numbers and don't show significant short-term growth.

I ask at every meeting. Everyone could talk about development and everything is going to grow, because, well, developers talk like that, but I'm more interested in what I call the Tyvek test. Is it really being built? Is it imminent and tangible? Has it got a permit? I don't think there is significant new residential growth in either of these ridings. Would that be a fair characterization?

Mr. Horsman: Well, I think perhaps my colleague who served in the municipal government for many years in a senior position would be better able to answer that than I could. There is growth throughout all of Alberta, but it's not uniform, obviously. But those people who have had the experience at the municipal level should be consulted in terms of what they may expect to see in terms of their needs, in terms of what government relationship there should be between the provincial government and municipal governments. I think that's something that Bob would be better able to answer than I could.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Thank you. Again, more work for us to dig into to try to understand. And as a famous Albertan – adopted Albertan, I guess – used to say, we'll have to try to skate to where the puck is going to be as well; a big part of our challenge.

I don't have a question as much as a comment. We were talking last night at dinner with your friend Troy Wason, whose name is now officially in *Hansard*. Part of this process is just putting people's names in *Hansard*, isn't it?

11:50

But we were talking last night, and I just want to echo my colleague, Mr. Evans, and the others' comments here on kind of nonpartisanship and how, as I've said before today once already, I feel like this is, having done some things in the public sphere before, the purest form of democracy I've ever participated in. And I think your lessons in how to work in an inherently partisan environment, but in a respectful way of listening to and understanding what other perspectives are, is a wonderful frame of reference for us on this commission and in whatever tiny way we can have an influence on the rest of our political or democratic discourse. Hopefully, we perhaps can achieve that as well.

So mostly just a note of thanks for you being here today and for your service to the province. Thank you.

Mr. Horsman: Well, thank you. I hope that it's been of use.

When I look back on the history of Alberta, from 1935 until 1965 there was no question that these issues were determined by some committee of the Social Credit Party, which governed throughout that entire – but then along came this guy by the name of Peter Lougheed in 1965, and he skewed the whole mess as far as they were concerned.

Nonetheless, I think that you have a role to play and a significant one, and that is to make sure that there's some equity in terms of the representation. Population is a key element in that, and you have to take that under consideration as well as what other representation may be made to you regarding the future as far as economic development in different parts of the region and so on. These are all things that obviously have to be addressed not just by the province but by the municipal governments, who are going to be affected significantly by what economic and other aspects of the changing life of Alberta may be. And I just hope that we don't have to go through this when we're the 51st state.

The Chair: Mr. Horsman, thank you so much. You have implicitly taught civics to a couple of generations through your life and your profession, and you just gave us a little lesson again today. I am going to excuse you to the gallery. If you can stay, I know the commissioners would love to chat with you privately. Thank you for coming here.

Mr. Horsman: Thank you. I'm using this cane because I'm the author of my own misfortune in the way I pulled weeds in my garden last night.

The Chair: It is five to 12. Our last scheduled presenter is the hon. Rob Renner. No pressure, Mr. Renner. We have not used the time limits so far, so I don't propose to start. Actually, we may have had one add-on as well. You're the last scheduled presenter, Mr. Renner.

Mr. Renner: I thought I was going to be the cleanup hitter and send you on your way.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My name is Rob Renner. I served as the MLA for Medicine Hat from 1993 until 2012, and between Mr. Horsman, who was my immediate predecessor, and myself, we have about 39 years of consecutive MLA representation at your table today. I want to also indicate that I've been in discussion and had some long conversations with Bob Wanner as well. I was here this morning when he made his presentation, and to a very large degree I agree with everything that he had to say as well.

I want to talk just a little bit about your role as the electoral commission. I don't envy you. It's like playing dominoes. When one moves, then five more down the line are going to move along with it. It must be a very, very difficult job to be given. Others have mentioned the fact that the growth of seats doesn't necessarily equate to the growth of population. So the faster growing areas cause trials and tribulations in the slower growing areas.

I also want to talk about representation and adequate representation and how an MLA can represent their community. That's really the whole basis for democracy. We concentrate so much on the Legislature: I get so many votes, and you have to make sure the votes are equal. But the lion's share of the work of an MLA is not done in the Legislature in Edmonton. It's done in their constituency office and in the association and the work that they do when they're back home, which is the majority of the time. Contrary to popular belief, they're not on holidays when they're not in Edmonton; they are hard at work in their own constituency. That's the reason why you need to make sure that the MLA has a community that has some commonality, that they can have a clear understanding of: what are the issues; who needs a particular assistance?

In my own case, Mr. Horsman concluded his political career in 1993. I was elected in 1993, and it just happened to be that I was elected into a new riding under a previous Electoral Boundaries Commission. That was not the same as the one that he represented. That particular boundaries commission determined that Medicine

Hat, although it had always had one MLA, had grown too large to have one MLA. In their wisdom, rather than splitting the city in half, they put about three-quarters of the city into one riding – they called it Medicine Hat – and they put about a quarter of the city into another riding, called it Cypress-Medicine Hat. That's the breakdown that I operated under for the majority of the time that I was the MLA. That included Cypress county, and it also included the county of Forty Mile, the town of Bow Island, town of Redcliff. I think that it worked and it served the needs of the constituents very well.

My riding was a one hundred per cent urban riding. I dealt with not only the people that lived within my own riding, but I tended to and my office tended to deal with issues that were Medicine Hat issues at the constituency level. When people were having problems getting their WCB looked after, when they were doing any number of things that they call on their MLA to do – I worked with my colleague Lorne Taylor and then later Mr. Mitzel, and we tended to say – I'd call Lorne; I'd say: "Lorne, I've got an issue. Someone owns some land in your constituency, and they've called my office because they live in my constituency. Is this something that you can help me out with? This is an area of expertise that I don't really have." Conversely, Lorne would call on me, and he would say: can I send somebody down to your office because they're dealing with issues that I know you deal with on a day-to-day basis? We called them our steady customers. They were in the constituency office frequently.

We got to know the system. We got to know the people in the department that we were dealing with and how we could resolve their problems as quickly as possible. We worked as two people serving a very large constituency in both cases. Their constituency geographically was far larger than mine, but the concentration of work was in the city of Medicine Hat. The work that's on the ground, not the work in the Legislature.

Once we were in the Legislature, of course, we were MLAs just like everyone else, and we were representing and voting on behalf of the people that we represented. But it is so critical that we consider not only population but also the quality of representation and whether someone can actually do the job.

12:00

We have some geographic realities that we have to deal with in southeastern Alberta. You see on the map there the Bow River. South of the Bow River is the Oldman River. The Oldman River comes through Lethbridge. The Bow River comes through Calgary, and that tends to be where – you go upstream, and the closer you get to Lethbridge and the closer you get to Calgary, that's kind of where the migration ends. We've heard earlier about north-south. The north-south only works where there are bridges. If there's no bridge, that's a very hard barrier, those rivers. And then just north we also have the Red Deer River. So we have all those rivers.

We also have one that you don't see on that map. It's called CFB Suffield. It's this huge area that goes all the way across the north. Nobody lives there. It's not hard to represent, but it sure is hard to get around. They don't like it if you take a shortcut across the base. You see Hilda and Schuler and those places: they can't get to Brooks, for example, because they'd probably get shot along the way, especially when the British were there.

I think there are a lot of arguments that are very valid that say it was a mistake to take Forty Mile and Bow Island out of that Cypress-Medicine Hat riding and substitute Brooks. I can understand why it was done. The numbers would justify it, but it makes for a very, very difficult riding to represent. I don't know that I would want to be the MLA that has half of Medicine Hat, all of Brooks, all of Redcliff, all of these municipalities, municipal

councils, that expect your time and energy, and still do the on-the-ground work that an MLA is expected to do.

I would suggest that even though it may end up being slightly lower than the population base that you're aiming for, in this particular case there are some local issues, some realities geographically and otherwise, that it probably justifies having a slightly below average and having Brooks return back into that area closer to Calgary, Strathmore, Chestermere, and those areas. They truly do have much more in common than they do here in Medicine Hat.

That's it.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Renner.

Mr. Clark, any questions?

Mr. Clark: Can you just tell me a little bit more? You know, one of our remits is effective representation, right? There are some framework parameters, I guess, that are laid out for us both in the act and flowing back up to the Supreme Court reference of 1991 that sort of define common communities of interest, geography, scarcity, density, et cetera, and the Justice took us through that at the beginning of the day. I'm just curious if you can maybe flesh out a little bit more in ways that might help us both here in Medicine Hat and area and elsewhere in the province to define what is a common – see, you gave some examples of the MLA constituency work, and that was really helpful. But I just wonder if there are even more kind of essential principles that we could use when we're evaluating these sorts of questions here but elsewhere as well?

Mr. Renner: Well, I think one of the examples in this particular part of the world is irrigation districts. We talk about municipal councils, we talk about rural municipalities, we talk about a number of things, but there's another whole group that is governance and critical to the needs of southeastern Alberta, and that's the irrigation councils.

Brooks is on the Bow River irrigation council. Bow Island and Forty Mile all the way up to Taber is the St. Mary irrigation council. Their communities tend to associate up and down the canal system. Just like you and I, who are not irrigation farmers, will be up and down the highway system, it's critical that irrigation farmers have some commonality. Hopefully, their MLA is familiar with and can work with their respective irrigation councils as well.

So there's another little extra something in southern Alberta that you don't find in the rest of the province. Irrigation is the lifeblood of southern Alberta, and Medicine Hat is right at the very end of the St. Mary irrigation system. The canals end in Medicine Hat, but all the way up that canal system they're all working together and all interrelated. That's why it makes so much more sense to include Bow Island and Forty Mile in one of the associations associated with Medicine Hat.

Mr. Clark: That's great. That's very, very helpful. Thank you.

The Chair: Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: No questions. Thank you.

The Chair: Susan.

Mrs. Samson: Thanks for coming out, but I don't have any questions.

The Chair: Mr. Evans.

Mr. Evans: No questions for me either, but thank you for your helpful submissions and your input. It's very helpful.

Mr. Renner: Thank you much. Good luck.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Renner.

Well, ladies and gentlemen, there was one add-on that I'm prepared to hear, but this person is going to be restricted for time. Donald Knudsen, are you present? Please come forward. I'm going to limit you to five minutes. We're not going to charge you anything extra for coming late, but we'll give you only five minutes.

Mr. Knudsen: Thank you very much for your time anyways.

I just had a little bit to say. I'm Donald Knudsen. I recently moved here about five years ago to Medicine Hat. I've worked three elections as a greeter, I guess you might as well call it, and I found that there are a lot of people that don't vote. We have a big problem with representation of people wanting to vote. Not to pick on it, but I worked in Redcliff one time and Medicine Hat another time. There was a group of Hutterites come in. They were in the wrong place. They should have been in Seven Persons. So we need to help immigrants, people who are not the regular, to vote. It'll help our democracy immensely. They need to know where and who to vote for.

We need to have a representative that knows the needs. Like Mr. Wanner said and the previous speaker said, there are a lot of different areas that we need to address. I think Redcliff-Medicine Hat is a good name, and Medicine Hat-Dunmore is a good name. Where you make the split in Medicine Hat, I would say that we need to have – like, one of them would be almost all urban. I think Redcliff-Medicine Hat would be a good one. Then take Medicine Hat and Dunmore and Cypress county. If you want to call it Cypress-Medicine Hat and save on paper, we can do it that way.

That would be it.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Knudsen, and thanks for sticking your hand up late and coming in and presenting.

Mr. Evans, any questions or comments?

Mr. Evans: No. Thank you for your submissions.

The Chair: Susan?

Mrs. Samson: No questions, but thank you.

The Chair: Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: I've been staring at maps a lot recently, as you can imagine, and one of the things I've noticed, and it's a function of our culture: we read from left to right. That's why the names roll out the way they do. You know, Brooks-Medicine Hat, right? Cypress-Medicine Hat is different than most parts of the province. People who live there should be congratulated on being culturally diverse in that respect.

Really, I want to ask you about naming. In your ideal configurations what would be the names attached to them?

12:10

Mr. Knudsen: Well, I said that Medicine Hat-Redcliff or Redcliff-Medicine Hat, however you want to read it, would be an urban riding. Medicine Hat, you can call it Cypress or Dunmore, would be another one.

I think you probably all know that there is an economic district that the city of Medicine Hat, Cypress county, and Redcliff all are a part of, and they are working together already anyways.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

Mr. Clark: No questions for me, but thank you very much for coming.

Mr. Knudsen: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you again, Mr. Knudsen. You're excused.

We'll now adjourn the hearing. We'll stay around. We're happy to talk briefly.

I must say that this, without a doubt, has been the most engaged public hearing we've participated in. I'm not saying it to make you feel good. People have stayed; we've had great presentations, great history. It's been a long week, but it's been a very enjoyable end to the week for us, so thank you very much, everyone, for coming. We'll write to you in late October, and you'll be able to read what we've come up with.

Thank you.

[The hearing adjourned at 12:11 p.m.]



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

Fort McMurray

Monday, June 16, 2025
12:57 p.m.

Transcript No. 21

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission

Justice Dallas K. Miller, Chair

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Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Fort McMurray

Public Participants

Vaughn Jessome, Constituency Assistant, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche and Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo
Byron Kessler
Rene Wells

12:57 p.m.

Monday, June 16, 2025

[Justice Miller in the chair]

The Chair: Well, good afternoon, everyone. We're going to start right on time. Welcome to the Fort McMurray edition of the Electoral Boundaries Commission public hearing. First, I want to thank all of you who have come today. It looks like all the presenters may be present already.

By way of introduction my name is Justice Dallas Miller. I'm the chairman of the commission, and I also serve as a justice of the Court of King's Bench in southern Alberta.

The other commissioners at the table with me are, first of all, Susan Samson, a long-time resident of Sylvan Lake, Alberta, and an experienced municipal politician who has served several terms as a councillor and as a mayor. Susan was named citizen of the year and received the Queen Elizabeth II diamond jubilee medal in 2012 for her extensive volunteer activity in the community.

Next to Susan is Mr. John Evans, KC, a lawyer with a firm known as Stringam which is centred in Lethbridge, Alberta. That's where he does much of his work, but he conducts trials across the province. John's legal ability has been recognized by being awarded King's Counsel, or KC. John also volunteers as a member of the Alberta Judicial Nominating Committee.

To my right is Dr. Julian Martin. Dr. Martin is a retired history professor from the University of Alberta with advanced degrees from Cambridge University. Julian has volunteered on many committees in the Edmonton and Sherwood Park areas and serves on provincial quasi-judicial tribunals.

At the far end of the table is Mr. Greg Clark, an entrepreneur and consultant focusing on information and knowledge management. Greg has the experience of serving one term as a member of the Legislature of Alberta for Calgary-Elbow. He, too, is a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II platinum jubilee medal. Currently Greg serves as the chairman of the Balancing Pool of Alberta and advises and consults organizations relative to proper board governance.

We are your Electoral Boundaries Commission, and we have been travelling the province for the last three weeks. This is our week for northern Alberta, and we're happy to be here. We had a great trip up here, and we look forward to hearing from those of you who are presenting.

I also want to just introduce to you Mr. Aaron Roth, who is in the front row. He can wave. If you have any written material that you're going to present, if you want to leave it with us, leave it with Aaron, and he'll make sure we get copies.

The Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission is an independent commission established by the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. We have the task, which is given to a commission every eight to 10 years, or every two election cycles, to look at the boundaries and see if there's to be any change. Well, there's no question that this time around there will be changes. Why? First of all, the Legislature has expanded the number of seats from 87 to 89, so we've got two additional seats to apportion in the province. By the next election there will be 89 new electoral divisions.

It's helpful to see what our timeline is like in order to give an idea of the process that we'll be going through. First of all, this commission was established by the Speaker of the Legislature in late March of this year. We were able to meet a couple of times as a commission in April to discuss process and schedule. Then we commenced our public hearings in late May in southern Alberta. We've worked through Pincher Creek, Lethbridge, Drumheller, Medicine Hat, Brooks, Calgary, Wainwright. You can see all the places we visited on our website. We conclude our hearings next week. After we've concluded all of our public hearings, we will

deliberate and review the presentations that we've heard, review the population statistics, and start working on our report.

The timeline requires that we provide an interim report to the Speaker of the Legislature by late October of this year. That report will be made public. It'll be published in the *Alberta Gazette*. It'll be made public, and members of the public can respond to that report in the weeks and months after late October. We will then conduct a second round of public hearings, and by the end of March 2026 we are required to submit our final report to the Speaker of the Legislature. At that time the government will enact enabling legislation based on our report. That will be enacted, and of course the public will be notified of the new boundaries.

You are aware, no doubt, that each member of the Legislature is elected by only voters in that person's constituency. I will use the terms "electoral division," "electoral district," "constituency," "riding," all meaning the same thing.

Again, for clarity it is helpful to compare what has happened in the past in respect to electoral boundaries. In 2017 the previous Electoral Boundaries Commission issued its report and submitted it to the Speaker based on only 87 constituencies. That commission dealt with a population of Alberta of just over 4 million people. The formula that they used is, as you can see, a formula based on a 4,062,609 population divided by 87, and the mean average number is 46,697. In Alberta and in Canada we do not operate on the one person, one vote principle. We operate more on what has come to be known as effective representation. The courts and the legislation have said that effective representation is achieved as long as the targeted population is in that range of minus 25 to plus 25 of the mean average. You can see those population figures on the screen. So anywhere from 35,023 to 58,371 was the permitted number to be allowed in each electoral division as a result of the 2017 electoral boundaries. The important number to recognize is the population figure, as I said, just over 4 million people in 2017.

This year the formula is before you, and our population is 4,888,723. The mean average is obtained by dividing it by the number of constituencies, which will be 89. You see the target population range of 41,197 to 68,661. That's the targeted range that we are dealing with as a commission. The population number that we've arrived at is based on what the legislation says we must refer to and supplemental information from the Alberta government.

1:05

First of all, the legislation requires us to look at the most recent decennial census for Canada, which was 2021. In population terms a lot has changed over the last four years in Alberta, so we're not solely relying on the 2021 figure. What most people don't realize is Statistics Canada does update their census figures on a regular basis, and added to that the Alberta government, through the Alberta Treasury Board Office of Statistics and Information, regularly updates and validates the population of Alberta.

The number we're using is the number that you see on the screen. That is a verified and validated population figure as of July 2024, so that's the figure we'll be using. That's the cut-off date, and that's the data that we'll be relying on. I know that there have been public reports of the population of Alberta actually being 5 million. Well, that may very well be correct, but the most validated and verified figure is the one that's before you, and that's what we'll be using. The challenge for us as a commission is that the growth has not been evenly distributed across the province. It's been focused mainly on the two large cities, Calgary and Edmonton.

Our task as a commission is to come up with a recommendation of the boundaries providing for the term "effective representation." Again, it's not one person, one vote; it's effective representation. That can be arrived at using a number of factors. Most of these

factors are actually spelled out in the legislation. First of all, we look at the relative sparsity and density of the population throughout the province. We also look at factors such as common community interests and organizations, and that may very well come into play in our hearing today. Geographic features feature prominently in the areas outside the cities but, to some extent, even within the cities. We will be looking at geographic features like rivers and roads, major thoroughfares. Communication and transportation lines across the province will also be a factor.

Our goal as a commission is to provide a report that provides understandable and clear boundaries to Albertans. The legislation allows us to take into consideration other unique and appropriate factors that will come to our attention through the public hearings, largely. Now as part of the public hearing process we want to hear from Albertans. We want to hear from you as to what you'd like to see in your particular part of the province.

To commence our hearings, we have a list of three formal presenters, and because we have some time, if there's anyone else that would like to present, we'll allow those individuals to present after we've gone through the list.

Our first presenter is Mr. Byron Kessler. Just have a seat at the table here. By the way, all these microphones do mean something. The hearing is being recorded, and the audiofeed will be on the website in a couple of days. It's also going to be transcribed, so *Hansard* will provide a written transcription that will be on the website as well.

Mr. Kessler, please identify yourself, tell us where you live, and proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Kessler: I'm Byron Kessler. I currently live in the little town of Gregoire Lake Estates out by Anzac and was born and raised in Peace River. I worked in Robb, Edson, Peace River, Manning, Whitecourt, Grande Prairie, Dawson Creek, Rainbow Lake, Fort McMurray. I have a NAIT forestry diploma, a U of A forestry degree, and a ITABC red seal journeyman electrician. I was the owner and operator of a now defunct forestry firefighting consulting company. So I'm not educated to the extent of all of this, but I do have some understanding of it.

The Chair: You know the north by the looks of it.

Mr. Kessler: Yes.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Kessler: I used to be a forest officer. I worked in the firefighting side of everything with the Alberta government.

I'd like to thank you for giving the opportunity for the electorate to speak their minds. I have a simple question. Do you believe we need a referendum on separation? I don't want you to answer that, but are we truthfully seeking the answer to that? That's why I put that in there. Are we truthfully seeking the answer to that?

With that, I'd like to bring your attention to WCC. I don't know if you guys know of that, back in the 1980s. This isn't a new thing. The basis of this whole premise and all of this stuff is equity, equality, fairness. Not everyone gets a blue ribbon in life. Some of us don't even get first, second, or third-place trophies. It's what it is. Life is not fair.

I beg to differ on that, the trophies and first places. Life is based on ROI; it's our return on our investment. You know, I might be a thousandth place, but am I happy with my return on my investment? And by return on investment I mean labour invested by me, my family, my neighbours, my community, my town, my city, my province, my country, my kingdom. Think of all this labour invested: for what purpose? I added kingdom because we're still

under the Westminster Commonwealth; some of the awards or whatever point that out.

All of this labour versus each of these entities taxing said labour: labour meaning time away from the ones we love and the things that make us happy. I would hazard a guess that most of that happiness and the ones we love are what we would say makes us prosperous. They say you increase your wages to your employees. It doesn't make them happier, but if you give them more time with their grandkids or something, it does, right?

So it's labour and return on investment of said labour. If the entities above decide to invest a large portion of labour, banking on obtaining prosperity, and one of the entities to which it's bound, of all of those that I had mentioned, from kingdom down to self, decides they want to take a substantial portion of that, what is our labour? In doing so, taking the benefit from the whole takes away from you. It has always been implied that if you work hard, you would get ahead.

I tried putting something together here because I'm passionate about this. The British Commonwealth is 2,000,418,000 people. I pulled that up on the web. I might be wrong. I'm just throwing numbers out, but I'm confident that that's close. Canada is 40,000 people, 1.6 per cent . . .

The Chair: Forty thousand or 40 million?

Mr. Kessler: Forty million, sorry. Roughly, again, 1.6 per cent of the Commonwealth.

We basically did away with the Commonwealth because they were taking from us a while back. We said that we wanted to be our own, right? Our current situation we're in: Canada is at 40 million; Alberta is 4.88. We have the same situation. A lot of people think that central is taking from the north and the west.

In saying all of this, I'm trying to put – and people are asking for this referendum, but what are people really asking for? They don't think it's fair. They're taking us. It's your labour. How do we get benefit? We work hard. I get a big house. I try and make people happy in my community, in my town. If it gets taken away, how does population – the Ottawa-Toronto corridor there. The election is over, right? How do we get equal representation? They say the whole west doesn't even equate to the east, let alone one of the big provinces. That's what I'm getting down to.

1:15

I'm not saying that it shouldn't be population, but I didn't know the formula you had. From what I've seen, I would urge you to go to that lower level, the negative 25 per cent, and those extra seats that are there, the areas that – I know people aren't going to like this, but if I work hard, I strive. That was sort of the dream. I work hard, and I can provide for my family. I work hard, and I can get ahead, yet it doesn't seem like that. The last few years I worked 80 hours a week. A week. Double. In 2019 when everybody was saying they didn't want to go to work, my income was \$185,000. I said I would go. I didn't get ahead and felt underrepresented. It was all just taken away. There's no point in my labour. I should have just sat on my butt. This area works hard. We try to provide for the province. If there's no benefit to that, why do it? If there's no representation, right?

So the real issue is the lack of meaningful influence on our labour. This facilitates a political advantage-taking, undermining the dignity and potential contributions of other underrepresented regions that care about the investment in the province, right? Representation by population does not work. We can see that in Canada alone, the population of Quebec and Ontario versus everywhere else. It's essential we redraw the MLA seats to include

population. I do understand: Edmonton with a million, Calgary with a million point three people. You can't say: yeah, you get one hospital in Fort McMurray. You get one hospital. I mean that population has to be in there somewhere to provide, but when you work your arse off and you get nothing, it's frustrating.

What I would like to see is: create a positive feedback loop where, yes, it might not be fair, but we know life isn't fair. But if we work hard, maybe we get more representation. I don't know how that works within your formulas. I don't know the whole scope of how all your formulas work, but that is basically what I'm saying. I agree that population is a big factor, but it should be that if we invest, if we – you know, that was the American or the Albertan dream. You work hard. We're go-getters. You know, I started a company. Yeah, it didn't work, but we give 'er. We put out.

I guess my final statement: is it better to reward less labour investment? I put it down as labour because if I just said dollars – but it's actual labour. This is time people have. You know, I chose to labour, and I didn't get to go and see this with my niece or nephew or my kids or my mom. I missed out. Our investment in the labour we do, our sacrifices: should we not be rewarded for that? That is what I'm trying to say.

I mean, I pulled up tons of numbers and, you know, if you look at the GDP of Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, they don't give it to you, but they'll tell you that it's like a trillion over the next 11 years. Well, that's \$90 billion every year, and with the lower population, now, that's a fallacy as well. The people producing that \$90 billion: there are guys out here that fly in every week, still not company paid. They'll pay it themselves from Ontario and stuff, right? They see the Alberta advantage, but their family is all there. Their parents are there. Their nieces and nephews are there, so they still do that. They still do that.

It was like \$800,000 GDP per capita compared to, like, the \$70,000 and \$80,000 of Edmonton and Calgary. One seat. Like I said, I understand population, but there comes a point where this little area getting split up 75 times doesn't equate to equality or fairness when this area gets one. I mean, from your formula there I would urge you to go to the low end of that. I just did a quick calculation. That comes out to 118 seats. Do not give those out as definite: you always get this. The producers, whether it's Banff that makes tons of money because of the Japanese tourism – I don't have the numbers. I don't have the figures, but a bunch of our province's productivity comes from there. They should have an extra say. They should have the ability to say: "No. We need to reinvest in this. We need to reinvest in this instead of it all coming – you know, I want the Yellowhead done."

I know I didn't have a fancy presentation like they taught us to do in school. This is all just from my heart, and I hope I came across. If you have any questions of what I'm thinking, I'd hope that you understand where my head is at.

The Chair: Mr. Kessler, thank you very much. We are going to probably have some questions to answer, but just for clarification, you said you live in Gregoire Lake?

Mr. Kessler: Yes.

The Chair: That's south of the city here, and that's in Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche?

Mr. Kessler: Yes.

The Chair: Is that where you operate your businesses as well?

Mr. Kessler: No. I am a journeyman electrician right now. I work for companies within town.

The Chair: Okay. Just for context, the population – and we're going to probably press you for some information that you could provide to us as a commission. The riding that you live in, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche, in 2016 had a population of 44,166. The population for 2024 is 44,916. About an 800 increase, very slight compared to the rest of the province. But it's helpful to just look at your northern riding as well. Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo in 2016 was 41,420. The 2024 number is 45,917. Those numbers are on the lower end, obviously, as you recognized in the formula. So your point is: look, there are not a lot of people in these ridings, but we shouldn't expand the ridings to make that number go higher, closer to the mean average. Is that what you're saying?

Mr. Kessler: Yes.

The Chair: Because it's difficult to get representation in Edmonton.

Mr. Kessler: Well, I don't believe that it should be just population. Like, if that's our range, why not have it at the low end? That's our equal representation. Then what we have left, you get economists together and you say: "Okay, Rainbow Lake produces this. Cypress Hills produces this."

I:25

Like, have a look at it and say: okay; hey, you know what? Edmonton and Calgary actually have pretty good GDPs or whatever. We'll throw one in the whole and maybe not split these ones we have up. Maybe we say: no; you can overlap. Why can't the next ridings overlap? You vote for two people in your riding, your steady one and then one that could change. I know people aren't going to like it, but if your area doesn't prosper in effort to labour gone for the whole province, you may lose that guy next time around.

The Chair: Okay. Just to assure you, we're limited to only 89 ridings. We're not suggesting any more, just an increase of two.

Mr. Kessler: Okay. That's fine. I'm just saying that that is how I think.

The Chair: Okay.

I don't want to monopolize the questioning, so I'm going to ask the other commissioners if they have any questions. Susan, do you want to start?

Mrs. Samson: Thank you, and thank you for coming out. I have been looking at these ridings in preparation of coming up here, and it's extremely difficult. The ridings are massive and, as you say, huge economic drivers. I mean, this province is run on gas and oil and the labour that comes out of here, and I hear you loud and clear. But the parameters that we're given is that this riding that you live in is 10,000 people short of just the average. Am I right that you're suggesting that we take the lower half – like, we can go plus or minus 25 per cent – and you're saying: go as low as you can? Thanks for that clarity.

The other thing, too, I just wanted to mention is that we use population to start the calculations, to start where we're going to make the boundaries or change them, but, you know, one of the parameters is communities of interest, geographical features, communication – the chair went through it – and any other factors. I think you brought up some factors that bear consideration, but I guess the bottom line is that given the parameters that we have to work with, this riding will only get one MLA.

Mr. Kessler: And that's what I mean, but me coming here and saying this – I mean, I guess I represent 40-some thousand people.

Mrs. Samson: You do. You do. I know that.

Mr. Kessler: You know, getting it out – like, I don't expect just, "Oh, he said that; it's going to happen," but it has to be said.

Mrs. Samson: You know, I agree, and I think we have to hear it. I feel compelled to acknowledge your case because it's valid, but the tools that we've been given can't help us solve the point you're coming from.

Mr. Kessler: Yeah.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Evans.

Mr. Evans: Good afternoon. Appreciate your presentation. I appreciate that it comes from the heart. I think that's important.

As I've said to many people that have presented, now that you're seated there, I'm going to mine you for some information. My colleague Susan brought up a point that I think is very helpful, and it comes from the legislation that we're governed by. Sort of in section 14 of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act there's a catch-all, and Susan referenced it: "any other factors the Commission considers appropriate." Susan touched on it briefly with you, but I'm interested if you could help me understand the economic factors that you were alluding to. If you were going to provide some parameters to that or some delineating factors, what would they be? How would we assess the positives and negatives of the economic drivers?

Mr. Kessler: In my mind I was saying, like, you can't just go gross economy. I mean, if Suncor and Syncrude and these guys decide, "We're going to take this writeoff, this writeoff, this writeoff, this writeoff," and they actually don't put anything back to taxes or the province, then that's a loss for that area. It would have to be net benefit to the province, what goes into your coffers.

Mr. Evans: Well, looking at it on a municipal basis, would that be a way to look at it in terms of the municipality being in the black or being in the red?

Mr. Kessler: Yeah. And I am not sure if the RMWB is or not. I mean, I do know that, like, the town of Grande Cache actually went backwards and went to the MD of Greenview, you know, because they were in the red. So then that area now is represented by that whole of the MD of Greenview type of thing, right?

And I guess Fort McMurray did the same thing because they couldn't get upgrades because their tax base was just the town. There is no town of Fort McMurray per se; it is the hamlet or whatever of Fort McMurray within the RMWB of Alberta, right?

Mr. Evans: What are your thoughts about the size of this particular electoral district and the fact that Fort McMurray is kind of divided? We have a northern part and a southern part, one represented by one MLA and the other represented by the other.

Mr. Kessler: I mean, there has to be a dividing line. Most people commonly understand that. We've always in our fishing regs, everything – it's been the rivers. It's been roads, things like that; provincial boundaries, basically, right? Whether that line is correct or not, I have no idea.

Mr. Evans: I think you're answering my questions. I appreciate that very much.

The Chair: I'll go across to my colleague to my right, but I just have a quick question. Gregoire Lake Estates: how many people live there? And how many people live in Anzac?

Mr. Kessler: Gregoire Lake Estates is 200; Anzac, maybe 400 or 500.

The Chair: I grew up in a town of less than 400. Okay. Thank you. Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you. Thank you for coming, and thank you for going to the emotional trouble of sorting out all the backstory on how labour is built into the provincial economy. I respect that work.

I wanted to touch, though, on one feature that I'm not – well, you did mention that a lot of workers still fly in, so obviously I want to talk about the old story of the ghost workers, as it were. In your experience – it sounds like you've got lots of it – there are still a lot of people living in company-controlled campsites or flying in for spot work and the like. Would you characterize the working population of this area as higher than the official census population?

Mr. Kessler: Yes, definitely.

Dr. Martin: And do you feel that – and, again, this is impressionistic. You know, 10 or 15 years ago we were sort of in the boom of construction-type work here. Do you feel that the current situation of those extra workers compared to the situation back then is comparable? Slightly less? The same? What do you think?

Mr. Kessler: I would say that, to the Fort McMurray area, it's probably comparable. A lot of people now drive. That's why we got a twinned highway for 40,000 people.

Dr. Martin: Yes. Good point.

Mr. Kessler: This area has, like – the last job I was on was a maintenance job. We just worked at this one facility, maintenance-wise, sat in tables like this, about this big. I think there were 14 of us. Three of us were from Fort McMurray.

1:35

Dr. Martin: Right.

Mr. Kessler: The others: Kamloops, Rocky Mountain House, Edmonton. I know we have said that there can be no hindrance to the person to crossing borders for employment. To some degree – I mean, this is off topic, maybe. I don't know if it is. In my mind if John's company has 85 per cent out-of-province workers, that's fine. He's allowed to do that. The workers are allowed to do that. But then shouldn't Alberta encourage John to maybe try to get some permanent housing? Like, this has been continually going on year after year after year.

Dr. Martin: Well, I entirely agree with that consequence of workers coming in and not being grounded, as it were, in the municipal district. If you're not paying taxes, then you're getting some level of expensive services for free. I think that's always been the problem up here. How to service all the community properly when only some portion of the population is paying into it. Well, that's a classic problem, isn't it? I think to some extent, the fact is that Fort McMurray has generated so much money so fast that sometimes people forget that is a problem. I'm just probing to find out whether it explains why the numbers, the official numbers,

remain relatively flat. You think that that's because the cycle of outside workers continues as a significant feature of the economy?

Mr. Kessler: Yes, definitely.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much.

Yeah. I guess I'll build on a couple of the points that my colleagues have made, and then I have some geography questions, given that it sounds like you've worked and lived all over the north. That's very, very helpful for us.

Just in terms of, again, maybe giving us another slice on the population, I think Justice Miller talked about how Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche and Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo were sort of 44,000 or 45,000. Just as a reference point, we've got that plus or minus 25 per cent. In 2016 when they were established, they were around 10 or 11 per cent under the average at the time. We're now 18 and 16 per cent under. So we're still within the 25 per cent, but we're already kind of getting – as you know, the rest of the province has grown incredibly. I mean, kind of a good news, bad news, right? We've had 800,000 people move to Alberta, and they generally are moving to Calgary and Edmonton and surrounding areas. It's not that Fort McMurray isn't growing, it's just not growing as fast as other parts of the rest of the province. Just one example of that is when I do a quick little bit of math. You add the two Fort McMurrays together; it comes up to just under 91,000: 90,833. There's one constituency, Calgary-North East, that is 85,000.

That's part of the challenge that we've got. How do we balance all this out, right? I think you said it yourself. You got to accommodate for the vast geography up here. There are just not a lot of people. But there are lots of other considerations. The folks in Calgary-North East or Edmonton-South would say: "Yeah. We also have needs, too." People always wish us luck as we go through this because we've got to balance all of it. Again, as Justice Miller said, the nice thing about the Canadian model is that we can do that. We can say: "You know what? There's a good reason that there's a sparser population." We have the tools, I guess. It's just a question of how.

When I look at a map, I'm looking here at sort of the north, and I'm kind of going over towards, like, Slave Lake area. I'm just wanting to get a sense of kind of what the natural connections are here, north and south, east and west. Like, is Slave Lake at all connected in this sort of – it seems like you have to go all the down south to Athabasca and back up again.

Mr. Kessler: Everybody talks that, like, after the fire and maybe a little bit before the fire, they were going to do a highway to Calling Lake, Red Earth area or whatever. It never did transpire. From my understanding the Saskatchewan government has built a paved highway to the Alberta-Saskatchewan border, out past Anzac, and Alberta has left that as a mud trail, where they freeze the rivers in the wintertime. So there are no east-west corridors anywhere here. It is literally north-south and to the north to Fort Chip.

As a forest officer I understand some of the mentality up there. They don't necessarily want the highway going there because some of the people that live in Chip feel that we're heathens or that we pollute their culture, which, to some degree, I have to admit that we do. The money, the things, the vices that come with it, right?

To the north of Fort McMurray there's the ice road in the wintertime, but there isn't a permanent highway there either. So it's basically an hour north and south of Fort McMurray.

Mr. Clark: The previous boundaries had an east-west divide in this region, and in 2017 they changed it to more of a north-south orientation. In your opinion, that makes sense?

Mr. Kessler: Yes. It is the corridors of what we have for travelling.

Mr. Clark: That's perfect. That's what I need to know. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Mr. Kessler, I failed to mention that we normally have the presenters stick to a seven-minute time limit and then three minutes for questions. This has been very, very interesting and very helpful, sir. As I said, the list isn't that close, so we can be much more flexible. We've heard from you and we've grilled you for 35 minutes, so thank you so much for coming. You're excused. Please stay if you can because sometimes we engage in more fulsome conversation after all the presenters. So if you can stay, please do so. Thank you again for coming.

Mr. Kessler: Thank you again for letting us speak.

The Chair: Our next presenter is Janice Bailey. Janice Bailey? No. Okay.

Vaughn Jessome.

Mr. Jessome: Good afternoon to the commission. Thank you very much for giving us the opportunity to speak today. I'd first like to welcome you to Fort McMurray, home of the oil sands, the epicentre of the economic corridors, the energy superpower that our current Liberal government professes.

For the record my name is Vaughn Jessome. I'm a 45-year resident of Fort McMurray. For the first 30 years I owned a restaurant and operated that, and for the last 15 years I've been running constituency offices in Fort McMurray. I started with the late hon. Guy Boutilier, from 2008 to 2012. Subsequently I became the constituency manager for Tany Yao, the MLA for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, and Brian Jean, the MLA for Fort McMurray-Conklin at the time, the leader of the Official Opposition Wildrose Party. For Minister Jean it was from 2015 to 2017. He took a break to take care of his family. He came back in 2022 to the present. He is now, as everybody knows, the hon. Minister of Energy and Minerals.

Just so you understand that this is not the first time that I've made a presentation to the commission. I was here the last time, and we still have the same debates going on today as we did back then. Government really should be more proactive in addressing the calculations, the parameters that they put you under. Understanding, I think, that you have exemptions, right? You have one or two or three exemptions with regard to the population?

The Chair: Up to four, under section . . .

Mr. Jessome: Up to four. Okay. Yeah.

I'm here today to emphasize the need and the desire to have a balance between a rural and urban area, especially in northeastern Alberta. We have two strong ridings that represent probably about 10 to 12 First Nations, two Métis settlements, approximately eight Métis Nations/OMG/Métis Nation of Alberta. The balance of the rural-urban really works well with regard to especially the First Nations, who really are one of the bigger users of our constituencies and stuff we have there.

1:45

Before I get into some information which may be helpful to you in the future, one request is that the commission, well, first off, not go with one MLA. I've been through that before. It was during the

peak times, and it was not a fun time to be working in the constituency office. The other thing is that the last time that they were here with the boundaries commission, we recommended an Athabasca River split. North of the bridge there's a population which involves mostly Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo; however, they carved a little piece of it and gave it to Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche, probably to add some population to it or whatever. However, from a voter perspective and constituent's perspective it's really confusing to them. For 10,000 years they voted in the same place, the whole nine yards, and for some reason they split it up.

If you can imagine Terwillegar Drive or somewhere there, any population in Edmonton, wherever, where on the right-hand side your MLA – I mean, you have that anyway. But here in the area on the right-hand side is Tany Yao, on the left-hand side is Brian Jean. Again, something that the last commission chose to do, which, really – like I said, I also run election campaigns, and it gets really confusing. People go to a lineup where they go all the time to vote. They wait a half hour, 45 minutes to vote. Then they say: no, you have to go over across the street. What that ends up doing is frustrating a lot of people, who may end up not having that opportunity to go ahead and vote.

Again, consideration. I know that you guys have your parameters. The whole idea about the north, especially northeast, northwest – I mean, you look at Central Peace-Notley, you look at Fort McMurray, you look at the geographical area that we have to cover. We're talking Smith's Landing, Fort Fitzgerald all the way down to Fort McMurray for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche is all the way from Fort McMurray down to Whitefish (Goodfish) Lake First Nation, which is just past Kikino. That's, like, almost 350 kilometres. When you talk about effective representation, to go with one to try to cover, even if it's just Fort McMurray north, is a tall task to ask. It really is. Fort McMurray-Conklin at the time was underutilized. However, when they went to Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche – I mean, Lac La Biche is a growing community just like Fort McMurray is. When you're looking at a commission, I mean, unfortunately, you look at today's numbers and stuff out there.

We look at some of the stuff that you covered with Mr. Kessler, and I can sort of help you understand it. There are some elements to consider when you talk about future growth. First off, inventory. We talked about real estate. We talked about houses. You know, they will tell you that they built four houses last year somewhere out there. Nowadays, however, you know, for the last two years inventory has been stable and dropped down as far as when it comes to real estate. Real estate is now so low. I won't say the quality but the needs of the person that's buying it are not there. What they are actually doing is door cost calculation. Anybody that's in construction understands that they look at whether it may be worth their while to actually build a house rather than buy one because they can't meet the needs.

In the boom of the time, back in the mid-2000s or, you know, after 1995, after Chrétien made his announcement with the royalty regime changes, we were building houses left, right, and centre. What ended up happening – it's all about supply and demand – is our community was stuck inside of a little cycle if you will. The government owned the land outside of it, the Crown land, and they did not release land timely enough. What ended up happening was that people were paying anywhere from \$250,000 to \$350,000 just for a lot of land to build a house, and then when you add in your door costs, you know, you're looking at \$600,000 to \$700,000. Approximately 15 years ago we had our first million-dollar sale of a house. Now there's all kinds of them that are out there. I mentioned that as the past because nowadays the price of land, mostly, is from \$60,000 for a lot of land to \$90,000, \$120,000.

Did you fly in, or did you drive in? You drove in. Okay. When we looked at population growth back in the mid-2000s, we were going to 250,000 people. We expanded the area in the north of Fort McMurray, and we also did it to the south, so right now we have the capacity to hold another 60,000 to 80,000 people without having to release anymore land. A lot of it is service ready. Now, because the prices are affordable, we see the opportunity to build more houses. So those are indicators of what's to come.

Last week we attended the groundbreaking of Home Depot. Home Depot is going to build a new store in Fort McMurray. Corporations such as Home Depot don't build oil businesses in the middle of the Sahara Desert. The economic growth that's projected for Fort McMurray is exponential.

We also talk about Pathways Alliance. I don't know if you guys are familiar with Pathways Alliance. They are a conglomerate of the oil sands and major oil sands players who have come together to create the carbon capture and storage facility to help reduce their carbon footprint. That is at the table of the federal government, waiting to be released. Based on the direction that the current Prime Minister is giving, we see that as being a low-hanging fruit for them that will drive the Alberta economy in the short-term. It can be anywhere from \$20 billion to \$40 billion in investment. Some of it is in Cold Lake, but also here in Fort McMurray. They have to retrofit their units. There's basically six organizations that are involved in it. The investment in that would be something to keep Fort McMurray busy for the next five years alone.

The census right now is currently being done. The municipality has just finished the census. They don't have the final numbers yet; however, they see a significant increase in population in Fort McMurray. Those numbers should be released probably before you finish your commission, before your mandate is up, so it might be a good opportunity to reach out to the municipality. They may be able to give you some raw data that you can use for it.

The current census – you're right – was in 2021. Five years without a census is not very supportive of a community that's always looking for extra dollars from the federal, provincial dollars. As you know, a community is funded based on their population. We have 76,000 people in the region of this province – well, Wood Buffalo. We're not talking south, you know, in Lac La Biche and area, when it comes to Fort McMurray and Lac La Biche.

You asked about the camps. With the last numbers we have, there are about 30,000 people that live in the camps. To put it into perspective, in the mid-2000s, when we were at a peak, we had a population of 80,000 people and 80,000 in camp; it was 1 to 1 at that particular time. At that time then-Mayor Melissa Blake – when CNRL and Albion had put in for their oil sands development, the municipality had sought intervenor status – actually intervened in the applications through AER or whatever their name was at the time. What she had said at that particular time is that our community cannot handle any more population. That's because we were still landlocked because of the Crown land and stuff out there.

A beautiful drive from here to downtown right now is 10 minutes. At that particular time it could take you three hours. During the beginning of the morning shifts or the evening, you can look at two to three hours if there's no accidents. If there's an accident, it could be five to six. You visualize an ambulance as: pick somebody up on the highway, and they're sitting at the top, so trying to get them down through there. That's the situation we're in now.

1:55

Right now we're in a more favourable situation. When you talk about camps, there is a desire, especially with the government and with industry, to reduce the size of the camps. Camps were created because once every six months Syncrude or Suncor would have to

do a turnaround, and they would bring in 4,000 to 5,000 people if not more to do the turnaround. It was for, like, two months, and that was it. Camps were used for that because they didn't want to put the pressure on the community. The community still supports camps for that type of business. What we don't support is that industry has now used that there to create fly-in, fly-out. We're talking about people who were born and raised in Fort McMurray and were told they had to move to Calgary if they wanted to keep their jobs, having shift schedules like 14 on and 14 off.

They have hubs. Edmonton is a hub, and Calgary is a hub. You get yourself to either one of those, and they'll fly you from there right into camp. You don't stop at the airport. They have six aerodromes north of the city. We have more aerodromes north of the city than probably anywhere in Canada. At one time industry was flying their own 737, 747, a big Boeing, bringing them in. They owned their own planes. They brought them in. They eventually got out of the airplane business and gave the contract to WestJet. If you're ever in Edmonton, in Calgary and you're waiting for your plane and you look at the departures, have a look. At any given day you see 68 flights to not Fort McMurray – no – to Albion, you know, to the different oil sands sites. They fly over it.

There's a significant move now. Things have changed in that they are moving towards establishing the community in which they build. We're not just talking Fort McMurray. You know, the Minister of Energy and Minerals speaks on behalf of Cold Lake, Bonnyville, everywhere you've been, Medicine Hat, Lloydminster. I mean, they all have the same problem. They suffer. They suffer because industry has been addicted to these camps that allow them to house them there. If they didn't have them there, if they lived in-house, in the community, then they would end up – maybe they wouldn't make it to work the next day or somewhere out there. Kid is sick: well, no, you stay home. They have dedicated labour, and that's one of the big things they like. What they fail to look at are the psychological disadvantages that camps have, and that has everything to do with increase in divorces, mental health and addictions – you name it – sleep schedules. There are many studies that say that anything over eight hours or 10 hours is not productive, especially – I mean, it's one thing to do it five days a week. To do it 14 days a week?

Having said that, they are moving towards. Some industry partners have made it a priority that their contractors hire people from Fort McMurray or they have an address here. You know, it's an address or whatever, but at least we're getting them into the community. They don't get to camp. They have to commute back and forth. So it helps to that extent. This is what has driven down the availability of houses and stuff out there. The other thing that they're doing is that they're moving more people into town. Suncor is making a priority when they – not a priority. Basically, when they're hiring new people – engineers, labourers, you name it – they're hiring people from within Fort McMurray or you have to come to Fort McMurray. The job office says that you have to relocate, which is a total change in mentality, which is a good sign for the future of things to come. While we're not there yet with industry, we're moving that way, and that's just with regard to camps.

If you understand the government, they look at the price of oil, you know, from the financial side of it. They look to see where they create revenue streams.

If you look at 40 – never mind coming from Edmonton or Calgary or Red Deer; how about the people that come from B.C., the people that come from eastern Canada and stuff right out there? There's about 40 per cent of people that come in from there that work in the camps and pay absolutely no Alberta taxes. And when you look at opportunities for revenue streaming, those are the – people will

move to Kelowna. They'll buy a package, and they will fly to Calgary, and then they get on the jumbo, and then they're there, right? They're there. The labour is mostly from the east coast, but people still live back there. They fly out here for 14 days, and they go home for 14 days, right? The toll that it's having on people is evident now. You can see that they are looking to switch away from that, but it's still a big concern for them.

The other thing we look at is that you hear about data centres. Fort McMurray is primed for at least one if not three data centres. These data centres are the operators that really like the northern part of Alberta, number one, because it's colder. Forty per cent of their cost is cooling their data centres, so having it where the temperature is minus 40 significantly reduces that. They require a size of about 40 acres, and there's one – I mean, Minister Jean speaks of it often – that's on the cusp of signing that will have, you know, 1,000 jobs for construction, the operation of it. They're no different than the old towers that you had before laptops, and you'd go in and have to change your hard drive out all the time. The maintenance on those is very high.

To build a data centre, you're required to be off grid. You're not allowed to access power from the grid, so you have to be self-sufficient. This is an opportunity for organizations such as Suncor and others that have power. Suncor currently puts back onto the power grid about 860,000 kilowatt hours, so that's an opportunity. For here we have the water systems, access to water when it comes to generating power. We also have a dedicated labour force for these people that are in camp or the people in here. They're there as well.

Yeah. In the end, when we look at when the recently elected federal Liberal Party and the Prime Minister talks about creating that energy superpower, it starts in Alberta. It starts in Fort McMurray, and we are on the cusp of an increase in population. Minister Jean spoke at the local chamber of commerce, and he sees, you know, creating supercities within Alberta that can have anywhere from 200,000 to 250,000 people in them.

When you talk about the connectors, the government has for the last year been actively setting up the road from here to Peerless Lake. That's our 686. Fifteen years ago, when they did the overpass for North Parsons, they actually created an overpass that was for heavy load, so it's a wider turn and stuff right out there. It would go from here to Peerless Lake. Red Earth is what it is, and then you go north. So you will see about three hours' difference in the travel. And they are there. Like, they've already – Peerless Lake, the First Nation band and stuff there, were isolated. They now have paved roads. They're looking at actually going from Fort McKay, which will reduce it even more.

The other one is La Loche road. La Loche road has never been a priority. It was something that Ralph Klein announced during the centennial of Alberta that he committed to and nobody ever did. Alberta has committed to the La Loche road, and that is in the planning stage as well, as well as the minerals. Transportation and Economic Corridors: all the way from the Northwest Territories down to Edmonton the minister of transportation for Alberta signed a memorandum of understanding with the minister in the Northwest Territories to create an economic corridor to be able to move their minerals into Alberta to be able to process them for them.

2:05

Having said that, I'll wrap it up. I'd really, really look to see you use your opportunity to give us exemptions. We cannot go back to the one. When you talk about effective representation, you will not get effective representation. I worked with hon. Mr. Guy Boutilier during the time of the peak, and this was a three-hour drive from a 10-minute drive. Like, it was terrible. We cannot go to those.

The Chair: Okay. You said, sir, that you can't go back to one. You mean one electoral district?

Mr. Jessome: That's right. Up until 2012 we had Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, which came from Fort McKay down to, basically, just outside of town.

The Chair: Okay. I'm going to stop you there because I think the commissioners are chomping at the bit to ask you some questions.

We're going to start with Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Oh, okay. Well, of course, I'm interested in the shadow population, particularly since you put a number to it. Now, how did you do that?

Mr. Jessome: Well, it is part of the census. The thing to remember is that we were very lucky. Mr. Clark, it's nice to see you. Thank you for your service. The mayor as well.

During the time with these three-hour drives and stuff we had there, Guy Boutilier was able to convince Treasury Board to put a dollar value to the 80,000 people that were in camp. They still went to our hospitals. They still used them. Like, the RCMP could have set up a station and stuff right out there. When we do a census in Fort McMurray, it includes the shadow population. Industry may be not always forthcoming with who comes, but they do have numbers that they give to the municipality in order to be able to complete the census because we are a unique community in which we get funding from the provincial government based on those people.

When Melissa Blake said that we can't handle it, they set up a community unto their own. They have hockey rinks. They have Tim Hortons. You name it. They have movie theatres. They have everything in those camps. You really help them, whether it's . . . [interjection] Pardon me?

The Chair: Can you give us some names to them?

Mr. Jessome: Yeah. Suncor camps, Syncrude, Albion. Albion was the first one that came in with the Tim Hortons and the movie theatres, the hockey rinks. You name it. Like, it's been so long that I can't even remember the stuff right in there, but you have everything that's there. I mean, full camp service. We were there in 2019 because we were looking at setting up, under the government of the day, the Kenney government, a detox centre out at the site because there are so many people that were looking for those kinds of services. Like, these are communities. They have their own doctors. They have their own nurses. They have their own medical facility. They were self-sufficient. That's what she asked for, and I don't blame her for that because at the time we really couldn't handle it.

But now the pendulum has swung back, and now thanks to the effort of Minister Jean and the government and the support – Premier Smith supports it as well – it's about building communities in which you work, profit. They look to see value to that. The more people that can work in Alberta, obviously, the more taxes you get.

Dr. Martin: I have a quite different question, I think. I want to talk about the Conklin Road. I want to talk about 881. A lot of people commute to work down there. You know, I see Mr. Kessler nodding. It's not surprising since you're in Gregoire Lake. I mean, that'd be a natural kind of thing to be working on sites all the way down that road. Is that quite common?

Mr. Jessome: A little bit. When 63 was not twinned and 881 was there, half the people took 881 halfway, right? So from commuting,

yes. We have Long Lake there. We have Cenovus. We have the other ones. But they drive in and they go into camp, and they're there for 14 days. You don't get too many people that live in, but most of them have camps. I mean, Mr. Kessler can – the discussion is about reducing those camps.

We talk about even whether it's Conklin. Conklin loves to stay as a very small, little, knit community. However, they have a \$50 million rec centre out there, right?

The thing at the time was that, when you talk about population growth, those are one of them. You do have Long Lake. You have MEG Energy. You have the other ones that are down on that 881 corridor. Yeah. There is some traffic on it from that perspective, but the traffic on 881 is very low right now.

The government must see things happen because they've earmarked \$100 million for 881 that includes passing lanes, staging areas. So they do see. Like, you hear it all the time now. The key factor with regard to economic growth is transportation and economic corridors. It's one of the main roads that they look at as a transportation corridor.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

The Chair: The map is brought up there, sir. Am I correct in understanding that the camps are on the road on the way down to Conklin?

Mr. Jessome: And beyond that. Yeah.

The Chair: And beyond that. But that corridor is . . .

Mr. Jessome: That's one. No, no. There's still north.

The Chair: Okay. On this side . . .

Mr. Jessome: Yeah. Let's say that 20,000 are north; 10,000 are south.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: Thank you. Yeah. I'm really interested in a couple of things. Obviously, the 686 connecting over to Peerless First Nation and then from there on to Red Earth Creek: that's the plan. I was just looking this up. This is, like, present tense in Budget '25: that's happening.

Mr. Jessome: That's right. You're right.

Mr. Clark: Okay. That's going to help over time connect east and west, obviously, and also that escape road in sort of an emergency situation. That's fantastic news.

One of the things you mentioned – and we'd looked at this, or at least I looked at this earlier. I think we may have had a brief discussion about it just in preparation for this. Why is the constituency split where it is? You know, the river seems like a very natural place. Just to make sure I'm not putting words in your mouth: you're suggesting the river is a very natural place to break the constituency?

Mr. Jessome: Absolutely.

Mr. Clark: Part of the challenge we have is . . .

Mr. Jessome: Population.

Mr. Clark: Yeah, just where people live.

Mr. Jessome: Unfortunately, the government still – I understand the population. Like, 90,000 in Calgary-Elbow or somewhere out there is a significant number, right? But you have to take into consideration – like, I'm here to say that you can't go away from the rural-urban setting, especially when you're talking about First Nations, Métis, the rural communities that are there. I mean, when you're talking about UNDRIP, you know, the whole nine yards, you have to be able to service them.

When I worked with Minister Boutilier at the time in 2008, if you came into the office and you were First Nation, we automatically sent you over to the Member of Parliament because the provincial government had little or nothing to do with First Nations because they were on-reserve. They were funded by the federal government. Now there is a significant investment by the province of Alberta – I'm sure all the other provinces are – in ensuring that they have equal opportunity, opportunity for economic development, they have access to mental health, you know, all the services that us Albertans grow to love and appreciate, making sure that they are looked after as well.

Having one – like, it would be a nightmare. I worked with Mr. Boutilier prior to Minister Jean and Mr. Yao being elected. We actually have one office for the two of them. At that time, Minister Jean was the leader of the Wildrose, and he did a lot of travelling to try to build party and stuff out there. As a leader it's a lot harder – Greg, you know this – to be able to be in your home riding because you're always out meeting Albertans because you represent Albertans, not just your own riding. With my experience with Mr. Boutilier with five years, we were able to combine both offices and operate from there.

We did it for most of the 10 years, as long as Mr. Jean was there, because it gives you more. Number one, you have a bigger budget so you can staff more. You can meet the needs of people much easier, quicker, and have access. We have pride in the work that we do there, and it's only because we have the ability to have the two of them there and are able to do that.

Mr. Clark: Do you mind? I just want to ask sort of a detailed question. Your comments about the traffic jams – before my time in politics I spent a lot of time here. In fact, this is the very first hotel I ever stayed in.

Mr. Jessome: When it was Fogg N' Suds.

Mr. Clark: That's right. Yeah. It was a different time. It's actually nice to see that things will calm down a bit, and hopefully that growth is a bit more sustainable.

2:15

Just a couple of quick points. We probably are going to have a tough time using the river as the natural break point for the constituency. It would be about 57,000 north of the river and only 33,000 or so south of the river if we did that without any other changes, just sort of a like for like, so that doesn't quite fit within the plus or minus 25 per cent.

That leads, though, to my next question. You had talked about the growth and development, kind of reserves or targeted development. Can you tell me where that's happening? Is it in Timberlea, Thickwood, sort of north of the river, or is it south?

Mr. Jessome: It's Parsons. It's north, mostly north. The municipality just completed a deal with – what's his name? – Allard. His name is Allard. He's from Edmonton, a developer. He's creating a mini south commons in Fort McMurray.

The Chair: A mini what?

Mr. Jessome: South commons, so South Edmonton Common.

He has already anchored Walmart. Walmart is building a supercentre there. Canadian Tire is building – like, they don't build those without the expectation of delivery, okay? Adding to that – he has 54 acres there – the availability of land of the north is still there. Still another 30,000, 40,000 people can live there.

Same thing in the south. Right now in the south Minister Jean's riding is, other than the left-hand side of Thickwood, south of the bridge. I mean, obviously, he doesn't want to see the 54 acres suck out all the business, so the idea is to try to balance with both. The Fort McMurray Airport Authority, you know, is looking at Aurora Landing, where they're going to develop some big warehousing stuff out there to help off-set that balance of retail.

In the southern part by the airport there are another 20,000 or 30,000 people that can fit in there. There's a development there right beside a golf course. Their land was selling for \$250,000. They've sat on it for 15 years. They are now ready to sell it for \$60,000. We're talking in a very beautiful community and stuff out there. This is something I was told two days ago. There is development there.

The Chair: Anything further, Mr. Clark?

Mr. Clark: No. That's it for me.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Susan.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. That's a very interesting presentation, and that fallout from the camps is going to be a hard one to change. I get the thing, but what I find interesting is that both MLAs share the same office at this time. Is that correct?

Mr. Jessome: That's right.

Mrs. Samson: That must be a benefit, having two voices in the Leg. to speak for the area.

Mr. Jessome: Hundred per cent. You know, back then, when Mr. Boutilier was the MLA – he was one – the government of the day, the PCs, had 20 MLAs in Edmonton, they had 20 MLAs in Calgary, and they all say: well, we have the same pressures. But for Fort McMurray it was, as Mr. Clark was saying, there was \$100 million put into Fort McMurray. Mr. Boutilier fought so hard that he ended up getting kicked out because they didn't want to listen to him anymore. In actual fact, when you talk about it, where was this wealth being created from? Fort McMurray. When you have 20 people in Calgary that are saying, "Oh, you know, I need whatever," when you look at what – you have to be in that traffic jam to really appreciate what we went through.

Having two voices, especially, you know, with Minister Jean being in cabinet, being in Treasury, is a huge benefit to our community, to the whole area. When he speaks, he speaks for all Alberta. Like I said, he really does. You know, he has Lac La Biche as his riding, but obviously as the minister of energy he meets with the people, CNRLs of Cold Lake and Bonnyville and Lloydminster and Medicine Hat and even Lethbridge and stuff way out there. The story is the same. You have to build more within the community because otherwise we just shut everything down and you have even less, right? You have fewer services.

Mrs. Samson: In your opinion, the existing boundaries, that are a north-south alignment, serve you better than the previous boundaries when they were more east-west aligned?

Mr. Jessome: I don't see how you would say east-west. Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo was Fort McMurray. There's no east-west. What happened was that Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo took on everywhere from downtown all the way to Fort Fitzgerald, Smith's Landing, so we were never east-west.

Mrs. Samson: It was always north-south.

Mr. Jessome: It's always been, like, north-south. Yeah.

Mrs. Samson: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Evans, any questions?

Mr. Evans: You gave us a population of 76,000 for Fort McMurray. I've got a population of 80,568 for Wood Buffalo. Do you agree with that?

Mr. Jessome: Sure. So the 76,000 is for Fort McMurray, and then you're talking the outer areas as well, right?

Mr. Evans: Yeah.

Mr. Jessome: When you compare them, when we're talking 15 years ago, when there was 80,000 . . .

Mr. Evans: Where's the improvement district No. 24 of Wood Buffalo?

Mr. Jessome: I don't know. If that's the park . . .

Mr. Evans: It's got 775 people, and Fort McKay has 669. Would you agree with that number?

Mr. Jessome: Sure.

Mr. Evans: Janvier is 194, is 376. Where's that?

Mr. Jessome: Janvier is south of town, so in between Anzac and Conklin. They have both a reserve there as well as a municipal setting.

Mr. Evans: And Gregoire Lake, 176 and 176A, is in Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche.

Mr. Jessome: That's right. That's a First Nation. That's 468. You bet.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Jessome, this has been very educational for us. Much appreciated. If you have that in written form, please get a copy to Aaron at the front.

I'm going to make an unusual request. You know the community, and we're going to have to look at the city and the boundaries. Would you be able to do some research and get some economic growth projections from the city and the region?

Mr. Jessome: Sure.

The Chair: If we're looking at future growth, that's a factor we will consider. That's a big factor, and we have this much data on it right now. So we need something from you if you could do the research.

Mr. Jessome: I was on the phone with the mayor this morning to see if he had any updates on the population. The population will be an eye-opener for sure as well as the future economic growth.

The Chair: And let us know at the same time when the census results are projected. We'll watch that with interest as well.

Mr. Jessome: Sure. We have a very strong economic development department here that has a lot of good, strong numbers, especially for data.

The last thing I wanted to say is that when you talk about the population, you know, if Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo was to take all of north of the bridge, you'd still have areas in the south where you can have – for example, Smoky Lake belongs to MLA Glenn van Dijken, and he goes to Athabasca. Like, there are areas there where you can still stream from. Please do not take away our two. We need that for many different reasons.

The Chair: No promises, but we are asking you for homework.

Mr. Jessome: We will provide that for you for sure. No problem. We will make sure that our legislators start talking about adding stuff other than the population with regard to that. Thank you very much. I appreciate that. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'll make another call for Janice Bailey. Is Janice present? No. Okay.

I believe someone else has come in, Rene Wells. Sir, you've noticed we very strictly enforced the seven-minute rule, so don't expect to be treated any differently.

Mr. Wells: I thank you very much for that. I want to thank you for allowing me the opportunity, Justice Miller and your committee, to allow me to speak today.

I apologize. I just jotted down some notes as I was hearing some of the other different presenters. I had only learned about your tour today at 6:04, when I received an e-mail from somebody saying: hey, this is going on today. I initially was reluctant to come down because of other conflicts that I had in my schedule, but this was important to me. I needed to come down and take it in. Then while I was down here, I was listening and I felt even more compelled to register and speak.

I know some of you drove and some of you had taken a flight up here, I think is what was said earlier.

2:25

The Chair: No, we all flew.

Mr. Wells: You all flew. Oh, well, I wish you'd driven, if for no other reason than just to experience the immense geography in this part of Alberta.

It is that theme, geography, that I want to focus on as part of my discussion today. Ours, as you know, is a specialized municipality. We're bigger than Nova Scotia. The amalgamation occurred in 1995, I believe, bringing the improvement district No. 17 and the city of Fort McMurray together.

Just a little bit about myself. I came to Alberta in 1980. I was a member of the RCMP, and I did three decades of policing across Alberta and the Northwest Territories. I started out in Gleichen, east of Calgary, and then I went to the opposite end of the scale in terms of population to St. Albert, where I engaged in city policing. The theme there was No Call Too Small, and it drove me crazy, but I digress. I then followed up with the federal drug enforcement in Edmonton, which took me to parts of northwestern Alberta. Then I put my name in. My wife is a teacher, and we wanted to explore another part of Canada. We went up to the arctic in the Northwest Territories and we spent five years up there; a huge, huge geography that we're talking about up there with a very, very small population.

We came back down to Alberta – we had no intention of ever leaving this province permanently – and went to Rimbey, cattle country and oil country, I guess; they have some energy industries down there, followed by a promotion opportunity in Lac La Biche, and then up to the Peace Country where initially I was a traffic commander. I had overseen the activities of members in Valleyview and Peace River. We were responsible for 13 detachment areas, providing traffic services, traffic enforcement, education awareness. Following that, I went into the Grimshaw detachment, headed that up, and then to Peace River for a brief time, and then down to Drumheller. I spent a few years there before I received my commission and moved up to Fort McMurray. I got off the RCMP train at that point after a couple of years here. I was with the RMWB as their director of emergency management, and then eventually moved into health and safety in the private sector.

I can fill in some of the gaps. You heard Mr. Jessome speaking earlier about the camps. From my time with the municipality, the RCMP, and also in health and safety, I got to know some of those camps.

What we lack in population, when I talk about the Peace Country, we have more than made up for in geography, with many communities dotting that part of northwestern Alberta; a lot of them small villages, fortunate to see the occasional police drive through. When you look at Fort McMurray, in this area federally, Fort McMurray-Cold Lake, we have one Member of Parliament serving 110,504 constituents. I just got that off the Internet. P.E.I.: we talked about this during the last federal election. It's smaller in area; we joke that in Alberta it would probably be a county. With a population of 179,280, it has four Members of Parliament and also four Senators. Good on them, I suppose.

If you look at it municipally, we have a council that is currently comprised of one mayor that serves the entire region. We're broken up into four wards: ward 1, six councillors here in the urban service area of Fort McMurray, and there are four in the rural areas. I think the number is about 5 per cent of the population in our rural areas, when you take in Conklin, Janvier – the gentleman who spoke earlier, where he was from – and then you look north. They enjoy four councillors, and good on them, I guess, too.

Our population may be on the lower threshold. You've heard earlier about the shadow population, the fly-in, fly-out. It was reported, I believe again by Mr. Jessome, that there are about 30,000, in all, workers who come here from all over Alberta and Canada to work in the energy sector and its ancillary industries. Many of these workers probably spend more time here plying their trades than they do at their homes.

I know I have a few former colleagues that had been moving back and forth between Fort McMurray and other parts of Canada. They spend a lot of time in the air. You heard about the aerodromes. So those are part of the pressures that we feel as a community, you know, whether it's the services that we provide municipally or other things, policing. Policing is a huge challenge.

One of the members of this committee asked a question about: can you name a couple of lodges? The one I would point to is Wapasu Creek Lodge. That services the needs of Exxon Mobil, up northeast of here. When I first got on here with the Wood Buffalo detachment, I believe that camp was somewhere in the neighbourhood of 2,000. Then Exxon came in and they wanted to expand their operations, and they came to what was then PTI. They said, "We need camp facilities," so they came to the municipality for a development permit, and they ended up expanding in stages. The plan was, you know, to go from that 2,000 to about 4,000 to about 8,000 to about 12,000 and then scale it back to about 10,000 now. I've been out of that game for a while. I don't know where they're at now, but I would joke that there are more people sitting

in that camp than there were in the town of Drumheller, or the area that I policed down in Drumheller.

You think about the simple amenities that we all take for granted. You know, if we have a problem, we call the police, or we call 911 if we have a fire. We came to them and told them that these things aren't possible when you look at the drive that we would have in order to get to them. I had driven that road a number of times; well over an hour to get there, one way. So they would create their own fire service, and that created a problem because they would need water now to properly service a call if there was a structural fire on their property. It mushroomed or snowballed into different problems.

There's also Suncor Fort Hills, Suncor Firebag, CNRL Horizon. They have a camp as well. It used to be Royal Dutch Shell and Albion, now taken over by CNRL. They have camp facilities there, and they also have aerodromes.

Now, earlier there were some questions that were asked about how the two constituencies are split here. I think Mr. Jessome had spoken about Thickwood Boulevard, runs east-west. If you live on the north side, you're in Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. If you live on the south side, then you're in Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche. You know, there's always been that talk: hey, why don't we use the Athabasca River as the dividing line? It would present some challenges in terms of populations. And I get that, looking at your numbers there, the plus or minus 25 per cent. If it was ever to serve as that dividing line, perhaps a push south of Lac La Biche may be in order.

I know that there is considerable growth, or at least I've heard of that F-35 program that is going into CP Cold Lake plus the heavy oil industries that are down in that area. I once had to drive highway 28 on a number of occasions when I was posted at Lac La Biche. My wife and I recently have taken that drive because we have some recreational property down in the La Biche area, and we were overwhelmed by the volume of traffic coming in and out of Cold Lake and Edmonton along that highway. That may be a consideration for you to ponder and look at, you know, taking in some of that population that are in those counties and municipal districts down there.

2:35

I don't want to take up too much more of your time here. My hope today is that you carefully consider the challenge of effective representation – that phrase really stood out for me today – for the two constituencies that we have here in northeastern Alberta. They take in a number of diverse communities, industries, and employment sectors here. The time that our Member of Parliament and our two MLAs spend on the road to serve those communities is immense, you know, not only on them but also the support staff that they have in place.

We all know, too, that Fort Chipewyan is part of that. We heard also about Smith Landing, Fort Fitzgerald. It's along the Northwest Territories border. There are small populations there, but they are constituents. I know that where you're in a riding, you know, such as the many that are in Calgary and Edmonton, those MLAs, those MPs, those councillors don't have that far to go to service those needs.

Again, I just re-emphasize the fact that I sympathize with our elected officials here in this part of Alberta, having gone through that in northwestern Alberta, whether it was doing traffic enforcement or trying to service the issues of awareness and education when it came to those problems, you know, that we're killing or seriously injuring Albertans on our roadways.

The Chair: Mr. Wells, thank you. Thank you very much.

Pardon my ignorance. The last presenter, Mr. Jessome: I gave him some homework, and maybe I can just supplement that request. Is there such documentation that, when we look at Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche work, you can show us a map that shows camp A, about so many. You know, camp B. Can you get something like that to us?

Mr. Wells: I think that there are some sources out there. I know that I once had access to a map when I was the director of emergency management. You know, another resource would be ESRD, the Fort McMurray office. I was an industry liaison there.

Mr. Evans: ESRD?

Mr. Wells: Environment and sustainable resource development. Yeah. Forestry division.

The Chair: That's a provincial agency?

Mr. Wells: Yes, it is. They're responsible for wildfire control, I guess, and attacking wildfires when they do occur up here. As an industry liaison in 2014 my task that summer was to drive around the area, take some pictures, get some co-ordinates so that they could put that into a map, and they knew where that infrastructure was that may need protection.

The Chair: Okay. If you could – I mean, there are people I see in the audience nodding that that information is available. If you could put your heads together and get that material to Mr. Roth, that would be helpful.

Mr. Wells: Absolutely.

Mr. Jessome: Industry does not like to share their numbers.

The Chair: Susan, any questions for Mr. Wells?

Mrs. Samson: No. That was a most informative presentation, and I thank you for that.

The Chair: Yeah. Three really good sessions.
Mr. Evans.

Mr. Evans: No, nothing for me. Thank you.

The Chair: Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: No. Honestly, I'm very keen on the maps because the fact that some provincial agencies are generating maps for their own purposes means that the camps are real. The more real they are, the happier I'd feel about, you know, the population number squabble. So if you, any colleagues, anyone in this room can provide us with those kinds of resources, it will help us very much.

Mr. Clark: Yes, and thank you. I guess the one piece I wanted to pick up on is that you mentioned going down south to Fort McMurray, Lac La Biche, potentially into Smoky Lake and area. We were down in that part, at St. Paul, I can't remember how long ago. We've been on the road for a while, but we were definitely there.

The Chair: Stayed at Canalta. I remember that.

Mr. Clark: That's right. It was a Canalta. There's no question.

That was just interesting to me as we get dipping into the Lac La Biche kind of area. How far would you say that extends? I mean, we've got Smoky Lake somewhat to the west. Is that sort of the natural western boundary? Is there value, do you think, in places as

far south as St. Paul? Bonnyville is obviously its own thing, I would assume. I know there's a lot of similarity in terms of the heavy oil and sort of that transition zone there. I guess I'm just curious. If you could maybe just comment a little bit more on where the connections are on the southern end of the constituency.

Mr. Wells: Yeah. The one thing I would always want to be cautious about, too, you know, whether you're involved in operating a ship or a huge aircraft or deciding on electoral boundaries: these minor course corrections would be the rule of the day. You don't want to confuse the public. As we saw in Fort McMurray, we have people that, depending on what side of Thickwood they would be on, it would create confusion for them. Education was always a big part of that.

In answer to your question about those communities, I don't have a lot of knowledge when it comes to the size of these communities. Like, Vilna, some of those other villages that are north of St. Paul: I don't know who takes those in. I'd be hesitant to try to say anything more on those. But I just thought that as a consideration, you know, if you push south, that might solve your problem of whether or not there's enough representation for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche.

Mr. Clark: I mean, I just really appreciate that comment. I've written down the small changes versus major course correction. You know, part of the mandate is clear and understandable boundaries. These large remote areas, like you say – I think you used the words "vast geography," or someone did, if it wasn't yourself, which I also wrote down. That's why our laws are written the way they are, and that's the history and the Canadian heritage. So just rest assured that that's something we're going to, at least speaking for myself anyway, very much take into consideration because it's a lot of area and not a lot of people.

Mr. Wells: A lot of area, but the people who are here want to make the best of what we have here. I know generally speaking that people feel, you know, quite strongly about being heard down in Edmonton or in Ottawa and are very sensitive to the idea that we may see major changes, and I don't think that I'll be very happy with that.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Wells and the previous presenters – when we saw it was, oh, only three presenters: okay; yeah, we have time for more. This has been very rich and very helpful to us.

If I can just supplement the homework that I've been assigning to the presenters. A presentation in written form from the municipality may be helpful as well in terms of potential industry. This data centre that just flashed up: I was intrigued by whoever talked about that. You know, the projection for growth of industry, which will bring related population: all that information is helpful.

Oh. It looks like we're – man, that artificial intelligence really works. I was just talking. The algorithms are following me.

Mr. Wells: Yeah. Well, the other thing that I point out, too, is that it's all about relationship building. You know, two of our MLAs are here. Our MP is based out of here. There is that opportunity for collaboration among the different levels of government that we have. I would be concerned if my representative would be in some far-flung part of northeastern Alberta. It's a five-hour drive from here to Cold Lake. Five and a half, maybe, I guess, if you take in bathroom breaks. It's just a huge, huge geography, vastness in the land that has never ceased to amaze me whether during my time in the RCMP or now here in northeastern Alberta.

2:45

The Chair: Yeah. It was former Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King who said that Canada is blessed with too much geography.

Mr. Wells: Absolutely.

The Chair: One more question from me. Really, your presentations have made me more curious.

Was it you, Mr. Jessome, that said something about the La Loche road or La Loche highway? Is that into La Loche, Saskatchewan? How far is that from here?

Mr. Jessome: From here, you mean?

The Chair: Yeah.

Mr. Jessome: It's just where Janvier is.

Mr. Wells: The La Loche road is just before Janvier. Right now the province of Saskatchewan has completed their road, so it brings us right up to the border of Alberta.

The Chair: Once it's open, how far of a drive would it be to La Loche?

Mr. Wells: It is 140 kilometres to Janvier, 160 kilometres to Conklin.

Mr. Jessome: How long from there to La Loche is maybe another couple of hours, another hour and a half. Three hours from here.

The thing about La Loche is that it opens up a lot of opportunity for employment, good for trade and stuff out there. Same thing as Peace River. The Red Earth opens up Grande Prairie. Grande Prairie really wants to have access to Fort McMurray.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you. Thank you very much.

Is there anyone else that would like to formally present while we're here?

We'll adjourn the public hearing. We'll stay for a little bit, and I'm sure we can engage in some more informal discussion. Thank you so much for coming this afternoon. Much appreciated.

[The hearing adjourned at 2:47 p.m.]



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

Peace River

Tuesday, June 17, 2025
9:03 a.m.

Transcript No. 22

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission

Justice Dallas K. Miller, Chair

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Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Peace River

Public Participants

Angela Cobick, Constituency Assistant, Peace River
Carolyn Kolebaba, Councillor, County of Northern Sunrise
Art Laurin, Deputy Reeve, County of Northern Sunrise
Gaylene Whitehead, Councillor, County of Northern Sunrise
Corinna Williams, Reeve, County of Northern Sunrise

9:03 a.m.

Tuesday, June 17, 2025

[Justice Miller in the chair]

The Chair: Well, good morning, everyone, and welcome to the morning public hearing here in Peace River by the Electoral Boundaries Commission.

First of all, by way of introduction my name is Justice Dallas Miller. I'm the chairman of the commission, and I also serve as a justice of the Court of King's Bench in southern Alberta.

The commissioner to my immediate left is Susan Samson, a long-time resident of Sylvan Lake and an experienced municipal politician who has served several terms as councillor and mayor of Sylvan Lake. Susan and her husband ran a small business in that community. She has volunteered considerably and has been recognized for her volunteer service by being awarded citizen of the year in Sylvan Lake and the Queen Elizabeth II diamond jubilee medal.

To her left is Mr. John Evans, KC, a lawyer with a province-wide firm that does litigation, focused out of the Lethbridge office. John does conduct trials and hearings across the province. His legal ability has been recognized by receiving the King's Counsel, or KC, designation. John also volunteers on the Alberta Judicial Nominating Committee.

To my right is Dr. Julian Martin, a retired history professor from the University of Alberta, whose advanced degrees are from Cambridge University. Julian has volunteered on many committees in Edmonton and Sherwood Park, where he now resides, and also serves on quasi-judicial tribunals such as the Surface Rights Board and the Land Compensation Board.

At the far end of the table is Mr. Greg Clark. Mr. Clark is an entrepreneur and a consultant focusing on information and knowledge management. Greg has served one term as an MLA representing Calgary-Elbow. He, too, is a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II platinum jubilee medal. Greg serves as the chairman of the Balancing Pool of Alberta and consults organizations and corporations relative to proper board governance.

We are your Electoral Boundaries Commission. We have been travelling the province. This is, I think, our fourth week. As the old country song says, we've been everywhere, man, and we're now finishing off our term in northern Alberta. We will be finishing in Edmonton on Monday of next week.

Our task as a commission is to come up with a proposal to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly to redraft the boundaries for the province for the next provincial election. A couple of things are noteworthy in our task. First of all, legislation has changed such that Alberta is moving from 87 electoral divisions to 89, so two more seats are being added to the Legislative Assembly. We have to place those two new ridings in the province. The first task, as I said, is to deal with the additional two seats. Secondly is to deal with population growth – huge population growth – and I'll get to that in a minute.

It's helpful for us to lay out the timeline that we have. I think then you have a better understanding of our work and the task before us. As a commission we were formally appointed by the Speaker of the Legislature in late March. From the time of our appointment the clock starts running. We are now on a timetable. We met in April on a couple of occasions to discuss process and schedules and the manner in which the commission will be functioning, and then in late May we started our across-the-province tour of public hearings. As I said, we will conclude those next week.

Then we have the task of sitting down and deliberating and beginning to write a report. Our report will profile each of the proposed 89 ridings and explain why we've structured the ridings

the way we have, why we place the boundaries, and we will deal with the population. That report, which has come to be known as an interim report, will be submitted to the Speaker in late October. It will be published in the *Alberta Gazette* and will be made public, and Albertans will then have an opportunity to respond to that report.

We will then have a second round of public hearings, and that second round of hearings will probably be in the format of receiving written submissions leading up to Christmas and then in-person hearings in January, and we will likely focus, because of the time of year, in the two major centres, Edmonton and Calgary. We will also be doing virtual hearings at that level as well. After we hear that second round of public hearings and receive that feedback, we will then finalize a final report, which will then go to the Speaker of the Legislature. The Speaker will table it, and the Legislature will then deal with enacting legislation based on our report.

As you know, in the ridings – I use the term riding, constituency, electoral division interchangeably. The proper legislative term is electoral division, but we often refer to them as a constituency or riding. Each constituency has one Member of the Legislative Assembly, and the people in that constituency elect that particular member to represent them in the Legislative Assembly.

9:10

Again, by way of contrast – contrast is a good way to achieve clarity – I am referring to the last Electoral Boundaries Commission report. That report came out in 2017, and in many ways eight years is a really long time ago when it comes to the issues that we're dealing with. That report was based on a population base of Alberta of just slightly over 4 million people. To get an idea as to how that commission dealt with the electoral ridings, they were limited to the 87. They didn't receive any new ridings, so they relied only on 87 constituencies. They took the population of 4,062,609 Albertans and divided it by the number of ridings, and the mean average was 46,697. That's not the required number for each constituency; that's just the average. We take that, then, and within the parameters of that number there's a minus 25 or plus 25 variance. The target for the commission for the Legislature is to ensure that the population of each electoral division is in that range. That's what happened in 2017.

Now, for us as a commission we are relying on population data that has been verified as of July 2024. How do we get that? First, the legislation requires that we look and make reference to the most recent decennial census for Canada. The last formal census was 2021. That is too old to just rely on by itself. What we've come to realize is that Statistics Canada continually updates the population data after each census. Since 2021 there's been updated data in terms of the population of the country and specifically for us as Albertans, plus the Alberta government through the Alberta Treasury Board department's – Alberta Treasury Board, not Alberta Treasury Branches – Office of Statistics and Information further verifies and substantiates the Alberta population.

That work has been done on a regular basis, and the most valid and verified figures that we are able to rely on are the figures from July 2024, just almost a year ago. That figure reveals that Alberta has a population of 4,888,723. We take the number of electoral divisions that we must deal with, 89, and we come up with that mid mean average of 54,929. Again, the target rate is 25 per cent below up to 25 per cent above, so the range is 41,127 to 68,661. That's the target range that we are focusing on as a commission.

Huge population growth over the last several years has not been spread evenly across the province and across all electoral divisions. Our task as a commission is to draw the electoral boundaries across the province in a way that provides effective representation. That is

a key term for us to work with. Canada and Alberta do not rely on the one person, one vote as our southern neighbours do. That's a very specific provision in their constitutional history. We do not rely on that principle. Rather, we have the principle of effective representation. Canada historically has taken a different path from our southern neighbours, and that's the key term. Just to reiterate the effective representation, that target range provides for effective representation according to the case law.

Now, in completing our task, we have several instructions in the legislation. The primary one is to deal with the relative sparsity and density of population. Population is a very big concern for us, but it's not the exclusive or only concern. Other factors that Canadian authorities down through the years have been focusing upon are the common community interests. That is a big factor we'll be dealing with. We also consider certain geographic features. Those are particularly important in rural situations but do come into play in the large urban areas as well. Communication and transportation lines are also features that we will consider when implementing new boundaries.

Finally, our focus is to come up with a proposal that provides clear and understandable boundaries. The legislation also allows us to take into account any other factors that we may think are important in relation to redrawing the electoral map. Those other appropriate or important factors, no doubt, will come out as a result of our public hearings. We have learned so much about this province and will take the many hours of public hearings and public representations into account as we review and deliberate and create our report.

Now we're in Peace River. We want to hear from you. We are scheduled to sit here all morning. We don't have a full list. We have three scheduled presenters, but what often happens is people will volunteer that aren't registered to make submissions, so if you're here and not signed up and you find that you want to make a point at the end of the presenters, we're more than happy to accommodate you. We don't have a strict timeline in presentation. In fact, we almost always engage in dialogue. We always have questions of the presenter, and you'll find that, I think, we're all very approachable, and we love dialogue and love checking in with what you say.

Our first presenter is Angela Cobick.

Mrs. Cobick: I'm assuming this is the spot here.

The Chair: Yes. Have a seat there. Just identify yourself and tell us where you're from and proceed with your presentation. The microphone will pick up.

By the way, I didn't indicate that this is recorded. The audio will eventually be placed on the EBC website. It's also transcribed. The people from *Hansard* are here, so you'll be able to read the transcription in a couple of days on the website.

Mrs. Cobick: Okay. Sounds good.

All right. I am Angela Cobick, and the position I have held for the past six years is the constituency manager for here in Peace River, so when I speak to the items today, it comes from experience but also as a resident of the constituency.

I had submitted a document yesterday. I'm not sure if you received it. It might have gotten a little late. Yes? Okay.

The Chair: We may have received it. We haven't read it yet.

Mrs. Cobick: That's okay. Then I can go over it.

As you can tell from the map, the Peace River constituency is the largest geographically in the province. It's a lot of area to cover. Interestingly, when you scheduled this meeting, somebody from

High Level, Rainbow Lake, or La Crête or even further north would have to drive anywhere from three to four hours to attend this meeting, and that is if highway 35 remains open due to a wildfire, which has been intermittently closed over the past few weeks. That's a lot of driving and a lot of distance to cover.

The Peace River constituency includes six urban municipalities, four rural municipalities, four First Nations, one Métis settlement, and five school divisions. If you compare that to, say, a Calgary riding, you may have two to three school boards, you have exactly one municipality, which would be, like, the city of Calgary, and you may not, probably wouldn't have a First Nation that you needed to represent as an MLA. When you're talking about, I guess, trying to represent as many stakeholders, constituents, and other groups as possible, the Calgary MLA or an Edmonton MLA would have significantly less.

When you talk drive time, if you started in the south of this constituency, which is further south here of Peace River, and you went all the way up north, which would be past High Level, it would be five hours. That's just south to north. If you wanted to do east to west, if you're talking from Rainbow Lake all the way over to Garden River, that's over three and a half hours. Then if you take into consideration that you need to be in Edmonton as an MLA, it's seven hours. That's from La Crête. If you went further north, it would be longer.

9:20

The Chair: These are driving distances.

Mrs. Cobick: These are driving distances.

That doesn't take into consideration, of course, that we have a lot of winter weather up here, and that's in ideal road conditions. It doesn't include ferry closures. There's an ice bridge which is, of course, only open in the winter. The ferry is somewhat intermittent, and of course there's always poor cell service on either highway 88, which is the fastest route to Edmonton from La Crête, or even highway 35 can be intermittent. Highway 88 is pretty much no cell service, so if you wanted to take a phone call or do a meeting, it's not happening. It's kind of what we call dead time, where you just drive. Yeah.

If you take a senior citizen who may want to drop off documents because they don't scan, they don't do virtual meetings, to drive to a constituency office could be three hours. That's not reasonable to ask somebody to do that to come to an in-person meeting, which often people prefer. They want that face time with their MLA. They want that interaction. They want to feel like they're heard. They would prefer an in-person meeting, but we would have to ask them to drive three hours or more to get to a constituency office.

Rural Albertans actually have more unique and diverse needs than maybe somebody who lives in a city. As a city MLA you're probably not going to have to deal with agriculture or forestry. You're probably not going to have to deal with transportation because many of your roads are municipal. In the constituency office we have varying needs, from the farmer who has, you know, drainage issues to some of our First Nations who have been evacuated.

We have seen that every year in the constituency since 2019. We have had either a First Nation or a community evacuated every year since 2019 either to wildfire or due to flooding. We have a community evacuated right now, and they have been evacuated for several weeks, which is up in Chateh, one of our First Nations. That's a significant impact on the residents, when they are evacuated every year, and on resources for the MLA and our office to provide that support. If we made this riding any bigger, it would put the people who are already, I feel, at a disadvantage at a further

disadvantage because those resources are going to be stretched even further.

If we look at the map, it's very difficult to see where you could make it bigger without, I guess, cutting out – like, we already have a little bump-out up there. That is Little Red River Cree Nation. Why we have them is because they're actually technically in Wood Buffalo national park, but because they're a First Nation, it made more sense for them to be part of us rather than to stick them into Fort McMurray. There isn't a road going east over into Wood Buffalo or over to Fort McMurray, so they are part of our constituency. They are the furthest to the east. It would not make geographical sense, I think, to include any other communities without increasing your drive time and your distance for those people to travel further.

I would like to keep rural residents – I don't know how many rural presentations you have listened to yet. When you talk to a rural resident, they already feel like they are at a disadvantage for many reasons. One of them is that, I mean, we have exactly one highway going north up to the Northwest Territories. If that highway closes, you can, if you needed to, cut over to highway 58 down highway 88. It adds a significant amount of drive time.

Also, when we have to travel, it's often for things like medical appointments. There is lack of specialists here, so we need to drive to places like Grande Prairie, Edmonton, sometimes even Calgary for specialists. When rural residents talk about that they're at a disadvantage, it's for those reasons. I don't want to put them at a further disadvantage by having, you know, those resources stretched thinner.

The Chair: Just to give us some perspective, ma'am, how long is the drive to Calgary?

Mrs. Cobick: It is eight hours from here.

The Chair: And to Edmonton?

Mrs. Cobick: It's five hours from here.

The Chair: Okay. So five to eight hours to get to them.

Mrs. Cobick: Yeah, from here. If you're in High Level and you need to get to Calgary, it's 10-plus. It's a big province. It's really big.

The Chair: You don't have to work hard to convince us now.

Mrs. Cobick: That's, I guess, the basic – what it comes down to is that to make it even larger would stretch the MLA and, you know, the resources that the office can provide.

The Chair: Okay.

Mrs. Cobick: If anybody has any questions.

The Chair: Questions, Mr. Evans, to start?

Mr. Evans: I do.

Mrs. Cobick: Great.

Mr. Evans: What would be your major concern, in terms of your presentation? What are you trying to help us avoid doing?

Mrs. Cobick: What I'm trying to help you avoid is making this constituency bigger.

Mr. Evans: Okay.

I just want to make sure that I have an understanding of the division of powers and responsibilities from your perspective in terms of what your MLA is doing and what is the responsibility of the municipalities within this electoral district. Just to maybe help with that, in the Municipal Government Act, under the general jurisdictions or the powers of the municipality, they're to deal with

- (a) the safety, health and welfare of people . . .
- (b) people, activities and things in . . . a public place . . .
- (c) nuisances, including unsightly property;
- (d) transport and transportation systems;
- (e) businesses, business activities and persons engaged in business;
- (f) services provided by or on behalf of the municipality;
- (g) public utilities;
- (h) wild and domestic animals . . .
- (i) the enforcement of bylaws,

roads. In reference to one of your points, drainage issues as it relates to a farmer would be a municipal concern.

But it sounds to me like maybe what I'm hearing from you is that the constituents aren't getting that kind of support from their municipality and are going to their MLA. Am I wrong?

Mrs. Cobick: No. I guess when I was talking about the roads, I mean, the counties do a good job of maintaining their roads within their county. Of course, the MLA would be responsible for the major highways that exist within the constituency. When it has actually referred to, I guess, a drainage issue, the counties also do a really good job.

Our issue is more so with enforcement under the environment and protection act. If somebody buys new land – maybe there's a low area – but Environment has considered that a wetland, you can't farm that, and we're running into some barriers with that, with people wanting to create farmland but there are some environmental regulations. That's where our office comes in and tries to help.

Mr. Evans: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.
Susan.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for coming out today. I have a few questions, but I first want to say that I get it that the distances are great. We flew. We did not drive because we can't make it from A to B in the time allotted, so I get it. When we flew over, I was amazed at the vastness of what I see.

But I do have some questions. When you talk about the bump-out to the east, on the map it refers to it as Garden Creek. Is that the same thing?

Mrs. Cobick: It is. We call it Garden River. It says Garden Creek on the map. I'm not sure why. Maybe one of my colleagues here knows.

Mrs. Samson: You have it because the most direct road runs through your electoral division.

Mrs. Cobick: Yes.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

Can you tell me where the CA offices are in your riding?

Mrs. Cobick: Yes. We do have one here in Peace River, and we have another one in La Crête.

9:30

Mrs. Samson: Okay.

Then my other question is: can you expand upon your relationship with – again, it would be like-minded levels of government – the MLA or the provincial government and your relationship with Central Peace-Notley and Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo?

Mrs. Cobick: Central Peace-Notley: we, of course, share a boundary.

Mrs. Samson: Yes.

Mrs. Cobick: So we often have constituents who are sometimes confused about who their MLA is, especially Central Peace-Notley. We get lots of people from Berwyn, which is just south of Grimshaw, and some people over in Falher and Girouxville, which are just south of the boundaries. We do get some people who are confused about who their MLA is. We do have a good working relationship, so it's easy to just refer those people over to them or take their information and pass it over to their office. Even though we do share a boundary with Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, we don't get any confusion.

Mrs. Samson: It's pretty clear.

Mrs. Cobick: Yeah. It's pretty clear.

We do sometimes have Lesser Slave Lake. Sometimes some constituents from over sort of in High Prairie also find their way over to us, but we refer them back to their office as much as we can.

Mrs. Samson: Right.

And just to reiterate, it really is: do not expand the boundary.

Mrs. Cobick: Yes.

Mrs. Samson: Then I see, when I look at the populations, that you cannot reasonably decrease it either because then you don't have the population.

Mrs. Cobick: Right, according to your new formula, but it looks like we just fit in that nice 25 per cent. But I will add that actually Mackenzie county is the fastest growing county, I believe, in Canada. They have a very young population. So although they may not have the voting power yet, there are a lot of up-and-coming voters.

Mrs. Samson: Why are they moving to Mackenzie county?

Mrs. Cobick: They are not moving there. It's actually heavily a Mennonite community, and they tend to have large families.

Mrs. Samson: Okay.

Mr. Evans: Where is that?

Mrs. Cobick: That would be La Crête. Mackenzie county is actually the largest county, I think, in Canada. They fit all inside of the Peace River constituency.

Mrs. Samson: Yeah. I see that La Crête is showing 4,000 population in those small dots, and, you know, Manning is only 1,100. Good point. Thank you for bringing that up.

No further questions. Thank you again.

Mrs. Cobick: Thank you.

The Chair: You have grown about 10 per cent, if my rough math is correct, since '16, which is pretty good for a rural riding.

Mrs. Cobick: For rural, right, yes.

The Chair: Your constituency office is in Peace River, and you have one in La Crête?

Mrs. Cobick: Yes.

The Chair: Peace River: you're open full days, five days a week?

Mrs. Cobick: About four days a week, but that also depends on if I'm travelling with the MLA to somewhere like Manning or somewhere else. Then I'm not in the office.

The Chair: Okay. And La Crête is open how often?

Mrs. Cobick: Right now it's whenever I can get there because we're short a staff member.

The Chair: Oh. So you operate both offices?

Mrs. Cobick: I do right now, yes.

The Chair: Central Peace-Notley: where is their legislative office?

Mrs. Cobick: Yep, they have two as well. They have one in Fairview and one in Valleyview. Many of the rural ones try to have two offices just because those distances are so great.

The Chair: Okay.
Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you, and thank you for being here and for giving us a feel for the distances involved. I'm interested in the fact that over the last eight years – or I guess it's eight years since the last census and today – you've grown 8 and a half, 9 per cent. Good for you guys. I'm happy for La Crête, but I bet you that there are other areas of growth as well that have added to your population. For example, I suspect that, you know, there has been an upturn in the oil and gas industry. Would you think that some of those numbers are attributed to that?

Mrs. Cobick: I don't know if there has been a large increase in oil and gas here. I think we're always hoping for more to come up. But I think Peace River's population has stayed pretty stable in the past 40 years. I don't think it's changed a whole lot in Peace River or the surrounding communities.

Dr. Martin: Okay. We always hear a great deal about the great play on for gas across the Alberta-B.C. border, the Montney play and so on and so forth, but it hasn't generated a lot of humans even though there may be a lot of machinery.

Mrs. Cobick: Right, yeah.

Dr. Martin: Do you find in your constituency work that the industry file is fairly quiet?

Mrs. Cobick: As far as oil and gas, yes. We do deal more so with forestry and agriculture files.

Dr. Martin: Could you talk to me a little bit about that? I'm just very interested. Flying in gives you such a weird view of the land, so I'm glad for the opportunity to hear more about farming and forestry, if you wouldn't mind.

Mrs. Cobick: Sure. I'll talk about, actually, Mackenzie county. I want to say, back in 2008 . . .

The Chair: Sorry. Can you just describe the boundaries of Mackenzie county in your riding? Go up to the map.

Mrs. Cobick: Sure. Mackenzie county: you can see it in the blue on there. The county of Northern Lights goes – Paddle Prairie Métis settlement isn't on here – right up to about right here.

The Chair: Okay.

Mrs. Cobick: Then Mackenzie county is the rest except Rainbow Lake is its own municipality. High Level is its own municipality. La Crête and Fort Vermilion are part of Mackenzie county, and Mackenzie county goes down to – there it is right there – the boundary.

Dr. Martin: Massive.

Mrs. Cobick: Yeah. Very large.

The Chair: Okay. Sorry. I just wanted to get . . .

Mrs. Cobick: No. That's okay.

The Chair: Go ahead, Julian.

Mrs. Kolebaba: Angela, this might help. I mean, I'll just submit it.

Mrs. Cobick: Sure.

Mr. Clark: Oh, wow. Yeah. Awesome.

Dr. Martin: Whoa. Even better. Thank you very much. It's small print.

The Chair: You can't have everything, Julian.

Mrs. Cobick: The promise I believe back in 2008, I want to say, was to open up more farmland in Mackenzie county. It's a very slow process. There are Indigenous consultations. There are environmental assessments. There are all kinds of things that are going to be happening. They're finally finished that, and now they're in the process of changing titles and, you know, dividing out the parcels. I believe it's about 200,000 acres. It's a large amount of land that will be going up for auction and then to be sold, cleared, and turned into farmland.

The Chair: It's Crown land now, and it's proposed to be sold for farming?

Mrs. Cobick: Yes. There will be a big push up there for some new farmers, farmers to expand. Of course, when you're clearing that land, there will be some logging operations that will be very interested in those trees. There are already existing sawmills and logging operations up there.

The Chair: Now I know why the Mennonites are up here. Sorry. That's very interesting.
Anything more?

Dr. Martin: Yeah. I just wanted to follow up about the forestry industry. One could fully expect a logging and sawmilling set of operations. Is that expanding as well?

Mrs. Cobick: It's held, I want to say, steady. We have several sawmills around here and up in Mackenzie county, but with the clearing of these new acres there will be, I imagine, some expanded operations to help.

Dr. Martin: How many acres were expected to be in that plan?

Mrs. Cobick: I want to say about 200,000 acres, I believe. It's a large amount.

The Chair: It's all in Mackenzie county?

Mrs. Cobick: Yes.

Dr. Martin: Okay. Thank you very much.

Mr. Clark: Fabulous. Thank you. I've got a couple of quick questions. Well, maybe not quick questions, but they are questions. You talked about that you've got two constituency offices. You're one person. Would it help if you had more resources, like more money, if you were able to hire someone full time? Is that part of the constraint?

Mrs. Cobick: That's some of it. I mean, it's hard to find sort of, I want to say, the right person for the job. There's an enormous amount of trust. There's a lot of responsibility. I mean, I work alone, independently, so you have to be able to work under those conditions.

9:40

Mr. Clark: I know a bit about that. I think it's an underappreciated job, constituency manager. You really have to be plugged into the community. You get to know people. You need to know a variety of different stakeholders. There's like an air traffic control kind of aspect to it.

Actually, I'll build on that a bit. My colleague Mr. Evans had asked about: what's a municipal role; what's a provincial role? Maybe I'll just ask you to reflect a bit on that air traffic control, right? I imagine that oftentimes you get a question about something that is clearly municipal. You don't just sort of close the door and say: go over there. You say: "You know what? Sure, let me help." Then you make a call to your connection within the municipal area and say, "This person has this question; would you mind reaching out to them?" or "I'm going to put them in touch with you." That's not a zero-effort sort of endeavour.

Mrs. Cobick: Right. Same with the federal MP. Same thing.

Mr. Clark: That's right.

Very often these things don't have clear lines either, right? There are aspects to the drainage issue which are municipal. It's a culvert. Why the heck is that happening? But then, well, it borders on a wetland, except maybe it doesn't, except maybe it does. Especially here I have a lot of empathy for that. I think that, you know, sort of ties back to my first question of just the resources, whether that's another staff person or part-time or some research or something.

Having said that, it's outside of our scope, so that is something we can't make any promises on, but it's something we've reflected on a little bit in particular in areas here. Previous commissions have made recommendations to the Legislature to say: let's maybe look at that. That's certainly something we can think about doing as well and just maybe pushing a little bit to make that change.

Now a couple of specific geography questions. You talked about Little Red River Cree Nation. Makes a lot of sense. We received a written submission from the mayor of Peace River asking to include Woodland Cree up highway 986. Now, at the same time, you've said: please don't make our boundaries any bigger. But I guess I just wanted to ask your perspective on that. Would that make sense for us to do that?

Mrs. Cobick: Woodland Cree is about an hour from here, or not quite an hour's drive, to the east, straight to the east. If we included Woodland Cree, you would have to include Lubicon. They are on the way through there. Woodland and Lubicon – and there are some other First Nations around there – have, I guess, what we would call a consortium called KTC, Kee Tas Kee Now Tribal Council, where they all come together to decide on issues that work for their First Nation. I'm not sure you can include one without including the rest.

Mr. Clark: All right. Let me just get my bearings here. They are further east yet then. Is that right? Lubicon is further east?

Mrs. Cobick: Not quite as far east as Woodland. I'm just going to Google Maps.

Ms Whitehead: Right here is Woodland, and over here is Lubicon.

The Chair: But it's on 986 there.

Mr. Clark: Oh, I see. Lubicon is just over the boundary, and Woodland Cree is further east yet, but they're connected.

Mrs. Cobick: Right. So you couldn't include Woodland without . . .

Mr. Clark: I've got a bit of a tool here. I can draw boxes and it will give me an estimated population. The estimated population of my map is about 1,350 people. Does that sound about right? It doesn't have to be perfect, but it's sort of give or take.

Mrs. Cobick: Probably around that. Yeah.

Mr. Clark: Okay. All right. If we were doing one, we'd need to make sure we do both, which geographically makes some sense?

Mrs. Cobick: Yeah.

Mr. Clark: Okay. That's very helpful.

The Chair: And you could handle that growth?

Mrs. Cobick: Population-wise.

The Chair: The growth, you could, but the geography . . .

Mrs. Cobick: Right.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Clark: It's along – sorry.
Go ahead.

Ms Whitehead: KTC involves five nations: Woodland Cree, Lubicon, Loon Lake, Peerless Trout, and Atikameg, which is Whitefish out there.

The Chair: Okay. So five nations.

Mr. Clark: Five nations. Okay. That's really helpful.

The Chair: And you already have four?

Mrs. Cobick: Yes, which are all further north.

Mr. Clark: Would you mind maybe just grabbing the microphone so our friends at *Hansard* can record this? I'm going to write it down as well. What are those five nations you mentioned?

Ms Whitehead: KTC includes five First Nations, which are Woodland Cree, which is in Cadotte Lake; Lubicon, which is in

Little Buffalo; we got Loon Lake by Red Earth; then we have Peerless Trout east of Red Earth; and then the last one is south on 88, on 750, which is Atikameg, which is Whitefish Lake First Nations. There are five of them in that KTC.

Mr. Clark: What was the last one again? Sorry.

Ms Whitehead: Atikameg, or Whitefish Lake.

Mr. Clark: I see it there. It would be important, then, to keep those together in one group.

Ms Whitehead: Yes.

Mr. Clark: Fabulous. Thank you.

Mrs. Cobick: Which then would also include, if you're looking at it from a geographical perspective, Red Earth Creek.

Dr. Martin: Just everything along that roadway, then.

Mrs. Cobick: Yeah. And then that's another municipality, which is MD of Opportunity.

Mr. Clark: Now I'm seeing why a previous commission perhaps drew the line where they did.

Mrs. Cobick: Yup.

Mr. Clark: Got it. Okay. That's helpful. That's why we come visit. That's really helpful. Thank you very much. That's incredibly helpful information, so thank you.

The Chair: We always love it when an MLA comes but, more importantly, someone who organizes an MLA.

Mrs. Cobick: Right. Yes. The MLA wanted to be here, but timing.

The Chair: I would warn you, Mrs. Cobick, that an occupational hazard of constituency managers is that they often end up being the MLA.

Mrs. Cobick: I've heard that's known to happen. Yes.

The Chair: Don't say you weren't warned. Thank you so much. Very appreciated.

Our next presenter is Gaylene Whitehead.

Ms Whitehead: Okay. Good morning. My name is Gaylene Whitehead. I'm a councillor for Northern Sunrise. The only thing I would like to say about the boundaries is to include the five nations, like was mentioned, because we're actually all part of Lesser Slave Lake, just over. It would make more sense because the main shopping place is Peace River for all our nations.

The Chair: Okay. That's your commercial draw.

Ms Whitehead: Yeah.

To include most of them, anyway, at least if possible in either way, because that only makes more sense for our election times to be included in Peace River. It's a shorter distance for us to go an hour – I know for sure because I live out there – instead of going to Slave Lake, which is two and a half hours when we have to go down on 88. That's a truck route, and it's always rough, so 986 is easier for us to go to Peace River to do everything.

The Chair: Okay. You're a councillor for what MD?

Ms Whitehead: Northern Sunrise county.

The Chair: The suggestion of taking in these First Nations: would that easily take in all of the county of Northern Sunrise?

Ms Whitehead: Northern Sunrise is up to Red Earth, so yeah, the three, anyway. Yeah. But I know that Loon Lake is part of Opportunity, which is the Red Earth area. That's all Opportunity, but just to be over to include them would be easy. That would help with the population for Northern Sunrise, too, the population growth. We're a major municipality, like, a large – we have all the land, but we don't have the population. So that would help.

The Chair: Help these constituents.

Ms Whitehead: Yes.

The Chair: And the sense that you have from the people that you represent in your county is that they would be content with being moved into Peace River.

Ms Whitehead: Yeah.

The Chair: Okay. Good. Anything else you want to say before I turn it over?

Ms Whitehead: No, for the boundaries would be all I have. Thank you.

The Chair: Any questions, Mr. Evans?

Mr. Evans: I'm really interested in terms of your position in the county and being able to tell us how that operates in this particular geographic location of the province, taking into account the remoteness, the size, and helping us understand sort of what you guys are doing on a county level, at that municipal level and then what help you get from your MLA. You know, when a constituent, a person in Northern Sunrise county, comes to you with a problem, what are those types of problems, and how do you deal with them?

9:50

Ms Whitehead: Well, it's the road conditions, mainly. If it's in a county boundary, then we can deal with it, but if it's provincial, then we have to go to the provincial, like the main highway. The 986 is a secondary highway that goes right through to Red Earth for us, and we have a lot of traffic going there. It kind of depends what the problem is and who to go to. We have to know. If it's within the county, then we go to the county. If it's within the province, then it's the province we have to approach. And we're the advocates, right? We stand; that's all we can do.

Mr. Evans: And Red Earth: the big draw there is oil and gas exploration. Is that what's happening there?

Ms Whitehead: There's a lot in our surrounding areas north, in that area. I live right in Cadotte Lake, so I know all the trucking that goes by all the time. I travel on 88 to go to my meetings, and I go through 986 to come to Peace River. Those are our main highways that we go: 986 to Peace River and 88 to Edmonton.

I mean, like the other lady said, with dead zone areas: we have a lot of those up in the north. That's another thing we need to consider. You know, any kind of emergencies, I always bring up that our broadband is not the best, and that's one thing that's really needed in the north, especially with AI coming. How are we going to manage when we don't have that capacity?

Mr. Evans: You don't have the capacity, if I understand it right. For example, you have Zoom meetings, virtual meetings.

Ms Whitehead: Yeah, some areas. It depends on how fast your data is that you can take in on your Wi-Fi. We have different companies, and they're not all the same. Some are very up and down.

Mr. Evans: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Susan.

Mrs. Samson: Thanks for stepping up on short notice.

Ms Whitehead: You caught me off guard, but I'm going to wing it.

The Chair: This is important.

Mrs. Samson: Yeah.

Mrs. Williams: Do you mind if I just interrupt? Sorry. I am the reeve, so I will be talking next.

Dr. Martin: You're on *Hansard*. Can you state your name, please?

Mrs. Williams: Yeah. Corinna Williams. I'm reeve from Northern Sunrise county. I'll be following up after Gaylene, so if there are any other questions, I'm happy to answer for the county.

Mrs. Samson: I was just going to ask you: in Lesser Slave Lake, your electoral division, where are your constituency offices located?

Ms Whitehead: I wouldn't know because I don't deal in Slave Lake; I deal in Peace River.

Mrs. Cobick: And Lesser Slave Lake only has one in Slave Lake.

Ms Whitehead: The main one, yeah.

Mrs. Samson: Okay. Thanks.

The Chair: This is really helpful; it is.
Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you, and thank you. I was really struck by your characterization of the two roads, the one that allows your community to go east to a city where you can get a whole bunch of services in an hour or so, and the other kind of forces you down 88, which is basically a truck road. It's more of a boundary than a travel route by comparison. That's very interesting to me. I know a little bit about the eastern side of Lesser Slave Lake, and I fully concur. That is a truck route. It's very interesting to hear that your trading and social relations kind of relationships are all drawing you towards the Peace River western side.

Thank you for that, and I very much appreciate you stepping up on short notice. This is very helpful.

Ms Whitehead: Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Yeah, thank you. We really appreciate you coming. Again, this is why we come. Are the folks in Peerless and Trout back home?

Ms Whitehead: No. They're still in Edmonton. They're still evacuated.

Mr. Clark: We were in the hotel with them when we were in Edmonton. That was a few weeks ago. That's such a shame they're still – how's that looking?

Ms Whitehead: We don't know. They're hoping to be back by another month. That was a long-term thing, so we don't know. It'll depend on the fires because the fire is right around. These roads – I know we're not dealing with the roads – we're blocked in if we don't have the major roads to go in and out. That's something with the boundaries that the MLAs need to look at. Like, for instance, for Peerless – we say PTFN to shorten the two nations together – the only escape is that they have one road in, one way out. That's why we tried to advocate for the corridor to go across from Peerless Trout to Fort McMurray. That would help out in the north.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Absolutely. Okay. We heard a little bit about something along those lines yesterday up in Fort McMurray, so hopefully that's in progress. I, obviously, don't have any details.

I'm interested now in Lesser Slave Lake constituency, a little bit further south, High Prairie and Lesser Slave Lake itself. There are a number of First Nations south of Atikameg on actual Lesser Slave Lake itself and the rest of that constituency, you know, off towards Falher and those sorts of areas. I guess I'm curious. That looks like a pretty significant geography and a different highway going east and west. Is that a different connection then, would you say?

Ms Whitehead: Yes, it is.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. And do you know where those folks sort of generally kind of operate?

Ms Whitehead: Slave Lake, High Prairie, depends which one is closer. Slave Lake has more stores available than High Prairie, and the same thing with our area. We have more stores than Slave Lake. That's why most people come to Peace River.

Mr. Clark: Slave Lake, High Prairie. I'm just getting my bearings here. Okay. Oh, I see. Okay.

Ms Whitehead: So you go where the things are available.

Mr. Clark: Right. Absolutely.

Ms Whitehead: Yes. It's the same thing with us.

Mr. Clark: Then, I guess, I presume they would then go as far over as Grande Prairie for big-city things, I assume.

Ms Whitehead: Yeah. We have medical both ways, either Grande Prairie or Edmonton, but being a First Nation, they usually refer you to Grande Prairie first. Then they'll fly you out to Edmonton if it's critical.

Mr. Clark: Okay. Sorry. I'm just trying to get my bearings here. Looks like we're off into Fort McMurray, kind of Lac La Biche territory going east, and there's not much in the way of roads out east.

Ms Whitehead: We have to go through Athabasca.

Mr. Clark: Athabasca. Right. Yes. You go down and then back up again. Okay.

Ms Whitehead: There's no cut across.

Mr. Clark: So that sort of catchment thing goes west, Falher and Valleyview and Grande Prairie and that sort of area.

Ms Whitehead: Yeah.

Mr. Clark: Okay. That's really helpful. Thank you so much. I really appreciate you stepping up on short notice. I don't know who put your name on the list . . .

Ms Whitehead: I don't know either. I didn't even sign the board.

Mr. Clark: . . . but we thank them for doing it. It's been really helpful, so thank you very much.

Ms Whitehead: Thank you. Have a nice day.

The Chair: Okay. Our next presenter is Carolyn Kolebaba.

Mrs. Kolebaba: That's okay. The reeve will speak, and if there's time, I'll chime in.

The Chair: Okay. So that's Corinna Williams? Okay.

Mrs. Williams: Corinna Williams, reeve of Northern Sunrise county. I see you have the map in front of you. If you were to look at the map area of just Northern Sunrise county, we would be just slightly smaller than Belgium. That gives you our land mass.

We have a ward system in Northern Sunrise county where we're elected in our wards. In our ward system – this is just to give you a concept of our MLA if he does go to see a resident, which he has done in the past – I have around 156 houses. It takes me 300 kilometres to go see those houses. You can imagine that if there is a resident that is needing our MLA Williams's service, he has a long way to go. We're really trying to emphasize the long-distance travel that we have in this area.

I'd like to remind you that section 3 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms affirms that "every citizen of Canada has the right to vote in an election of members of the House of Commons or of a legislative assembly . . . to be qualified for membership therein." Based on this, the commission must uphold the right to effective representation, ensuring that lower population numbers in northern regions do not lead to our voices being overshadowed by urban density. This is something we hear constantly from our residents, from a lot of the people I speak to. They feel very lost in our rural representation. When you had one of your earlier maps, you could see that down south there is lots of representation, but when you look at the north, you're looking at one, two, or three. So we do feel that our voices are not heard, and as populations continue to grow, concerns persist that rural voices, especially us, are at risk of being drowned out.

10:00

While urban centres argue that current boundaries favour rural areas, we strongly disagree. Although our population is much smaller than those of densely populated regions, our elected representatives must cover vast geological areas, as you have heard already this morning about the five hours or more to travel. The growing geographic and political disconnect is further worsened by limited transportation infrastructure, including no airport for us in the Peace region. I'm not sure where you flew in to, if that was Grande Prairie or if you were able to get into Peace River.

The Chair: Peace River.

Mrs. Williams: Then you were very fortunate to fly into our airport. We do have a wonderful airport here, but unfortunately there is no active transportation. That is really hurting us right now and especially, again, our MLA Williams.

If you're looking at making this boundary even bigger, then, again, we lose our voice even more. Rural areas are very unique. Until you've driven it, and I mean actually driven it – Premier Smith

actually did drive around the area. She went from High Level down to Manning over to Peace River, and she was shocked. She told me how long it was and how sore her bum was from a lot of time in the seat. That's something that we're really trying to emphasize to you today, about the distance.

Our oil and gas sector is extremely important to us. It's one of our biggest taxation revenues for Northern Sunrise county. So, again, that representation is very important for our industries to have that voice. Fair and effective representation we feel is fundamental to a democratic society, ensuring that all voices are heard. Population alone should not dictate representation. Instead, the vast geography, economic impact, and distinct realities of northern and rural communities must be considered.

We continually advocate, as Councillor Whitehead spoke to, about the connections for highway 686. That's a very important economic corridor, and that's something that MLA Williams is advocating for us as well. That is going to move, and it actually will help for egress, too, when we do have fires here. As you can see, in the north we're very limited with that road structure, so if there are fires, they can stop MLA Williams from actually being able to get to a community because the road is closed. So that vastness factor is very big.

Also, as we have spoken to, the blackouts: quite often you'll drop a call, just sporadically. Even in Three Creeks I can drop a call, so I can imagine Minister Williams with his travel and trying to do his work as well and including the distance.

If there are any questions you have for me, for Northern Sunrise or anything else you'd like clarity on, I'm more than happy to do that. But, definitely, you know, the airport is our biggest issue for our region right now.

The Chair: Your MLA: would he fly to Edmonton?

Mrs. Williams: He often drives.

The Chair: Because there's no real decent, regular air service.

Mrs. Williams: No. There is none unless he had a charter, which would be very expensive.

Mrs. Cobick: It's prohibited.

Mrs. Williams: Oh, yeah, it would be, right?

The Chair: It's what?

Mrs. Cobick: They can't charter an airplane.

Mrs. Williams: They're not allowed to.

The Chair: So he's obligated to drive.

Mrs. Williams: Yes. It's what we call windshield time. I quite often ask many ministers to come up here. I'm happy to drive you around for eight, nine, 10, 11, 12 hours and see where we get. You'd be very surprised.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Clark, any questions?

Mr. Clark: No. Again, I'm just struck by, like you say, the vast geography of the area, and I'm a little surprised that, one, there is no scheduled air service and, two, that there wouldn't be any sort of ability for the MLA to fly up even on an occasional basis. It's something that I've made a note of. I understand the sensitivity to cost as it relates, but democracy has a cost. Proper representation: there's tremendous value to that in my opinion. I'm one guy and

don't control that, but it may be worth something. We note and consider it.

Again, just building on what you were saying, more of a comment than a question and as Justice Miller said in the outset, we're lucky in Canada that we have a structure where we can have some differences, and for very sparsely populated areas, you know, it's a balancing act. There's absolutely no question. That's why it's important, I think, for us to be up here.

Mrs. Williams: I can give you some history on the airport, which may be helpful to you.

The Chair: Please.

Mrs. Williams: We used to have a really thriving airport. I think that we had two or three charter flights a week that would go to Edmonton, around \$600 return. Then AHS came in and shut down the medevac. That's what hurt our airport the most: because that was removed. Because we lost that and the same person who ran the medevac ran the charter flights – they could not just do one – AHS then gave the contract to another company that is here. They have an office in Peace River, but the airplane or helicopter is usually in Grande Prairie. It's not in Peace River. Hence, we lost our charter flights.

The Chair: So then it comes on demand to Peace River to be utilized.

Mrs. Williams: Yes, when it's required. They sometimes will have one in the hangar, but from our understanding, most times it's kept in Grande Prairie. Right now the Peace River Airport is being run by a nonprofit organization, and they're mainly farm sprayers. Their flights look busy, but it's all their flights. With that, we also lost Nav Can; we lost that part of it as well.

To get this airport back, we're all trying to work on it. Our regional municipalities are continuing to have conversations. We know how important this is. Especially if nuclear does come here, that airport is going to be fundamental, so we're continually trying to advocate. Minister Williams is advocating with us as well, and the Premier does speak of that airports are – the disconnect is that they cannot fund a nonprofit organization, obviously. That and our loss of charter flights is where the issues arise, you know, if that is useful.

Mr. Clark: Yeah, it's helpful context for sure.

The Chair: What year did that happen, when AHS moved out?

Mrs. Williams: I think we were – Carolyn, were we in 2019? Yeah, 2019, so it's been fairly recent.

The Chair: So that wasn't the case when the 2017 Electoral Boundaries Commission came in.

Mrs. Williams: No. You would have had chartered air at that time, and now we do not. That's, hence, why we're talking strongly about the distance travelled. It's all windshield time.

The Chair: So now we're proposing adding in a county and several First Nations, creating a larger riding, and you have worse transportation alternatives than you did in 2017.

Mrs. Williams: Absolutely.

The Chair: Okay. Where did I butt in? Sorry.
Any more questions, Greg?

Mr. Clark: No. Thank you.

The Chair: Julian.

Dr. Martin: Merely to say that this is seemingly tangential to our work, but it isn't. Certainly, it helps us understand the boundary conditions, so to speak, as to how far you can shrink or expand an electoral district given the practical realities of proper and effective representation within it. We will probably be adding some comments about this in our textual discussion of the riding in the body of our report because these are important things for people to know about. We don't have direct advocacy on these things, but we can help raise the consciousness around them.

10:10

Mrs. Williams: Yeah.

Could you bring up the map that has all the people? You had a map there that had the constituents on there. I can't remember what slide it was. I don't have my glasses on, so I can't see that either.

The Chair: Oh, on the PowerPoint?

Mrs. Williams: The opening remarks, yeah. I'd like you to really have a look at that. I think you'll understand more so if you really could look at that.

This one. When you really look at it, you'll see where we're trying to explain to you north to south. We always hear, as we say – this is just coming from us – that the south gets everything; the north gets nothing. We feel that's purely due to lack of representation. When you look at how many people are down south and you look – northern Alberta: we feed and we fuel the province and we feed and fuel the country, and our representation should mimic that as well. Our voices should be just as strong, and we feel honestly that they're not at the moment. I get very passionate about this because I do constantly hear that Edmonton is northern Alberta, and I will tell people no.

The Chair: Well, you'll be pleased to know that in my general introductory remarks I often refer to Susan as coming from Sylvan Lake, which for a southerner is central Alberta. I didn't say that today. I didn't, so I didn't make that mistake.

Mrs. Williams: I appreciate that.

The Chair: You're exactly right. We think Edmonton is the end of the province. This has been very helpful.

Mrs. Williams: I was recently in Ottawa, and it was surprising how many people didn't realize anything existed past Edmonton. I really think they thought we're horse and carts.

The Chair: After the fur trade nothing happened.

Mrs. Williams: Anyway, I won't go off on a tangent. Sorry.

The Chair: Anything further, Julian?

Dr. Martin: Not from me. Thank you.

The Chair: Susan.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. I just want to ask you to comment. When we are asked to look at the First Nations people and their settlements to the east, how do you feel about that balancing act with poor transportation routes and the greater increase not only of representing those people but of reaching out to them and seeing

them and all the things that representation requires? Give me your comments on that.

Mrs. Williams: While I understand that representation for all Indigenous and Métis is really important, unless that boundary is changed so that it either comes up and goes out or there's a way that it could be changed where it's not getting bigger but a different configuration – to me, I could understand that. The town of Peace River is very important, as Councillor Whitehead has spoken to. I could see that being a possibility, but just to make it even bigger still really, again, takes away our rural voices. Again, I'll remind you of that previous map of how it looks compared south to north.

Mrs. Samson: I think one of the things – are we faced with a timing issue? Are we wanting to increase and take on those people before the infrastructure is in place? Like, is this something that needs to be looked at down the road when the transportation infrastructure is there to connect those people into another area?

Mrs. Williams: To me, it makes sense to have a look at it now because it could be 10 or 12 years down the road. Right now they're telling us three years just for all the studying. Again, I really do believe if nuclear comes here that's going to be a whole different conversation again because that's going to really increase numbers.

Mrs. Samson: You haven't talked about nuclear; you've just alluded to it. Did you want to expand on the topic?

The Chair: Yeah, please.

Mrs. Williams: I can expand on it. Ultimately, the provincial and federal government, obviously, make the final decisions, but as regional municipalities we have PREC, which is the Peace Regional Energy Committee, and we've been advocating as well as Minister Williams for having nuclear here. They are looking at placing nuclear in Alberta, and we're really advocating that we would be the best. We have the Peace River, which is only 2 per cent allocated for water. It would sit in most likely the county of Northern Lights, but they do have a second site in Northern Sunrise county, again close to the river. I believe the numbers are around 20,000 for construction and 3,500 to run it. The construction will be a 10-year phase. Again understanding that it's going to be 10 years plus before there's even a hole in the ground, you're still going to start having people come up to do the geographical studies and all the other bits and pieces that go in nuclear. I'm not a nuclear specialist, I can tell you that. We're looking at the economic factor. This is where our drive is, purely for the economic factor. We do understand that that will increase numbers greatly.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

Mrs. Williams: Thank you.

The Chair: Before I go to Mr. Evans, before I forget this, which body is the main negotiator or person on the ground that would know the most about this nuclear project? Would it be your council or Northern Lights?

Mrs. Williams: Reeve Ungarian is our chairperson. He's our spokesperson, and he's the reeve of the county of Northern Lights. Terry Ungarian. He's our spokesperson.

We're working very closely with Energy Alberta. They would be the builders of the nuclear. They would not be the proponent. Energy Alberta is having continued conversations with government, and MLA Williams has been part of those conversations.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Evans, any questions?

Mr. Evans: Yes. What was the acronym of the northern organization that you guys have formed?

Mrs. Williams: Oh, PREC, P-R-E-C. I've always got to be careful how I pronounce it.

Mr. Evans: I was thinking the very same thing. That's why I wanted to get it right.

It stands for?

Mrs. Williams: Peace regional economic committee.

Mrs. Cobick: Energy.

Mrs. Williams: Oh, energy committee. Sorry. Even I'm getting confused now.

Mr. Evans: Okay.

Mrs. Samson: Who are the main bodies inside the Peace River energy committee?

Mrs. Williams: We have the county of Northern Lights, the MD of Peace, the town of Grimshaw, the town of Peace River, and Northern Sunrise county.

The Chair: Could someone on behalf of that regional group send us something in terms of expected construction that would give us an idea on growth of population and industry?

Mrs. Williams: Yes, absolutely. We've got a lot of those documents already of what's expected, so we can certainly send that to you.

The Chair: Yeah. If you or someone could send that to us, that would give us . . .

Mrs. Williams: Yes. I will ask Chair Ungarian to send that for you.

Mr. Evans: Do you have a website or anything like – put anything together in that way?

Mrs. Williams: I think they're looking at one. I can't remember if it's up and running. But if there is one, I will certainly send you the link. Right now we're within IAAC, which is the international assessment . . .

10:20

Mr. Evans: International Atomic Energy?

Mrs. Williams: No. It's international assessment – I'll find it for you. Too many acronyms.

Mr. Evans: What does IAAC do?

Mrs. Williams: They're doing the actual study. They're doing the risk study. They'll have engagements within communities. They'll have engagements with Canadian nuclear safety council just to make sure that everything is correct for that. They'll do assessments of the river, assessments of First Nations impacts.

Mr. Evans: Are they government, or are they private industry?

Mrs. Williams: They're private industry. I believe they're part of the federal government, but they're a separate body. They report to the federal government of the impact assessments.

Mr. Evans: Who engaged them?

Mrs. Williams: Energy Alberta would engage them because they're going to be the ones hoping to build the nuclear, and the government would have engaged them as well, both provincial and federal, as they make the final decision.

Mr. Evans: Just one final question, just in terms of me trying to figure out the geography: the 986 is what connects to the 88?

Mrs. Williams: Once it's built.

Mr. Evans: Okay. What condition is that road in presently?

Mrs. Cobick: The 986?

Mr. Evans: Yeah.

The Chair: Is it two lanes, four lanes?

Mrs. Williams: It's two. It's pretty rough.

Mr. Evans: That's a provincial highway that the province is responsible for. When you say rough, give me an idea.

Mrs. Williams: More of a truck route.

Mr. Evans: When you say a truck route, I'm not going to take Dr. Julian's BMW . . .

Mrs. Williams: You won't get your little car down there, no. Not recommended.

Mr. Evans: So four-wheel drive.

Mrs. Cobick: The 986 goes through . . .

Mrs. Williams: Oh, 686 is what I'm thinking of. Sorry. I've got my highways confused. So 686 is the economic corridor that we're trying to get. That will connect Fort Mac; 986 connects to 88 and will take you over to Manning in that area, but they are truck routes still. It is a twin lane, and, yeah, it can be difficult to pass.

The Chair: Can I just get back to: what is the purpose of the nuclear power that you're working towards? Is it to provide energy for this region, energy for the province? What's the ultimate purpose?

Mrs. Williams: Yeah, it's energy for the province because of all the new data centres that are looking at coming into Canada, and it will be energy for Canada as well. We're all aware that our electrical grid will not handle the population boost and what's going to be coming. Canada is already looking at nuclear. In the east you've got the Bruce Power. For the north here we're hoping, and that's what our committee is trying to work towards. That will increase population and demands, and that's the connection to the airport.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much. If you could maybe do that little bit of homework and get something written to Aaron for us, that would be helpful.

Mrs. Williams: Yes. We've got all those reports.

The Chair: If I can encapsulate what I think the commission has heard: first of all, do not enlarge the electoral division geographically except that – okay – maybe we'll bring in the county of Sunrise with those five First Nations, right? And you may have some population growth, so the next Electoral Boundaries

Commission may have to trim it back because of the population growth and the boundaries. Is that a fair assessment of what we've heard?

Mrs. Cobick: That's what you heard.

Mrs. Williams: I would say yeah. Northern Sunrise county: we're already in the boundary with MLA Williams.

Mrs. Kolebaba: We have two. We're two. MD of Peace is split as well.

Mrs. Williams: We're one of the old ones, and we're cut. Yeah.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you very much.

Well, I should just make sure. Is there anyone else here that hasn't presented?

Mrs. Williams: I think Councillor Laurin, and I don't know if Councillor Kolebaba would like to. Councillor Laurin is our expert on oil and gas, so he can certainly give you much more information than I can.

The Chair: Oh, okay. Good.

Mrs. Williams: Thank you for your time today. Thank you for listening.

Mr. Laurin: Good morning. Thank you for that introduction. No pressure applied there.

The Chair: Good morning. Well, what I like to tell people that haven't registered to come up and present: we don't charge you extra. Just state your name and your position and where in the riding you live in and proceed.

Mr. Laurin: My name is Art Laurin, and I'm deputy reeve with Northern Sunrise county and I live outside of the hamlet of St. Isidore. I'd just follow up on a few of the comments made to the doctor's point about the oil and gas place. The Montney and the Duvernay for the most part fall outside of this constituency. The Montney is more towards the Fox Creek area. The Duvernay is closer to the Grande Prairie area.

I raise the oil and gas consideration especially around the corridors side of things. I hear our Premier talking extensively about the importance of expanding on resources. You know, obviously, with less people here and less advocacy and less representation the understanding of the importance of the resource development in this part of the world is becoming less understood by the masses and making it more difficult for people like our Premier to advocate and convince others how important this is to the benefit of all Albertans.

I have two other points. The second point would be that, you know, as a first-time councillor what I've learned about Alberta in comparison to other provinces is that we are the only province with constituencies that expand – north, south, east, west – the entire province. There are no other provinces that extend this far north. When you consider the rest of Canada, like Saskatchewan, you don't have this sort of population base and resource development this far north in other provinces. You're limited with the Canadian Shield to the east.

The Chair: You're saying that British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba do not have this cluster of population and industry and resource development and agriculture?

Mr. Laurin: Correct. Not to the same extent as Alberta.

Lastly, with all due respect, the commission, as you introduced yourselves: everybody is Edmonton or south, as I could gather.

Dr. Martin: Sherwood Park.

Mr. Laurin: Sherwood Park. Northern Alberta, rural Alberta, hamlet, correct?

Dr. Martin: A mighty hamlet.

Mr. Laurin: Yes.

I would argue that, you know, while I appreciate you flying our beautiful northern area, I wish you would have drove it because, really, that's the only option for us constituents and our MLA, our minister. I think you would have gained a deeper appreciation for the challenges that we face in this area in terms of representation and equal access to our elected officials to advocate on our behalf.

Those would be my three additional points. Any questions?

The Chair: Actually, can you summarize, punchily, really quickly, again?

Mr. Laurin: Just to answer the doctor's question, the Montney and the Duvernay are extended a little bit outside of our municipality. While oil and gas are incredibly important to our area, those are not the zones that we particularly develop in these areas. Peace River is kind of prolific for the Bluesky, and the Clearwater zone is more of a heavy oil operation.

I talked about the economic corridors for resource development and the trend, obviously, of urbanization and fewer and fewer people here, fewer and fewer people being represented and understanding the value of those economic corridors and the resource development that goes along with them and the challenges people like our Premier have in advocating for expansion of those corridors for the benefit of all Albertans.

Secondly, I talked about Alberta having constituencies extending north, south, east, west in a much more broader sense than any other province in Canada. As you reflect on this and possibly compare us to other provinces, we are uniquely Alberta. We're different.

Then I would say that, you know, the flight situation, the airport challenges, the logistics around getting around and seeing things: you guys experienced it first-hand. You flew out here. I wish you would have driven out here and driven all over this beautiful area, but what you would have done is that you would have spent twice as much time as you have at this. It's not as efficient, right? Time is important, and so is our minister's time, our MLA's time, and so is our constituents' time.

10:30

We just, plain and simple, don't get the same representation. I listened to Angela speak. I think it's very clear that we can't expand. We can't take on more. That seems like insanity to me, to take on more area. We're already stretched to the max in terms of the time it takes to get around. While the formula works great in populated areas, it falls apart completely in areas like ours. So I beg of you to consider all of those things when you think about our area for the benefit of the people in this region.

Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Evans, any questions?

Mr. Evans: Yeah, and a comment. You're quite correct in terms of on the face would be the lack of northern representation on this commission. However, I'm a bit of a chameleon because I am familiar with northern Alberta. That means beyond the mighty

hamlet of Sherwood Park. Uniquely, although I reside in Lethbridge, as the chair indicated earlier, I litigate all over not just Alberta but western Canada. And even more uniquely, we have offices in Fort McMurray and Grande Prairie, and as part of my responsibilities previously I spent a week a month in Grande Prairie for five years, and I've litigated in the Peace River region. So I have driven this and all the way over into northern B.C. As well, I spent a week a month earlier on, say 10 years ago, in our Fort McMurray office for approximately three or four years.

So I have a bit of a flavour and have driven these roads and understand not only the uniqueness of the northern people, you guys as a community, but your ability and willingness to travel vast distances and think nothing about it. Four hours is nothing. Four hours for somebody in the south: they're thinking they're going to have to get a hotel room. You guys will drive four hours, you know, to Grande Prairie . . .

Dr. Martin: To head to Costco.

Mr. Evans: Yeah.

. . . and then get two hours along the road and realize, "You know what? I forgot something," wheel around, drive back, and think nothing. That's just a day. That's, like, a normal day. So that flavour, you know, I'm conveying to this commission. And then, in addition, we're learning even more about what it's really like to be here in the north, so thank you for keeping us aware of that. But I wanted you to know that you're not forgotten.

Mr. Laurin: Thank you.

The Chair: Susan.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. And thank you for that additional information. I think what really resonates with me is when you say that everything falls apart when we start looking at these boundaries. It really does. I had a hard look at it well before I came here trying to get an understanding. What happens in one area to compensate – for example, to get the First Nations in with better representation – ripples down and affects everything. You know, our starting point is always the population, and when we look right across the board, east to west in the north, the population just isn't there. We will do the absolute best we can for the few people that live here.

Mr. Laurin: Thank you.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: Julian, any questions?

Dr. Martin: Doctor will do. No, not really. I just couldn't pass that up. Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Greg is fine.

Mr. Laurin: Hi, Greg.

Mr. Clark: Hi. How are you?

Yeah. I think my colleagues have hopefully conveyed that it's so important. It's why we come here, right?

You're exactly right. It is not the same as driving. It just isn't. And not an excuse; more of an explanation. You know, we're in six different places this week, and part of it is almost to kind of, like, put a face to the name, right? It's one thing – we've got tools and data. You can draw a line on a map, and you can get a population. That's just numbers. And that's part of it, but it's a small part of it.

I think actually coming and hearing from folks like yourselves, especially people who are really connected to your communities and, I think, making the effort to be here in the first place, just says a lot. You're strong advocates for your communities and for your region. I just want to say thank you and that we hear you. It's why we come.

Thank you.

Mr. Laurin: Thank you for listening. Appreciate it.

Dr. Martin: Actually, I do have something to say in that, you know, despite all the talk of numbers and boundaries and the like, this commission really – the legislation directs this commission to answer, provide solutions to effective representation. That's what this is all about. Obviously, then, numbers are part of it. Obviously, the boundary lines are part of the attempted answer. But, really, what we're all about is effective representation. We can't understand that unless we hear from you. So the remarks that you offer us about "Weigh this heavier than that" are very valuable, and I thank you for it.

Mr. Laurin: Thank you.

The Chair: Hearing the presentations this week and this morning just reminds us that we should thank heavens that we do not have the one person, one vote system as our neighbours to the south.

Sir, you have made us feel a little guilty about flying. I have to bear some responsibility because when we charted out the schedule for public hearings – oh, yeah – I was convinced that we can't drive up there. You know, time savings. We've got to fly this week. Maybe we should have added a week on and done the driving for two weeks, but we'll recommend the next commission do the driving.

Mr. Laurin: Fantastic.

The Chair: I thank you so much.

Is there anyone else who wants to present? Mrs. Kolebaba.

Mrs. Kolebaba: Thank you. Yes, I am Carolyn Kolebaba. I am a councillor for Northern Sunrise county, and I also chair PREDA, which is Peace Region Economic Development Alliance, and also NAEL, Northern Alberta Elected Leaders.

The Chair: Okay. Can you slow down and give us those two again?

Mrs. Kolebaba: One is PREDA, which is Peace Region Economic Development Alliance. The other is NAEL, Northern Alberta Elected Leaders.

I would just like to say to you that the Peace Country in itself, in this division here along with the Fort St. John and Dawson Creek, produces more grain than the whole province of Manitoba, so you can realize how vast we are up here with the lower populations.

I also would like you to know that below the 55th parallel we can go east and west but not above it. We live in the Arctic Circle. This is our area. Infrastructure is not there for us at all. The only two corridors to get us into the Northwest Territories or through there are highway 35 and highway 88, which just recently in the last – I don't know, Angela – five, six years has been paved. Before it was a gravel road. To go east and west . . .

The Chair: I'm sorry. Which one was that? Highway 988, you said?

Mrs. Kolebaba: Highway 88. Highway 986: we just finally got that one fixed wide enough that two logging trucks can go on it. Highways 688 and 986. They're good now.

Our MLA: we're going to burn them out too fast, too quick if we consistently change these boundaries. I've been elected for 26 years, and this is not the first time that we sat at this table, and it certainly wasn't the first time when the MPs wanted to – the boundaries had to be changed. Every time they look at that, it's all based on population. Well, it can't be anymore.

10:40

You have to start recognizing the infrastructure we have and how we commute to get from A to B. The rail: we only have one rail, and it's CN. You know, we don't have all of the maybe capabilities of infrastructure that – the middle of the province happens to be Swan Hills. You guys, Sherwood Park: you're not cutting it at all.

Mr. Evans: Is that officially? We've heard there's been some battle on that.

Mr. Clark: There's some controversy on that.

Mrs. Kolebaba: Yeah. You guys go on the map and have a look.

Mr. Evans: It's Swan Hills?

Mrs. Kolebaba: Yeah. Go on the map and have a look. Just do it out. Remember that when you start going south, you cave in, so it's not if you go by area. Yeah.

Anyway, I think that extending Dan's boundary would be ludicrous. I don't want to lose them to bad health or divorce or whatever. They spend a lot of time away from home already, and if they want to represent even a bigger area, it's not fair. It's not humanly fair. I strongly caution you. There's got to be some place, some wiggle room where we can say: that's big enough; let the people grow. Let us get some population before we change anything to it.

I think that, you know, we're looking for economic development, but I can tell you that a lot of people in the north out of one cheek say that they want economic and the other cheek says, "No, we don't" because look what happens when you get a large population. We see what's going on in the south. I don't know. How the north feels, I would say, is equivalent to how Alberta feels to Ottawa. You take everything, but we get nothing back. Until we start seeing an equal – whatever – share of what we're contributing to the GDP, yeah, we're not happy.

The Chair: So don't expand the boundaries to the other county.

Mrs. Kolebaba: No. We're split. Our Northern Sunrise county has two MLAs. We have Scott Sinclair, and we have Dan Williams. That's been that way for – I don't know – eons. The reason is because of what Angela has said. It's just too huge geographically to say I've done justice to my people as an MLA.

The Chair: I believe you, but I find it staggering, the grain production statistics that you've...

Mrs. Kolebaba: Yeah. And the oats have the highest protein value because we have the longest days of sun. We produce great oats here, and it's sold all over the world.

The Chair: Just to understand, you're saying the entire Peace Country stretching into B.C. produces more grain annually than the entire province of Manitoba.

Mrs. Kolebaba: Correct.

Mr. Evans: What was the starting – well, you said it was from here to Dawson.

Mrs. Kolebaba: Fort St. John. That's the Peace River side on B.C.'s side. They have a Peace side as well, and they call it that.

Mr. Evans: Right. So it's from where to where?

Mrs. Kolebaba: Peace River, from this riding here, because Fort McMurray doesn't have very much of that grain. Our riding all the way over to Fort St. John and Dawson Creek. That expanse in there is the production.

Mr. Evans: Okay.

The Chair: Susan, any questions?

Mrs. Samson: Just to clarify, you're in favour of the five First Nations being joined into the Peace River riding?

Mrs. Kolebaba: No.

Mrs. Samson: You're not.

Mrs. Kolebaba: No. He can't service them. Right now Scott Sinclair tries to get up there, and he does his thing, whatever he does. If you look at that map there, it's almost as huge as our riding. Like, we can't complicate it anymore.

Mrs. Samson: Yeah. I do see that.

Mr. Evans: What if he could fly? What if, you know, the northern representatives were permitted to fly? Apparently, they're not now. That makes no sense to me.

Mrs. Kolebaba: He couldn't get out to the east anyway. It's too much. It's too big. It's vast. Like, Councillor Whitehead lives at Cadotte. It's an hour for her to get to our office. For him, then, he has to go another – I don't know – 40, 45 minutes to get over to the Lubicon side. The Woodland are first and then the Lubicon on that stretch of road, and they're a growing population. They're really growing. They're up north there with the Mennonites.

It just wouldn't serve us. We would lose representation everywhere else, and we don't get them enough now. Dan does his best, and so does Arnold Viersen, our MP.

Mrs. Cobick: Even if we did fly, once we land, we'd have a lack of rental cars...

Mrs. Kolebaba: Yeah, you wouldn't get anywhere.

Mrs. Cobick: ... or a hotel or lack of amenities for a rental car. Even if we did fly over, it's not as easy. It would be nice, but once you land, you don't have a rental car or accommodation.

Mr. Evans: Are there airports to land at?

Mrs. Kolebaba: There is. High Level: you can have out of there, but their flights are what?

Mrs. Cobick: Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday: High Level.

Mrs. Kolebaba: Yeah, it's not every day.

Mrs. Cobick: Again, you would need a vehicle or somebody to pick you up on the ground or a rental car. Actually, in our agreement we're really limited on rental vehicles. I think it's three times per year. Three or four. It's not a lot.

Mr. Evans: I'm thinking more in terms of charter. Are there other airports closer to these communities that are ...

Mrs. Cobick: You might find a landing strip, but not an airport.

Mr. Evans: Okay.

The Chair: Okay. Julian, any questions?

Dr. Martin: No, thank you.

Mr. Clark: No, thank you. I think it's: message received loud and clear. Thank you.

Mrs. Williams: Could I also add a comment that you'll notice here that we have a lack of public transportation. We have very limited bus service here. So even if an MLA could jump on a bus, if he's allowed, we don't have it. We don't have that kind of transportation. That is another limiting factor for us.

Mrs. Kolebaba: Anything else?
Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mrs. Kolebaba: A pleasure.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mrs. Kolebaba: Good luck with your dilemma.

Mr. Evans: We've heard that.

The Chair: Well, thank you to all the presenters for the information we received. I'll adjourn the public hearing now, but we'll be standing around if you want to talk to us informally.

By the way, the reference to section 3 of the Charter from a nonlawyer warms a judge's heart. Thank you. I assume you're not a lawyer. Thank you for referencing it because that is, overall, what the authorities use to guide us in our determination of effective representation.

Mrs. Williams: Could I just go on record?

The Chair: Oh, please come. Yeah.

Mrs. Williams: Sorry. I know you have adjourned, so I'm not sure if I'm allowed to go back.

The Chair: Yeah. Okay. We'll open it up.

Mrs. Williams: When you had asked me the question about the other Indigenous, Woodland Cree and all these things, I've sat back there and thought about it now, and I don't agree with that. I was looking at the map ...

The Chair: You don't agree with bringing them in?

Mrs. Williams: No. It would be too complicated with the four Indigenous representations that MLA Williams already has. To increase that amount of travel, again, would be huge. As Angela said, regardless of where Minister Williams could fly into, if he could, you would still be tacking on another two or three hours windshield time with a lack of communication in that area as well because there's a lot of dropped phone calls in that specific area, so that wouldn't work. I've just sat back there and wanted to clarify my opinion on that.

Mrs. Samson: I do think that's important.

The Chair: So Williams is the Peace River MLA.

Mrs. Williams: Yes. And Scott Sinclair is Lesser Slave Lake. He's part of our county as well just because of the way our county lines are.

Dr. Martin: Can I ask – we're off?

The Chair: So you want a sidebar?

Dr. Martin: Well, I just thought the meeting was adjourned.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you. We will adjourn now.

Mrs. Williams: Thank you for allowing me to speak again.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

[The hearing adjourned from 10:49 a.m. to 10:54 a.m.]

The Chair: Okay. Julian, you're very good at summarizing. Just summarize our discussion, and then I'll let the presenter respond.

Dr. Martin: Okay. We had a short hiatus from *Hansard* in which I initiated a discussion with the presenters around communications challenges and technology, focusing on Starlink opportunities, as it were, to shorten distances. I think all the presenters agreed that it's viable and desirable and occasionally affordable but not universally so.

We were also talking about other services, including the registries as businesses and how many of those were available, another way of looking at various services, and that southern folk – i.e., those who live on the other side of the Swan Hills – would see as ordinary parts of daily life. On these kinds of infrastructural issues and communication technology issues this area is pinched, and you're feeling that an increase in attention to these kinds of infrastructures and utilities would improve the ability of the people and its MLA to communicate more effectively with each other. Is that a correct summation of our off-*Hansard* conversation?

If any of you would like to speak further on this topic, the microphone is there. I mean, we have few opportunities as a commission to speak more broadly with presenters, so I would encourage you to pick up this particular theme of communication if you are willing to do so.

Thank you.

Mrs. Williams: Do you want my name again?

The Chair: Yeah, please.

Mrs. Williams: Corinna Williams, reeve, Northern Sunrise county. Minister Williams' portfolio within the government previously was Mental Health and Addiction. Up here mental health is strenuous, to try and get care. Our children alone are on a six-month waiting list. When you have a mental health crisis, you need the help now. You can't be told: we'll get you in in six months. These are the types of things that we advocate strongly for, and this is where we need that higher voice.

Mental health, especially for farmers – the last two or three years have been very strenuous on farmers, trying to get them help, trying to get them to speak about their mental crisis. The rate of suicides in young farmers is very high. If you look at the statistics, it's shocking. This is another area where we need our voices heard. You

can't have someone in a mental health crisis and have them drive five hours to be turned away because there's no room available, which is quite often what happens. That person is now put out on the street sometimes or returned back to a community again with no assistance. This is where the application again is very strong for us.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

The Chair: Anything further before we wrap up for a third time?

Ms Whitehead: Gaylene Whitehead, Northern Sunrise. I represent the Cadotte Métis. The other people I represented were the Lubicon before they became a reserve. The thing you have to know about the reserves and off-reserve is that people on the reserve have a lack of services. That's why we have to travel the extra distance to get out. For anything, even just to go get our driver's, medical, whatever, we have to drive the distance. For emergencies – there's no airport – we have to go to Grande Prairie and then to Edmonton. These are things that have to be considered.

There are two different kinds of services provided for different status people. That's why I say that the north has a lot of reserves plus ours, including the KTC. There are a lot of reserves up north and, I do believe, in the south. Like the mental health, you know, they look at people and they – when Dan was there for the mental health ministry, I told him: just include all the people; then you'll have your numbers for you to get a mental health recovery centre. Even though Grande Prairie is going to have one, we still need one in our area. We have little ones. We have addiction workers, NNADAP workers in our areas, but still the waiting is the main thing. Like Corinna said, the waiting time – you have to catch the person when they want to go, not six months later. They don't want to go after that. You have to catch the person at the exact moment when the desire is there.

This is the lack of services that we have up in the north. In Edmonton they can just go east or west, south or north to one of the recoveries, and they can get in. That's where we have to wait. We get on a waiting list even to go further south, and we even go to Fort McMurray. I just wanted to add that the different kinds of services are different.

Thank you.

11:00

The Chair: Okay. This is helpful to move us to the proper determination of effective representation. We're not the MLAs. We're not the representatives.

I'm going to go back and I'm going to ask you very specifically: are you suggesting that Peace River, electoral division 77, take in part of Northern Sunrise county, those five First Nations that we talked about at the beginning? Are you suggesting that it be expanded to that?

Ms Whitehead: I suggested Woodland and Lubicon because they're the closest to Peace River. The other ones are more distant.

Like I indicated, Peace River is our main area, and Slave Lake is too far.

The Chair: Okay. For the two.

Ms Whitehead: Yeah.

The Chair: So you would divide it between two and three, then?

Ms Whitehead: Yeah.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms Whitehead: I've always noticed that, and I say that we have to go vote in Slave Lake. A lot of the First Nations will not go to Peace River to vote, so that's why a lot of them don't vote. In Peace River it's closer for them to go vote.

The Chair: Yeah. See, that's where we're getting to effective representation.

Ms Whitehead: I'd rather go to Peace River than to Slave Lake myself because of the distance. I travel enough as it is. If I can shorten the distance, that would be good.

The Chair: Okay. Would you mind submitting a letter to us of your position?

Ms Whitehead: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

One more closing argument. Name again, please.

Mrs. Cobick: Angela Cobick, constituency manager for Peace River. My suggestion, if the commission is bound and determined to expand the riding geographically, would be to actually go southwest and include the village of Berwyn and also encompass, I guess, the rest of the MD of Peace. It's already split right now between our riding and Central Peace-Notley, so if you're looking for that extra, we'll say, 1,300 people with a minimum amount of drive time, that would be my suggestion.

The Chair: As an alternative to what we just heard?

Mrs. Cobick: Yes, correct.

The Chair: Okay. I think you all know the challenges that we face, then, just based on the presentations we heard this morning, so thank you. That's why I wanted to go back on the record, because we were losing some of that.

Okay. Thank you, everyone. For the final time, I am closing the public hearing at Peace River at 11:05. Thank you so much for coming and presenting and helping us along the way. Much appreciated.

[The hearing adjourned at 11:05 a.m.]



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

Grande Prairie

Tuesday, June 17, 2025
6:30 p.m.

Transcript No. 23

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission

Justice Dallas K. Miller, Chair

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Julian Martin

Susan Samson

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Manager of Corporate Communications

Supervisor of Communications Services

Managing Editor of *Alberta Hansard*

Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Grande Prairie

Public Participant

Bob Marshall, Reeve, County of Grande Prairie No. 1

6:30 p.m.

Tuesday, June 17, 2025

[Justice Miller in the chair]

The Chair: Good evening, everyone, and welcome to Grande Prairie's public hearing of the Electoral Boundaries Commission. First of all, thank you for coming this evening when we know there are conflicting demands on all of us. By way of introduction, my name is Justice Dallas Miller. I'm the chairman of the commission, and I also serve as a justice of the Court of King's Bench in southern Alberta, way down south in Lethbridge and Medicine Hat.

The other commissioners. To my left is Susan Samson, a long-time resident of Sylvan Lake and an experienced municipal politician who has served terms as councillor and mayor of Sylvan Lake and operated a private business with her husband for years. She's also the recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II diamond jubilee medal for her volunteer activity and has been named a citizen of the year in Sylvan Lake.

To her left is John Evans, KC, a lawyer with a province-wide firm known as Stringam. He works primarily out of the Lethbridge office and conducts trials across the province. His legal ability has been recognized by being awarded the King's Counsel designation, or KC. John also does some trials, I believe, up in this territory as well. John also volunteers as a member of the Alberta Judicial Nominating Committee.

To my right is Dr. Julian Martin, who is a retired history professor from the University of Alberta with advanced degrees from Cambridge University. Julian has volunteered on many committees in Sherwood Park and Edmonton area throughout his career and has also served on provincial quasi-judicial tribunals such as the Surface Rights Board and Land Compensation Board.

At the end of the table is Mr. Greg Clark, an entrepreneur and consultant focusing on information and knowledge management. Greg hails from Calgary, and he has the experience of being a member of the Legislature for Calgary-Elbow for one term. He, too, is a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II platinum jubilee medal and serves as chairman of the Balancing Pool of Alberta and consults and advises organizations widely relative to proper board governance.

We are your Electoral Boundaries Commission for Alberta. I would like to just go through a bit more of an introduction in terms of our task ahead. The legislation that governs our operation as a commission has been amended to provide for 89 electoral divisions rather than 87, so that is one big factor we must take into account in our work.

To give individuals some perspective as to what is before us, the timeline is helpful. As a commission we were established by the Speaker of the Legislature in late March of this year. We met a couple of times in April to discuss process, the program, and the schedule, and we commenced public hearings in late May. We've been going full strength in terms of touring the province since late May, and we will work this week and continue on Monday, next week, with our final day of virtual hearings. We have been to many communities, criss-crossing across the province, and this week we are dedicating to northern Alberta. We were in Peace River this morning, and we will be in Slave Lake tomorrow and Hinton and then to Red Deer.

Once we complete our public hearings, which will be next Monday, we begin deliberations as a commission. We will be meeting for three days next week to discuss proposals for the new boundaries, and we will be meeting no doubt throughout the summer, and eventually we will come up with an interim report. I shouldn't say "eventually." We will come up with an interim report, and that will be registered and filed with the Speaker of the

Legislature no later than late October of this year. That interim report is then subject to more public hearings and public feedback. We will receive that throughout November and December, and we will have a final round of public hearings then in January. That will then lead us up to a final report, which will be filed with the Speaker of the Legislature in late March.

As everyone in the audience knows, each constituency or electoral division or riding – all those terms are used interchangeably – elects one member of the Legislative Assembly. Voters in that division, or riding, do the voting for that member.

To give some perspective on what our task is, it's helpful to look back at the previous Electoral Boundaries Commission, which provided their final report in 2017. It's only eight years ago, but the world has changed a lot. Alberta has changed a lot over that time, and the contrast is helpful to illustrate the task that we have. In 2017 the Electoral Boundaries Commission, at that time, had an Alberta population of 4,062,609 people. That, averaged out over 87 ridings, came up with a mean average of 46,697. That's not the target number for each electoral division. The target number is a range of anywhere from minus 25 of that number to plus 25. Those figures are before you at 35,023 and 58,371.

Our situation this time around is a vastly increased population. The population that we will be relying on: the number is 4,888,723 Albertans, plus we have the 89 electoral divisions to deal with. The mean average then results in 54,929. Again, the target population is that range of minus 25, of 41,197, and up to 68,661.

The biggest factor, in addition to the change of electoral divisions, is the huge population increase. That growth has not been spread evenly across the province, so our task is to fashion and construct electoral boundaries after we hear from Albertans such that we can come up with effective representation across the province. That's the principle that we'll be relying on, not one person, one vote. We are not part of the American system. That is an American feature, not part of Canadian electoral law.

When we come up with our report, we will be working through several principles that are included in the legislation as guides for us. We will be dealing with the relative sparsity and density of population across the province. We will be dealing with issues such as community interests in each electoral division. Boundaries will be looked at or determined to some extent by geographic features. That's prominently in the rural areas. When I say "rural," that's outside of Calgary and Edmonton. That's a very rough definition of rural. Also, communication lines and transportation routes will serve as potential boundaries. Our task, ultimately, is to come up with understandable and clear boundaries for Alberta and for Albertans.

Finally, we will take into account other appropriate and important factors that we as a commission deem relevant. That's a catch-all phrase that will encompass any interesting or informative or helpful information we receive through the public hearing process. That, by way of background, is the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission, our mandate, and our schedule.

In view of that, we are here for Grande Prairie. Our first presenter will be Mr. Bob Marshall. Please come forward. Have a seat. We've got, obviously, lots of time, and we want to hear from you. Please identify yourself, where you live, and proceed with your presentation. Once you've completed your presentation, we will no doubt have questions and carry on a dialogue based on what you've told us.

6:40

Mr. Marshall: Well, thank you for allowing me to speak. I have actually met Greg Clark before. When he was leader of the Alberta

Party, he came up here to speak to municipalities. I am the reeve for the county of Grande Prairie. I live just outside of Grande Prairie, to the west, Wembley, on an acreage. With your presentation I do have some concerns around some of the guidelines, the criteria, and mainly how it's around population. We saw that the last time, and it seemed like it was primarily driven around population. When you look out historically – I'll probably get called on this from our history professor here – 100 years ago the population was primarily 80 per cent rural and 20 per cent urban because we were an agrarian society. Things have changed a lot in those 100 years. Now it's flipped, and it's 80 per cent or even more on the urban side. It seems like, with the immigration that we're experiencing, it's heavily populating into those larger centres.

The other one I'd like to highlight is effective representation. I would challenge the thought that an MLA in Calgary, their constituents, even though there is a higher density of population, can be 15 minutes away and walk to their MLA's office where, if I look in the north, if you look at the NADC area, which is Northern Alberta Development Council, we're 60 per cent of the province's land mass; we're only about 10 per cent of the population. But the resources that come out of the north, that feed the provincial revenue base from oil and gas to agriculture – in the northwest here there's more agricultural land than there is in all of Manitoba. From an agrarian base, oil and gas, forestry, and even tourism – how many of you have heard of Big Sam? Have any of you heard of Big Sam, the 1,000-pound pachyrhinosaurus skull, 72 million years old, that we excavated last fall?

Mrs. Samson: I did hear about it.

Mr. Marshall: We streamed it live. There are 1 in 25 households in Canada that saw it on one of the news feeds and 1 in 50 in Britain. Again, from a tourism aspect we have huge potential up here as well.

When you look at, again, some of our MLAs: it takes five hours to drive to their constituency office to see them versus being able to walk 15 minutes to see your MLA. Effective representation is more than just population. It's also: how can you engage with your community, and how do you represent the resources that your region is bringing to the province from a resource revenue?

Some of the other concerns are that an MLA in Edmonton or Calgary has one city council to deal with; the MLA that represents our region has the town of Wembley city council, the town of Beaverlodge, part of the city of Grande Prairie because that's split, the county of Grande Prairie, the MD of Greenview. There are five just for our MLA plus ag societies and different community groups. Again, in large centres you have one community group probably within your organization, where we have multiple ag societies, multiple community groups that your MLA in our region or in the north or in any rural area has to represent. The challenge is much greater for a rural MLA to have effective representation than it is in the larger centres.

Population is an important aspect of it. My concern is those numbers on the wall, when it's so heavily skewed: are we going to actually have proper representation in the rural areas and especially in the north? I look at Minister Loewen's riding right now. Basically, he's going from Fox Creek all the way up into Clear Hills county. It's a really challenging district that he has to look after and a lot of travel with that.

Again, 41,000. When you're looking at the north here, we have maybe 500,000 to 600,000 people total, and that's mainly concentrated around the city. The county of Grande Prairie has over 100,000 with the city and everything in it, and the other population base will be Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. There is another

probably 100,000 based around there. Then the rest of the population is distributed across the north, and that makes it even more challenging.

I really implore you to look at more than just those numbers. They're important. I don't disagree with that, but we really need to have proper representation for those rural areas, especially the resources that come out, so that we have the representation there so we can get the investment back into the region so that the money that is coming out from royalty revenue and everything else can feed the provincial coffers and we have the ability to manage them properly for the people that are in the area that are working in those regions versus someone in an ivory tower sitting in a downtown office building that doesn't know what is going on out in the more rural and remote areas.

I would really implore you to look at more than just what is on the board there with those numbers. I think it's important to all of the citizens within the province to look at that. I challenge this; I had the same concerns the last time, and it seems like at the last boundary review there was a number and it was primarily focused on the population. They weren't even willing to listen to anything else that came out. Their focus was, from my perception, from what I recall eight years ago – it was a long time, and my memory is not what it once was. What they were mandated to do by the government at the time was to look primarily at those numbers and come up with a balance of: how do you come up with those boundaries?

Again, I know that you look at community and there are other factors, but to me it seems like it's a subset of what you have to do with this. How do you look at this and then how do you balance everything else within it? I would challenge you to look at effective representation and have this as a piece of it but also those other factors. I believe they're key if you want effective representation for all Albertans within the Legislature.

Thank you for hearing me.

The Chair: I'm going to take the prerogative of the chair and quiz you, okay? Normally I let my fellow commissioners go. Just by way of explanation, effective representation can include several factors. The primary one is population, but it's not the only one. When we look at the two Grande Prairie ridings, the city, you're at a population of 50,852 now, and Grande Prairie-Wapiti is at 53,900, almost 54,000, so you're in the sweet spot there. That's not a problem.

We've been all over. Let me say a couple of things to you. Land doesn't vote. You talk about distances. How would you like to have seven different languages represented, none of them English, in your riding? What do you say to that?

Mr. Marshall: Well, I say that we have the same challenges in the north here because some of those immigrants are coming to our region as well. It's: how do we manage the influx and set those immigrants up for success within our region? We are short of skilled labour for a lot of the jobs that we require, so when we are bringing in these immigrants, whether they're – I'll give you an example. I have rental property in Wembley. Two years ago I had a young couple from Ontario. She's a nurse. He's a red seal welder. I forget where they were out of again, but he was working for the Coast Guard. He looked for: where's the best place to be a welder in Canada? Grande Prairie, Alberta. So they moved here. No jobs set up, two young kids, and they were here. Within three days he had a job lined up as a welder. She had already had a job as a nurse because we are short of those skilled labourers. That's just within Canada.

6:50

The next year, when they moved out, I had another couple from Quebec phone me looking for a place to stay because the vacancy rate is less than 1 per cent in our region. I've had immigrants for the work program that we have around the province to bring in immigrants, allowing that to come in. You have to pick and choose. I mean, the number of people that were applying for a place to rent was incredible. Great to be a landlord but challenging when you don't have a place to stay. Again, we have those same challenges, maybe not to the same extent, same volume as what the cities are seeing, but we're still seeing those immigrants come to our region as well.

To the numbers: yes, we're sitting pretty good, but like I said, the two population centres are us and Wood Buffalo in the north. The rest are going to have a hard time meeting those numbers. How are you going to have proper representation, especially as it's being driven up by population? The people are coming into Calgary, primarily, but people are starting to move from Calgary to Red Deer and then up to Edmonton as well as Calgary getting flooded.

We're trying to get people up here, but, again, how do we make sure that they're successful? How can we set them up for success so that they can integrate and they can help the economy and be successful in the community versus – I mean, the one documentary I saw on CBC a couple of years ago, the amount of immigration we've had over the last two years: more people are leaving because they're not seeing the success. They're sold a dream but they're not able to realize that dream, so they're turning around and they're leaving just about as fast as they're coming in. We've had record immigration, but people aren't able to see that success that they're being sold. That's a challenge that we have, and we have an abundance up here.

I mean, you're up in Peace River. In my opinion, it's one of the best places to live. It's colder than hell in the winter, but – yeah; okay – we can golf just about 24/7. We're getting close to that day if you want to go out. So there are lots of different things that draw people here.

Again, I put it back. Yes, we have that same issue here, maybe not to the same extent around languages and stuff. We're all seeing it across the province.

The Chair: You've given us some nice, handy statistics, 60 per cent of the land mass, 10 per cent of the population. What latitude are you using north for the land mass, roughly?

Mr. Marshall: I believe it's around Westlock. If you pull up the map, you can look at the NADC map for Alberta, and it'll show you where that boundary goes. I believe it's just south of Whitecourt, and it kind of goes along. It covers Cold Lake.

The Chair: Okay. Do you have an idea of the percentage of, say, resource development or tax revenue?

Mr. Marshall: Well, I can talk about wonder valley – that's Kevin O'Leary's AI data centre – \$70 billion. The total build-out on that, if it gets to completion, will be a quarter of a trillion dollars because the \$70 billion is just for the power generation and the infrastructure to support all the AI, the electronics, and everything that goes in the building. The vast majority of that is going to be in the buildings itself. That in itself will be a wealth of knowledge.

The amount of resource revenue coming out from south of here in the Montney, Duvernay, into the Greenview area and even into my region – I can take you out and within half a mile of my place I've got Archer. I've got CNRL. I've got Ovitiv all around me with

multiwell pads. Do I have the specific numbers? Actually, that's one thing the RMA, Rural Municipalities of Alberta, has been trying to get, the information from the government to actually see what is the total resource revenue that's coming out and feeding the coffers for the province so that we can help. It's another way of saying: look, this is what we're giving to the province; we need some investment back into our region around road infrastructure, hospitals.

Mr. Evans: It'd be on an MD-by-MD basis, the revenue?

Mr. Marshall: It could be. Again, the province should have a lot under the treasury and stuff, have those exact numbers and stuff. They would know that. Sometimes it is a challenge to get that information from them, but we know it's in the billions of dollars.

The Chair: Do you have access to people in the executive of the association?

Mr. Marshall: We try to work with our MLA to get them to get the information for us. Actually, Minister Horner is going to be here on Thursday, so I plan on having a discussion with him.

The Chair: Can we give you some homework and see if you can get that information for us and submit it or have someone submit it to us in due course?

Mr. Marshall: If I can. We've been trying this for a year, so if I can get it, yes, I will. Yes.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you. I've monopolized enough.
Mr. Evans, any questions or comments?

Mr. Evans: No. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay.
Susan.

Mrs. Samson: Yes. Thank you for coming out. I have a real concern, the same as yours, that the northern ridings – more than just Grande Prairie, Grande Prairie-Wapiti, Central Peace-Notley but also Lesser Slave Lake – are really challenged. I don't know if you know, but stop me if you know. We have another tool in the act that outlines the boundary commission, the things we can do. That's what I was messing with my papers about. It says that we can have up to four proposed electoral divisions that share a boundary with the province, and their populations are extremely low. That's what we're faced with right now with Central Peace-Notley and Lesser Slave Lake.

Can you talk to me about that connection, that cross-trading, the importance of having every one of those MLAs in place? Like, don't let me put words in your mouth. How important is that, to have all those ridings in place with MLAs?

Mr. Marshall: I believe it's very important. Otherwise, I wouldn't be here. Again, Todd's riding, which is Central Peace-Notley – originally he's from the Valleyview area. I mean, when he first got elected as Wildrose, this riding was split into two. The city was split into two, and we had the Wapiti, and then I can't remember what they were called back then, but it got split. Todd ended up with that long – it covered Valleyview, and then the city was primarily the city riding itself. Then some of that was broken out to cover into the Wapiti riding under Ron Wiebe right now.

Again, if I look at the city of Edmonton, you can be engaged with your people. You know what's going on in the community. You

know exactly what the heartbeat is, what's going on in Edmonton and Calgary. When Todd has to go from Fox Creek to Valleyview to Falher and all those small communities all the way up to Clear Hills county, it makes it a lot more challenging to know. For that MLA, the workload on those MLAs becomes more. Are you really having a proper representation?

I know you plan on going from 87 to 89. I'd like to see them in the north myself. We don't need it around here, but I'm looking – again, another massive revenue stream that comes out of Fort McMurray. You're going to Slave Lake with what's coming out of the Nipisi. I used to live in Slave Lake. My sister still lives in Slave Lake. What's coming out of the Nipisi field there is another huge boon from the royalty stream to the province, and they've got, I think, three different sawmills and lumber facilities in that region as well, and there's a pulp mill there.

There's a lot of resource revenue that comes out, but we need the proper representation. If the MLAs are not familiar, if they're having a hard time to connect with the community because it's so broad, it just makes it that much more challenging than it is. Like I said, when you can walk 15 minutes, you don't have to drive to your constituency office in the cities and stuff. It's just that.

We're very fortunate to be where we're at. No disagreement. I'm very fortunate that we meet the criteria and stuff and that we have the representation we do. I'm talking for the whole north because I truly believe that if we do this right even though it may not fall within those guidelines, we're going to benefit all of Alberta by having this set up properly so that we have proper representation.

7:00

Mrs. Samson: Thank you very much.

Mr. Marshall: You're welcome.

The Chair: Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you. Yeah. Just to set your mind at ease, you're correct on those numbers from way back. That proportion didn't change for a long time, actually, and then it just skyrocketed, obviously.

You're not the first person to tell us in the last three weeks about huge distances and how that negatively impacts effectiveness of representation, which obviously is the core purpose of this enterprise. You're not the first person to talk about the difficulties that the MLA is put to because of the huge distances. The logistical effort is mission critical and impacts the budget and all sorts of things in significant ways.

Loads of MLAs have to talk to tons of councils, but here it's the distances. I think you're quite right about the two great economic centres being here and at Fort McMurray. We heard much the same story in Fort McMurray, incidentally, about the challenges of distance. I mean, they only have two roads in and out. You don't really have all that many more roads either when you come down to it; you have to go past Fox Creek one way or another.

I am interested, first off, in the fact that there is growth here in population and that people have come more than they've left. To that, you and all your colleagues are to be much credited for building communities where people wish to live. Both the EDs of immediate consequence here to this hearing, Grande Prairie itself and Grande Prairie-Wapiti, are examples of resource-rich and active communities. I'm glad for that.

The numbers all bear out what we would look at if we were plain lazy, and we're not. We agree with you, I think. I know we agree with you that the population can't be the primary driver, and I think it was highly emphasized last time, but we take the act as a package.

The legislators in their wisdom have said that anything, including all these factors, is normal and healthy, so don't just run after a target. We've been pestering all our speakers on any number of topics that might seem obscure on a simple reading of the act. As far as our attentiveness to your anxiety, please rest assured that we are attentive, too.

The difficulty for us remains pretty clear. I mean, even if we accepted – I don't know what we would have to accept, but still we have to live within that actually quite generous vision that the legislation provides us. If we could give everybody more MLAs or double their travel budget – well, we can recommend it, but it's not in our hands.

Mr. Marshall: The worst thing the province did was get rid of its airplanes. That's the worst thing they did.

Dr. Martin: Yeah. I was very shocked about the airplanes.

The Chair: We just talked about that.

Dr. Martin: It's shocking. You know, we can express shock and dismay, but we can't demand it in our report. I think that's all I have to say.

Thank you.

Mr. Marshall: Actually, if I may respond to some of what you said. You talked about some of the population. In our region we just did a census, both us and the city. The city is sitting at just, I believe, 70,000 now. I know the county just did one. We were at, I believe, around 21,000; we're just under 27,000 now. We just finished it last year. Our age demographic is, I believe, in the low to mid-30s. I think ours is a little higher than the city's. I think the city's is kind of 32-33. Don't quote me for these. I know it's in that range, but I can't remember the specifics on that. So we are a very young demographic.

I know that within the legislation you are bound by the act. You have to follow it. You have guidelines to follow. I will, again, challenge the board. Within your report, looking at the challenges, that number hasn't changed around population; it was the same the last time other than the numbers have changed itself, but the guideline is 25 per cent within the mean average. That's a statistical number, and they looked at that. But I'm hoping that we can convince you to see that if we continue down this path, the representation for the rural areas, especially if we continue with the population growth towards going into large urban centres, is going to be even more and more challenging. And trying to meet those numbers and still have effective representation is going to be just about impossible. I would hope that, even within that report, you would make a recommendation that they look at this and have it changed because I don't think it's relevant anymore. Going forward in the future, it's going to cause more issues than the way it's currently worded, especially around the population.

The Chair: Sorry. What should be changed?

Mr. Marshall: Looking at that population number, just saying that: okay; it's got to be the average. There are this many people in the province; here's the average. There are this many ridings, 89 ridings, so if it's divided out, this is now the average that should be in the ridings, plus or minus 25 per cent, right?

The Chair: I don't want to leave you with any false hope. That would be very unlikely to me.

Mr. Marshall: No. It's up to the government to make that change. I had wanted, after the last electoral boundary review, to get in front of the government so that that change could be made, for them to look at it because it's got to be made at the provincial legislative level. It's not at your level, but you can make that recommendation as to – I believe that you can point out that there could be an issue going forward if you continue with this criteria that you have to look at.

The Chair: I don't want you to leave with any false hopes. We cannot touch that minus 25, plus 25. We can make exceptions under section 15(2), but that has a long, long history and it's endorsed by the Supreme Court of Canada, so we can't really adjust those numbers. That's what I'm saying. You know, that gives us the flexibility.

Mr. Marshall: I'm not asking you to adjust the numbers. I'm asking you to make a recommendation to the legislative body that if we continue with the criteria that's set out here, the next time around it's going to be even more challenging to do that.

Mrs. Samson: Can I just say it in my own way so that we're on the same page?

The Chair: Yes.

Mrs. Samson: As the population in the province increases, we know that it's going into Calgary, Edmonton, and, well, in this case, Airdrie, too. Those numbers grow exponentially and make it impossible for the rural northern ridings to meet the criteria.

Mr. Marshall: Or even some of the southern ridings.

Mrs. Samson: Yeah. We see that in Drumheller.

That's the concept. The number now, this year, that this commission is dealing with is a number of 55,000, plus or minus, but that number is only going to grow in eight years when the commission meets again and the challenge is that instead of having two ridings that fall below the 25 per cent, it could be three.

Mr. Marshall: Or even more.

Mrs. Samson: Or more because it's the nature of growth and the nature of how this is.

Mr. Marshall: The way the demographic population is going has changed over the last 100 years. It's a more technological society than it is a hands-on, in-the-field working society.

The Chair: But because it's a percentage, it grows.

Mr. Marshall: When I look in the north, we're not growing as fast. I mean, we are in our area, and we will maybe be okay in the Grande Prairie area and maybe in the Wood Buffalo area, but as soon as you get up to Peace River and into High Level – I look at Minister Williams. He's got all the way from Peace River right to the Northwest Territories border. It's pretty challenging. Again, the population isn't there, and it's not growing that fast unless something – actually, I'll double-check that. If you look at the La Crête area, they're pumping out babies left, right, and centre.

7:10

Mrs. Samson: We just talked about that. We were just told that.

Mr. Marshall: Maybe it won't change there.

The Chair: We have section 15(2), which is that special category.

Mr. Marshall: But it's still limited as to what you can do there, right?

The Chair: There's a limit of four, and we've only used two.

Mr. Marshall: But my concern is that if it continues this way, those four won't even come close to managing when you look at the full – like, if we continue on that way, I think it needs to be looked at through a different lens. I am imploring you to at least make those recommendations, that they look at that going forward.

The Chair: Okay.
Sorry.

Mr. Clark: Not at all. I think it's important stuff.

Mr. Marshall, thank you for coming. It's good to see you again. I have a few questions. I hear you. Absolutely. I mean, it's really striking just spending time here, right? First off, I always love coming to the Grande Prairie area. Like, it's part of the reason that we've met a few times. It's always just good to kind of come up here.

I'm also struck by coming to Grande Prairie having been in Peace River. Like, there's a big difference, right? It's a city, a proper city. You know, as a result, like you say, there's some growth here, but even then the growth is still lagging the rest of the province a bit. I think you're right in terms of the trajectory over time.

You know, the other thing I agree with completely is that the folks from other parts of the world and lots of people from other parts of the country – one fascinating stat I heard the other day is that the city of Toronto itself is shrinking. There are actually fewer people there now than there were five or 10 years ago, and where are they coming? Alberta, almost exclusively. You're right; Calgary tends to grow first and then gets a little priced out or houses are not available, Edmonton – we're seeing that in the population numbers, and I would argue Grande Prairie and area should be a magnet as well because there's a ton of opportunity here.

Just to give you a sense of the scale of what we're talking about, if we add together the Central Peace-Notley and Lesser Slave Lake constituencies, that's 56,000 and some-odd people. Calgary-North East has 85,000 people. This is the kind of juggling act we have, right? As Justice Miller says, we have some legal parameters of what we have to stay within, but then we also have folks in other parts of the province saying: "Hey, wait a minute. That's not fair. I need representation, too."

Again, just to go full circle back to what you're saying, effective representation and the flexibility we have as a panel and the Canadian construct are that it isn't just one person, one vote. If this was the U.S.: too bad, so sad. That's just the way it is. We're just going to go 89 divided by 4.8 million, and that's it, regardless of what that does geographically. Fortunately, we don't have to do that, so we do have some flexibility. I guess that's probably what I wanted to make sure we're clear on.

With that, I'm interested in the two Grande Prairie constituencies. Last time I think it was Grande Prairie-Smoky and Grande Prairie-Wapiti, if I'm not mistaken, right? They were split. The city Grande Prairie was split in half.

Mr. Marshall: It was one east and one west.

Mr. Clark: One east and one west.

This time we now have one fully urban Grande Prairie and then one partial Grande Prairie and rural surrounds. How does that work? How is it working for you?

Mr. Marshall: Well, actually, between the municipalities, between us, the city and the MD of Greenview, we've got a partnership around economic development. We call it Invest NW. We work very well together. One of the things we've noticed when we've gone down to CERAWEEK and other large conventions and stuff is that most of those players want to see that municipalities are working together. They don't want to go into where there's a war. It's not good investment practice. The same as our MLAs are working well with us. We work together with those two MLAs because they recognize that we're stronger as a region, especially if we have to go to the provincial government.

I also sit on and I'm the chair of the Water North Coalition. This is all of the NADC area for all of northern Alberta. It's around our water, waste-water operators, and anything to do with water and waste water. Again, we're 10 per cent of the population. When you have a small community going to the province, are they going to listen to you?

Part of the reason we created this coalition was: let's have a unified voice from the north to go to the province to talk about what our issues are around water, waste water, whether it's operators, succession planning, getting resources, water for life, AMWWP, capital investment, and stuff. We recognize that we are stronger working together as a region and promoting what we have here than we are if we're going off one on one. I believe our MLAs, from what I've seen, are onboard with us, and they recognize that. That's one of our strengths. Why we've got what we have is because of that unified front and working together for the benefit of our people up here.

Mr. Clark: I've certainly had a bit of experience on that regional economic development piece. I agree with you one hundred per cent. There are a lot of horror stories where potential companies come and they find that there's infighting and they just want nothing to do with it. I agree with you completely, and kudos for doing that. I think that's the way to go.

Where you do have maybe differences of just emphasis or focus: you've got one MLA that's working on Grande Prairie sort of city issues and then one MLA that's working on those city and rural issues. How is that working? Is that working, where you've got MLA Dyck, who is Grande Prairie, and MLA Wiebe, who is Grande Prairie-Wapiti? It sounds like they work pretty well together and with the different municipalities. Is that effective when you've got one that focuses just on the city?

Mr. Marshall: Because we're working as a unit – this is our number one priority for the region, and we push that number one priority. We're all speaking from the same song sheet. It's not that the city is doing their thing. We may when it gets to some other smaller stuff, but when it comes to the larger – highway 40X; to get a connector around the city so we get all that heavy traffic out of the city coming up from the south. Everything, all the dangerous goods have to go straight through the city. We're the only city in the province that that happens in. So that's our number one priority for all municipalities and our MLAs.

Maskwa Medical Centre, electrical distribution: another thing we're working with Minister Neudorf on. If you look at our area, we've lost businesses. One of our councillor's brother had a nitrogen plant in Clairmont. He shut it down because it's cheaper to ship it in from B.C. We've lost the Alberta advantage in the north from power distribution. We're paying just about three times the distribution costs than what we are in Edmonton and Calgary and southern Alberta. It makes a huge difference when you're trying to get these large players up here from a business standpoint.

We're all singing from the same song sheet. So it's not that the city is doing their thing, and MLA Dyck is supporting them. We're all together, and we're supporting the same aspect to move forward.

Mr. Clark: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Marshall: The other thing, too, from an economic development standpoint, is that we're 100,000 here. But if you look at the retail resources they have here, with the Costco, the Walmart, and all the other stores, yeah, we don't have as many as the cities do, Edmonton and Calgary. Like, they'll have four or five. But we have pretty much everything that the larger centres do. The city services an area of about 300,000 to 350,000 people. On Fridays you'll watch the B.C. plates coming in from Dawson and Fort St. John; on Sunday they're all going back home and then even north and stuff. The area that we service from a retail servicing standpoint is huge as well.

Mr. Clark: Okay. I have one more question if the judge will indulge. Looking to the east, then – you mentioned Minister Loewen's constituency of Central Peace-Notley. One of our sort of challenges there – and as the justice mentioned, we can go plus or minus 50 per cent on some of those. Central Peace-Notley is one of them, but it's right close to that line. If we needed to borrow, if you will, parts of another constituency, perhaps Grande Prairie-Wapiti or somewhere else, are there kind of natural spots there? If I look along – what was that? – highway 43, like you say, or elsewhere. If we needed to add a little bit into Central Peace-Notley from . . .

Mr. Marshall: Currently they're using the Smoky River as the west boundary.

Mr. Clark: It looks like. Yeah. Exactly. So a little bit west of that, does it make any sense at all for any of those communities or that part of the province to kind of cut into Central Peace-Notley? Or any other thoughts on that entire constituency? I know it's a fairly big one. If we need to expand that a bit to bump up that population, do you have any suggestions how we might want to look at doing that?

7:20

Mr. Marshall: Well, I mean, if you come west, you're going to chip into the county. But, again, Todd is another one that we work quite closely with as well. We have a pretty good working relationship with most of our MLAs. If it did move across, if that boundary got changed a bit to keep Todd viable, I don't think people would have a problem with it. I'm only going to speak for myself.

Mr. Clark: It's a tough question. I think the big message I'm hearing from you – make sure I've got this right, though – is that the folks up north and in this region work closely together. We draw lines on a map. We've got counties. We've got cities. We've got constituencies. We've got reserves. There are lots of different . . .

Mr. Marshall: Even Martin Long cuts into the MD of Greenview. He's on the southern part of MD of Greenview, and we've got Ron on the northern side. So, I mean, even that municipality – it's a large municipality, mind you – is cut into sections as well. If it got moved, so be it. If it makes sense to do that, then I don't see a problem. Then we've got three MLAs that we can hammer on.

Mr. Clark: That's good. That's really helpful. Thank you so much.

The Chair: Mr. Marshall, the really neat part of this exercise that we're on as a commission is that we touch on the philosophical

basis of what a democratic system looks like. You touched on that a little bit, the rule of minus 25, plus 25, okay? I mean, when you get down to it, how do we run ourselves as democracies? That's the neat little philosophical, if you like it, and I think you touched on that a little bit. But then we've got to get intensely practical. Like, where do the lines go, and how does it impact, you know, members of the Legislature? How does it impact the voters, and what type of voters does it impact?

Now we're on the tail end of our public hearings across the province, and I was struck by the distaste for anything suggesting a hybrid or a blended riding in some of the places we visited. They did not want to be mixing rural and urban people at all. By the look on your face, you betray your thought process: how can you not get along that way, right?

Mr. Marshall: You're shooting yourself in the foot if you can't get along with your neighbours. You know what? The only . . .

The Chair: Well, I mean, in fairness, it's bigger cities. They don't think they have common interests with, maybe, people on the fringes of their municipality.

Mr. Marshall: I would challenge that. Who is looking at that? Is it your municipal leaders?

That's one thing we had to get out of ourselves. Our constituents don't care where the municipal boundaries are. No different than where those boundaries are. All the people on the ground want is for you to do your job as a municipal leader or even a provincial leader and provide them the services and the quality of life and look after them. They don't give a rat's patootie about where the boundaries are. For those communities that are looking at that, I would say that it's only the municipal leaders that know where those boundaries are. I know where the boundaries are, but 90 per cent of the people don't. I didn't know where the boundaries were until I got into politics.

The Chair: In response to the issue of whether blended or hybrid ridings are helpful or effective, you would probably vote yes for that, right?

Mr. Marshall: Yeah. Well, we had it before. The city was split into two. The city may have had a different perspective in the past because the city and the county were like this in the past. We are not like that anymore.

The Chair: I'm struck by the fact that no one from the city government is here.

Mr. Marshall: Yeah. I was surprised, actually, because Aquatera, our water utility – we just had the AGM and the meeting there, so I just left the mayor and the other mayors.

The Chair: Grande Prairie is not unique. Province-wide we have not had a lot of representatives from municipal governments.

But let me throw one other thing to you. As we look at how previous Electoral Boundaries Commissions have looked at solving the challenge, especially historically, it's always been rural, urban, rural, urban, rural, urban, and urban means Calgary and Edmonton. We have those two different terms. I'm struck by the fact that that is the wrong terminology and that rural and urban do not constitute urban being Calgary and Edmonton and rural, everything else. We have now got a province that probably needs four descriptors at least and more regional focus and looking at effective representation. We saw that a little bit in the south, and we are

certainly seeing it up north. So I guess I'm throwing that out. Would you agree with me on that?

Mr. Marshall: On looking at things differently?

The Chair: With at least four different terms instead of just two, rural and urban.

Mr. Marshall: Help me understand what your four terms would be. I am open to it personally.

The Chair: I guess maybe the three: Calgary and Edmonton, hybrid, and rural.

Mr. Marshall: Yeah. I don't see a problem with it. Again, if you look at what people want on the ground, it's mainly people in my position or in your position that would understand what those boundaries are. Most people don't. I do have some people thinking – and that was part of the problem in the past, where the city and the county were like: the city wants this. There was that, and there's still some of that. But it's the leaders at the top that are starting to change that because the leaders were part of the problem in the past. So if we change it at our level, then we can drive that change and show the people that it's better to be a unified front than it is to go at each other. It's not constructive, and it's not conducive to anything good.

The Chair: Okay. Anything arising from that?

Well, thank you very much, Mr. Marshall. Thank you for your written submission as well. It's obvious that you've thought about this for some time, processed it, and you have flown the flag for this region very well. Aside from my comment that “we ain't gonna touch and we're not even going to recommend a change of the minus 25 and plus 25,” we will take your comments into consideration.

Mr. Marshall: Which ministry does this fall under?

The Chair: We're actually under the Speaker of the Legislature.

Mr. Marshall: So it's Mr. McIver now? Okay. I know Ric quite well.

The Chair: Yeah. We will submit the report, and then, as I maybe didn't say so clearly, when the final report gets submitted, it's up to the government to take our recommendations and implement them, tweak them, change them, or establish the boundaries.

Mr. Marshall: I understand the criteria you're under, and just at my level I need to speak to our representatives and see if they can start pushing that, to look at things differently. I know there are larger problems when it gets to the federal level and stuff, but I really think that for the benefit in the long term we need to start looking at things and be prepared for what is coming our way and looking ahead versus not being prepared.

The Chair: Please consider doing that homework for us and getting resource numbers to us if you could.

Mr. Marshall: I will see what I can find out for you guys, and I will send it to Susan because I have her card.

The Chair: Good.

Okay. We will adjourn this evening's public hearing. Thank you again for presenting, Mr. Marshall.

Thank you. We'll adjourn.

[The hearing adjourned at 7:30 p.m.]



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

Slave Lake

Wednesday, June 18, 2025
12:57 p.m.

Transcript No. 24

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission

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Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Slave Lake

Public Participants

Mike Skrynyk, President, Lesser Slave Lake UCP Constituency Association

Ken Vanderwell, Vice-president, Lesser Slave Lake UCP Constituency Association

12:57 p.m.

Wednesday, June 18, 2025

[Justice Miller in the chair]

The Chair: Well, good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to the afternoon session of the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission here in Slave Lake. I thank you for coming. We've got a cozy room and just the right size for it. By way of introduction, my name is Justice Dallas Miller. I'm the chairman of the commission.

I want to take a moment to introduce the rest of the commission. To my left is Susan Samson, a long-time resident of Sylvan Lake and an experienced municipal council member and former mayor of Sylvan Lake. Susan and her husband operated a business in that community for some time. She has volunteered prolifically in that community and has received recognition by way of citizen of the year award and by receiving the Queen Elizabeth II diamond jubilee medal.

Next to Susan is Mr. John Evans, KC, a lawyer from Lethbridge, Alberta, with the firm Stringam. That firm is a province-wide firm. John focuses his litigation practice in Lethbridge but also has tried cases throughout the north. John's legal ability has been recognized by way of him receiving the KC, or King's Counsel, designation, and he also volunteers on the Alberta Judicial Nominating Committee.

To my right is Dr. Julian Martin, a retired history professor from the University of Alberta. Dr. Martin received his advanced degrees from Cambridge University. He has volunteered on many committees and with many organizations in Edmonton and now in his home city of Sherwood Park.

I should have indicated that I'm from southern Alberta: Lethbridge, Medicine Hat. We consider Sherwood Park north, but, as a result of this week, I realize it's not.

Next to Dr. Martin is Greg Clark, an entrepreneur and consultant who focuses on information and knowledge management. Greg hails from Calgary and has served one term as a Member of the Legislature of Alberta for Calgary-Elbow. He, too, is a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II medal. He serves currently as chairman of the Balancing Pool of Alberta, and he consults widely with various organizations and corporations in terms of board governance.

We are your Electoral Boundaries Commission. We wanted to make sure you had some background as to who we are and where we are from.

The task of our commission is to come up with a new set of boundaries, largely because of two reasons. First of all, the Legislature has instructed us to provide for 89 electoral divisions rather than the current 87, so we're adding two electoral divisions to the province.

To help everyone understand the process that we're going through, leading up to the second issue that we must deal with as a commission, it's helpful to look at the timeline. We as a commission were appointed by the Speaker of the Legislature in late March of this year. We spent time in April in a couple of meetings discussing process and the schedule. Then we began our public hearings in late May, and since late May we've been travelling the province. We've been everywhere, man, as the country song says. This is towards the end of our tour, and next Monday will be our last day of public hearings conducted virtually in Edmonton. After we've completed our public hearings, we will take the submissions that we've heard, the legislation that we've been instructed to follow, and the population data that we will be looking at, and our task then is to come up with a report. That report has come to be known as an interim report, and that is due in late October of this year.

When that's completed, we will file that with the Speaker of the Legislature. It will immediately become public, and the public will have a chance to respond starting the end of October. We will then hear submissions throughout November and December through our website and then conduct a series of further public hearings in January. After that round of public hearings we then address the task of finishing the report and creating a final report. What we come up with in late October will be amenable to response and correction and criticism and public input. We have a timeline of one year from the time we were appointed in late March. We have to file our final report in late March 2026.

Now, as you all know, one member from each electoral division or riding is represented in the Legislative Assembly, and only voters in that constituency have the right to elect that person.

To give some context of the work that we're doing, it's helpful to compare our work to the last work of an Electoral Boundaries Commission. Eight years ago, in 2017, the previous Electoral Boundaries Commission issued its report, and it is the boundaries that they recommended that we're living under and we have lived under in Alberta for the last eight years and effectively the last two general elections.

The population is a key element of what goes into the report. In 2017 the commission at that time relied on an Alberta population of slightly over 4 million people. Specifically, they used the figure of 4,062,609. They divided that by the number of electoral divisions and came up with a mean average of 46,697 per electoral division. That's not our target population. Our target population is rather the range of minus 25 to plus 25, approximately 35,000 to just over 58,000. That's the 2017 commission.

Our task for this commission is to rely on a population number – and we've used population numbers that have been verified by Statistics Canada from the last decennial census in 2021 and updated regularly by Statistics Canada and updated and verified by the Alberta Treasury Board Office of Statistics and Information. As of July 2024 the population of Alberta is 4,888,723. You divide that by the number of electoral divisions of 89, and we come up with a mean average of 54,929, almost 55,000. Again, the target range is minus 25 per cent of that to plus 25 per cent, so approximately 41,000 to almost 69,000.

1:05

In addition to expanding the number of ridings, another huge factor in terms of us completing our report is the huge population growth across the province. The population growth, however, has not been spread evenly across all the electoral divisions, so our task is to go through that population data, realizing where it is, and come up with a plan that provides Albertans with what has come to be known as effective representation. In Alberta and in Canada we do not operate on the principle of one person, one vote. Rather, we strive for effective representation.

In determining that, we have several factors to consider, and these factors are all spelled out in the legislation. We consider primarily, first and foremost, the relative density and sparsity of population across the province. We also look at areas of common community interest; geographic features, most appropriate in areas outside the large cities; communication lines and transportation routes across the province also serve to help us draw boundaries. Our task is to create understandable and clear boundaries for Albertans.

In addition to the factors that I just listed, the legislation provides us with the right to use any other appropriate factors or information that we as a commission deem useful. That's kind of a catch-all phrase, and that phrase, in essence, captures what we're hearing at public hearings and what we expect to receive in terms of written

submissions. At this stage we are interested in hearing from Albertans, and we've heard a lot from various individuals.

That, surprisingly, is photoshopped. No, it isn't. This was our stop in Peace River a couple of days ago.

That's the map of Alberta currently with the 87 boundaries in it. By the time we've completed our report, we're going to create a new map with 89 electoral divisions.

That is an introduction to your commission. We have opened this up for the public, and today we have Mr. Ken Vanderwell scheduled and registered to present.

Mr. Vanderwell, can you just please come forward?

Mr. Vanderwell: I did have one question. I didn't hear you cover it. Is it okay to ask questions?

The Chair: Oh, sure. Come forward and have a seat.

Mr. Vanderwell: Oh, okay.

The Chair: Yeah. Introduce yourself, tell us where you're from, and then, yeah, proceed with the question. Questions are allowed; answers are not guaranteed.

Mr. Vanderwell: My question was on the two new electoral divisions. Has it already been written in stone where they're going to be at?

The Chair: No. It's in wet cement.

Mr. Vanderwell: Okay. But we kind of have a bit of an idea on population growth, when it happens.

The Chair: Yes. We've not made any determination, but we will start that process in late June after we've finished all the public hearings.

Mr. Vanderwell: I have two questions for the folks here.

The Chair: It warms our hearts when we see a presenter bring out maps, sir, so thank you.

Mr. Vanderwell: Oh, yeah. Okay. There we are.

Mrs. Samson: Great. Thanks.

The Chair: Sorry. One other thing I should say in relation to this particular area of the province is the provision under what we call section 15(2) of the legislation. You've already cued on to that, sir, so I'll let you tell us what you want us to hear in your presentation.

Mr. Vanderwell: Okay. I appreciate being with you all today. Again, my name is Ken Vanderwell. I'm a long-time resident of Slave Lake. I'm also the vice-president of the Lesser Slave Lake UCP Constituency Association. Our president is here with us as well, Mike Skrynyk. We're basically newly elected into the constituency here, so great to be with you today.

I'm making a submission to the commission today in support of leaving the existing boundaries of the Lesser Slave Lake electoral division where they're at. I actually will be giving you a copy of what I'm saying here today, so you won't have to scribble too much.

The Chair: Good. Thank you.

Mr. Vanderwell: There is, of course, a great fear that this constituency could be split up and added to existing constituencies to the west and east of us. Indeed, I do know that our small population base of around 27,500 is at the threshold of 50 per cent

of the proposed quotient average of about 55,000, which could lead one to that conclusion. However, there are a number of reasons why I believe the electoral boundaries should not be altered.

The first one is the geographical properties of our area. The bulk of the Lesser Slave Lake constituency follows existing municipal district boundaries, and it's roughly contained within the boreal forested area of the province, which is the second map that I've given you; this is called the green zone and the white zone. This is put out by the government of Alberta. I've highlighted on there the same electoral boundaries, just showing that it is a forested area and a resource area for the province of Alberta.

The green zone is recognized as containing highly integrated provincial forest resources such as lumber, pulp, and OSB, that have been developed by companies across the constituency, and of course timber dues are a source of revenue to the government of Alberta. Additionally, oil and gas development within our borders is well documented and occurs on this same land base. The oil and gas resources that flow from our constituency contribute significantly to the GDP of Alberta in the form of royalties, and significant jobs are generated by the resource sectors for the population within the constituency.

On both our west and east flanks of our constituency the green zone gives way to the white zone, and the white zone contains agricultural-suited lands for the farming sector. On the south flank, when we go south here, the constituency gives way to Swan Hills, and Swan Hills has quite a few geographical differences than down here; I call it down in the lake valley. Lesser Slave Lake itself and the tourism and fishing it affords are almost in the middle of our constituency. And heading north, we encompass our First Nation and our Métis friends and their communities in the boreal forest.

On a revenue basis our large boreal forest remote area is suited for resource development, and it is my belief that it should be kept intact to facilitate and enable that to continue. Splitting up the constituency could and likely would lead to competing scenarios on artificially imposed boundaries versus the natural geographic boundaries that are in existence.

The second reason the constituency should not be altered is access within our area. Unlike rural farmland in the white zone of the province, where there is a road probably every mile or two, our constituency has few public roads and many kilometres between communities and major centres that are contained in it. Métis, First Nations, and people of our constituency are quite isolated from each other due to the travel corridors and the highways across the area. With the main shopping, trade, and medical areas being High Prairie and Slave Lake, many constituents travel in excess of an hour to access services here. Highway 2 runs across the constituency from the east to the west, servicing Slave Lake and High Prairie. Highways 88, 754, and 750 basically run north and south in roughly the middle of the constituency, and they service Wabasca, Red Earth, and the various First Nation and Métis settlements.

The third reason I believe the constituencies should not be altered is our large Indigenous population and the Treaty 8 trading and traditional land areas. Our constituency contains an Indigenous identity population of 54 per cent, so over half the people within our constituency have an Indigenous identity. Their interests and their influences are best suited and represented by a single representative at the Legislature.

Eleven First Nation bands are based in the Lesser Slave Lake electoral district. There's the Bigstone Cree Nation, Driftpile First Nation, Kapawe'no First Nation, Loon River Cree Nation, Lubicon Lake Indian Nation, Peerless Trout First Nation, Sawridge First Nation, Sucker Creek Cree First Nation, Swan River First Nation,

Whitefish Lake First Nation, and Woodland Cree First Nation. Most of the region's Indigenous population is of Cree origin.

I would submit to the commission that splitting up the constituency would have a negative impact because the First Nation bands are a large social sector that have done business largely within the traditional constituency boundaries. The main trading areas are Wabasca, High Prairie, and Slave Lake, and there is truly a long history of established trading patterns and traditional lands that they have lived on for hundreds of years. This is best maintained by keeping the constituency whole. The large population on reserves and settlements should not be split up as they identify with each other and the traditional areas they have lived on for generations.

1:15

The fourth reason the constituency should not be altered is the already large physical size of our area and the ability of our MLA to appropriately service and serve the people of the constituency. Thankfully, in the past electoral boundaries review the constituency size and shape was altered. I remember when it used to go all the way up to Northwest Territories, and now it's about halfway down. That was a huge area for an MLA to service. In its current position it's really important that our representative can do face-to-face meetings with constituents, and an overly large constituency areawise would make this very difficult. It's already a problem, I think, for many rural constituencies, and it would be one that would worsen if one is divided up and the portions are added to other existing large constituencies that are out in rural areas.

The fifth reason the constituency should not be altered is that it would diminish the rural voice and interests within the Alberta government. Oftentimes we have seen a tug-of-war between the elected urban and rural constituency representatives on various issues. Keeping our rural constituency electoral district intact will enable our voice to continue to be heard in our large land-based but smaller population-based constituency, where much resource-sector activity brings value to the government of Alberta.

In closing, I would submit that the Lesser Slave Lake constituency should be considered one of the special areas and afforded the exemption provided in the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act and, notwithstanding our low population, be left as it currently is due to the five reasons I've outlined above.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much, sir. It's been our custom to engage with the presenters, and I know there's not been one session where we've had no questions or dialogue or discussion.

I'm going to start with Mr. Evans. Any comments or questions that you have for this presenter?

Mr. Evans: Yes; only because you threw down the challenge of no questions.

In terms of the Indigenous population, the Cree nations, the various ones that you named off, their interaction would be mostly in terms of the federal government, so with their MP rather than the MLA or the municipality. Is that your understanding?

Mr. Vanderwell: I think that that is where they do try to represent themselves quite a bit. But, of course, on some of these settlements it may not be federal land, right?

Mr. Evans: On the Métis settlements.

Mr. Vanderwell: That's right.

Mr. Evans: And you indicated that they're mostly heading to Wabasca, their trading route.

Mr. Vanderwell: Well, a lot of them would live north of the lake or perhaps a bit west down the lakeshore here, but their trading area would be Slave Lake, typically, because it has a large Walmart and things like that, that those people would be visiting to purchase goods at.

Mr. Evans: And the MDs that you would have in this area, in this electoral district, would be the MD of Big Lakes and the MD of Lesser Slave Lake and a portion of Opportunity?

Mr. Vanderwell: Yeah, the MD of Opportunity. I did have it on a different map, but I see it's not on this one. There are a number of MDs that do almost follow our electoral boundaries at this time, both on the east and the west and on the north, so we very much are MD 124, MD of Opportunity up in Wabasca, MD of Lesser – the one over in High Prairie.

Mr. Evans: Big Lakes, yeah. Okay. Thank you very much, Ken.

Mr. Vanderwell: You bet.

The Chair: Susan.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. And thank you for coming out today. I would have been sorely disappointed if nobody came.

On that note, we had a really good presentation yesterday when we were in Grande Prairie, and I wanted you to further expand on how important it is – because you have made it very clear that you don't want to see the riding split up to enhance the numbers in the other ridings. How important is it to you, and what does it look like when we have six MLAs in what I call the north, like, northern Alberta, and you have four municipal districts that fall nicely within your boundary? Plus you have some municipalities as well. Tell me about working together and how important that is, and talk about representation.

Mr. Vanderwell: Okay. I'm still not quite sure what your question is.

Mrs. Samson: My question is: how do you work with the MLAs, where you just pretty much work with the MLA? And then switch that up to the MDs.

Mr. Vanderwell: Sure. We actually have, I believe, a great relationship with the other rural MLAs. We have Minister Williams up in Peace River, who I see a lot. As they travel down towards Edmonton to the Legislature, of course, they will drive through our area or drive through Slave Lake. They often stop. At this particular time our MLA is not part of the United Conservative Party, so we are utilizing some MLAs to step in and help us in that regard as a constituency. We do have Ron Wiebe, who is an MLA over in the Grande Prairie-Wapiti area, who's helping us as well. We do have visits from our MLA out of Westlock, and that's Glenn.

We do certainly talk. We talk about – I don't want to say events – I guess rural events as well as rural areas, things that go on within the rural areas of the province here. I can't think of the word right now. There certainly is talk amongst ourselves as a constituency and our MLAs here.

On the MD front I mostly live in Slave Lake, so when I am dealing with the MD, I typically am dealing with the municipal district here in Lesser Slave Lake. If you're over in High Prairie, then you'd be dealing with the MD over there. I don't see any real animosity between the MDs at all. I mean, we're all trying to work

together. We're all trying to make a living. We're all trying to help our people be able to afford life in northern Alberta. I don't see any true issues there, Susan.

Mrs. Samson: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Vanderwell: Yeah. You bet.

The Chair: Quick question. Where does your MLA have his or her office?

Mr. Vanderwell: It's right on Main Street, here.

The Chair: In Slave Lake.

Mr. Vanderwell: In Slave Lake, yes.

The Chair: So no other satellite office or anything like that.

Mr. Vanderwell: Not that I know of, no.

The Chair: Okay. Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you. And thank you for the maps. I'm staring at one that just highlights the very large number of Indigenous land allocations and all the numbers. It's a huge spread of different communities.

Mr. Vanderwell: That's right.

Dr. Martin: I can well take your point that they wish to cohere rather than be split, as it were, and the roadways work to that effect as well. There are not very many of them. They're well travelled. Highway 88 is a dusty road at best and can be very difficult for noncommercial traffic, it seems to me. So there's a lot of movement along the south side of Lesser Slave Lake going east-west. Do you yourself go out much to High Prairie, that end of things?

Mr. Vanderwell: Yes, I do, of course, and it'll be more so now that I'm back with the constituency association.

Dr. Martin: You know, moving from Slave Lake down to Athabasca is one route out, as it were, but the other is to go west. I'm just interested – you have a Costco, but maybe you have to go west for things. Is that an impulse . . .

Mr. Vanderwell: High Prairie has an excellent hospital – of course, Slave Lake has a great hospital, too – so the hospital in High Prairie is certainly utilized by the folks across the constituency.

When you look at Wabasca north of Slave Lake, you can come into Slave Lake on highway 88 or you can come around the lake on the other side.

Dr. Martin: It's where the road comes down there at Marten Beach and comes back down here.

Mr. Vanderwell: That's right. There are, you know, two ways around the lake, which is what you'd really want, of course, for access if there are wildfires or other things that happen in the boreal forest.

1:25

Dr. Martin: We came in this morning from the west, and we travelled, of course, over lush green farming lands coming up to and on the south flank of the lake as we came in here. There's a lot of agricultural value and activity. Why is the population so low?

Mr. Vanderwell: Over in that part of the world?

Dr. Martin: No, just in the riding as a whole. It's been notoriously low, to be frank, and I'm sure you know that. All the mitigating factors you listed are excellent factors, but what is your feeling for the economic situation of the whole region such that it has not been growing? I mean, the rest of the province is growing by leaps and bounds, but this ED has not had that.

Mr. Vanderwell: So the deterrence to growth in the province or within our area here?

Dr. Martin: No. In the ED.

Mr. Vanderwell: Our major industries of course are oil and gas, and our second major industry then would be forestry. Third industry in the area I believe would be agriculture, so that's more on the flanks of the outside of the electoral division.

Forestry, I had mentioned, is an integrated operation within our province. I run one of the forestry mills here on behalf of our family. When I say integrated, if the trees don't burn and you actually can harvest them, of course, we make dimensional lumber, but the chips that we produce, you know, the round edges of the trees, we ship those to Peace River. Maybe we ship them over to Whitecourt. Maybe those chips go to Al-Pac. So that's integrated operations. They rely upon us for that input for their pulp purposes. When facilities are operating on the land base – of course, the hardwood or the poplar and the spruce grow together – the spruce would come to my mill. The poplar: you would be logging it for another mill, and it would go to their mill. So operations are very integrated.

The reason the forest industry is not going to really grow within our area anymore is that one hundred per cent of the annual allowable cut has been basically designated to facilities. So that's what it supports. The only way to grow that moving forward would be to put more trees in the ground, and then you can grow the stock that you need to increase the industry. There is an opportunity, of course, for secondary manufacturing. Transportation is always an issue, and if you have your secondary manufacturing around the city – and there are forestry secondary manufacturing facilities around the city – they would take our rough stock and they would take it down there. Then they would make whatever widget they are going to make, and they are closer to the folks that it's going to be sold to. So the transportation isn't quite as high.

On the oil and gas sector we certainly do see that sector growing within our area. We've had some major announcements, particularly north of Slave Lake, closer to the Indigenous communities, that they will be taking more oil and gas out of our area. So we see growth around that. We see growth in the Aboriginal community for great-paying jobs coming out of that resource sector. Of course, within even my sector we have, I think, great jobs for those Aboriginal communities as well.

One of the things I think that perhaps stops our area from growing is that a lot of young people maybe are more drawn to the urban areas. They want to live in Edmonton or live in Calgary, and they don't perhaps want to spend, you know, their life or their career up in northern Alberta.

Another thing that we did see is that when Slave Lake had the devastating fire, we had 2,000 people leave, and we didn't get them all back, of course. Fires like that, fires in Fort McMurray, Slave Lake, you know: we see some of the fires that happened here in the last couple of weeks impact those communities. If people don't have a place to live and they've been uprooted once, they may decide: hey, I'm going to live down in an urban area rather than up in the rural areas.

I don't know if I answered your question completely, but those are some of the opportunities I see. Oil and gas can grow. Forestry

I think is basically tapped out, and tourism of course can grow, too. But there has to be money that's put in for those types of things.

Dr. Martin: That's very helpful. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: Thank you. Yeah. I've got a few questions. Just, again, thank you very much for being here. The real gift for us of being able to travel the province is that, one, we get to see all different corners of Alberta, which is a real gift, and we're pretty lucky to live in the province we do, when we do, and just to hear from people who live in the community, who literally know the lay of the land. It's one thing to look at it on a map, but it means so much more when we come to actually visit and talk to folks in person. So I just want to thank you for coming.

Mr. Vanderwell: You bet.

Mr. Clark: A couple of questions. I want to pick up on the question on sort of Indigenous representation. You said 54 per cent of the constituencies.

Mr. Vanderwell: That's right. Yeah. Those were stats that I did look up, so I believe they're pretty accurate.

Mr. Clark: Well, indicatively, right? It doesn't need to be perfect, but sort of order of magnitude. That's helpful information. Even if there's a federal responsibility there in most cases or in a lot of cases, I presume that a lot of those kids go to public schools, use health care facilities, social services, like, those sort of provincial – can you maybe talk a bit about that? Is it a blend of the federal and the provincial? What's the impact of that on the MLA's job?

Mr. Vanderwell: I've been around long enough that we did have Pearl Calahasen, who was one of the first Aboriginal women that was our MLA, for a very long period of time. After her we had a gentleman by the name of Pat Rehn, and since then we've had Scott Sinclair. Both Scott and Pearl are of Indigenous background. I think it's great to have them. You know, it was great to have Pearl; it's great to have Scott as an Indigenous MLA. They bring, I think, a different understanding of some of the unique challenges that those communities face.

Of course, when the federal government, I guess, manages the land that you're on, there may not be a lot of opportunities there, so we certainly do see a lot of the more business-minded Aboriginals perhaps moving off the reserve into areas where they can make a decent living and they don't have to rely upon the federal government.

You are right. I see a mixture of kids going to school, and you have the Aboriginal schools as well in some of the communities, you know, down the lake. I think they're well-run ventures, and they do fall, of course, under the province of Alberta, and that is where you see all of the funding for those coming from. I'm not aware if there is any federal funding that is earmarked for that. Someone may have a better education on that than I certainly do.

I don't know if that answers your questions, Greg, or not.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. It does. I think these things are never a hundred and zero.

Mr. Vanderwell: That's right.

Mr. Clark: Especially when there's a mix of provincial and federal accountability there.

Mr. Vanderwell: I'd say that more of them would utilize the provincial services than utilize the federal services.

Mr. Clark: That's a great answer. That's helpful. Thank you very much.

Changing topic, then. As you see from the map, the number 27,442, and you had alluded to the 50 per cent, plus or minus. As Justice Miller said in his opening remarks, we're bound by both the act but also by the court interpretations, and that allows us, under section 15(2) of the act, to have a plus or minus 50 per cent; 27,442 is minus 50.04 per cent, so we've got to find at least .04 per cent if we're going to keep Lesser Slave Lake. We can't keep Lesser Slave Lake exactly, a hundred per cent as it is. The question for you is: if we needed to add some population around an edge, where would we do that? And what fits?

Dr. Martin: No pressure here.

Mr. Vanderwell: I need to see a bigger map.

Mr. Clark: Maybe I'll ask a specific question. If we were to go down highway 43, west a little bit . . .

Mr. Vanderwell: Towards Fawcett and Jarvie, down in that area?

Mr. Clark: Yeah. It's a question, I guess, of how far you go. We don't need a whole bunch of population. We want to be cautious of borrowing too much from neighbouring . . .

Mr. Vanderwell: Down into the Westlock area.

Mr. Clark: I'm actually thinking west on 43. My map is being slow because why wouldn't it be. There we go. Like, out past High Prairie, west of High Prairie.

Mr. Vanderwell: Oh, west. Okay.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. West of High Prairie there's a little place, Maurice Lake. It's a lake? It doesn't look like there are a lot of people around there. That's sort of one option. I'm just looking at this, not at all knowing the community, not at all knowing the connections or the land.

Yeah. This is Central Peace-Notley, which has a similar . . .

1:35

Mr. Vanderwell: No, that's – well, McLennan is fairly . . .

Mr. Clark: Right. That has a similar challenge in terms of its population; not quite as acute but not great either. I guess the question is: if we were doing some balancing, would it make sense? In the past you noted that it used to go a little further north. You're thinking: oh, how far north can we go? Great question. How far north can we go?

Mr. Vanderwell: It used to be right up to the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. I see that in 2010 it didn't quite go all the way up there. It didn't quite go to La Crête. It sort of went towards La Crête and then took a sharp left turn there. Effective representation in Canada means we can have big differences, right?

Mr. Vanderwell: Right.

Mr. Clark: The stat I used last night in Grande Prairie was that Lesser Slave Lake and Central Peace-Notley are about 55,000 people, those two constituencies combined. Calgary-North East is 85,000 people. It's so many. We've got some challenges.

Mr. Vanderwell: That's right. You can drive around Calgary in half an hour in that constituency.

Mr. Clark: And you'll hear eight or nine languages, right? So each of these has their own challenges. It's not a direct comparison. We're not trying to diminish the challenges because, absolutely, the vast geography really does create a unique challenge. But if we needed to go find a little bit of extra population, if you will, to add into Lesser Slave Lake, do you have an opinion on where we might do it?

Mr. Vanderwell: On the last boundary commission, they did add in Calling Lake and some of the communities further to the east. Some of those had Aboriginal settlements on them. That was to I think collect that. I would see us going further to the east. To the west – I don't know if my president can make any comments on that. He may have a little bit more knowledge than I do on the west side, if that's allowable.

The Chair: Sure.

Mr. Clark: Absolutely. We'd love to hear from you.

The Chair: Absolutely, yeah. Just grab the mic. You can stay there just as long as you grab the mic so we can pick up the audio.

Mr. Skrynyk: Currently, right now, the MD of Lesser Slave River is split to the south. In the Flatbush region, which is still in this MD, they are represented by the MLA out of Westlock. That may make some sense to bring them back into the fold of this constituency. I served on the MD council for 13 years, so I'm familiar with that quite a bit, that we had a split region with that.

Mr. Clark: Sorry, which MD is that?

Mr. Skrynyk: The MD of Lesser Slave River No. 124.

Mr. Clark: Okay.

Mr. Skrynyk: That's the one surrounding Slave Lake here to the ...

Mr. Clark: Oh, I see. Yeah. It just goes a bit south there almost between Athabasca and Swan Hills.

Mr. Skrynyk: Yeah, and the boundary line is somewhere up around Flatbush region. Flatbush is into the Westlock area. On the balance of where people live and where they do business and stuff, it would make more sense that that part of the constituency would come back this way. I don't know populationwise whether that would really be enough to help or not.

Mr. Clark: We don't need much.

The Chair: Oh, yeah, we don't need a lot, just .04 per cent.

Mr. Clark: We need about eight people. Any babies born in the last little while?

Mr. Skrynyk: If I may comment on some of the stuff I've heard here. You know, you talk about federal responsibility and provincial responsibility for the Indigenous. In my experience and what I've seen over the last while, it is becoming more and more of a provincial responsibility, and there is a lot more of the stepping up with the province in trying to help with this. Recently we have a consortium of Indigenous bands that have got together and purchased a part of tamarack energy. So there's a lot of stuff going

on in this region. Everybody's working together. To split them up just wouldn't make a lot of sense to me.

The Chair: Sir, just for the record, could you just give us your name?

Mr. Skrynyk: Mike Skrynyk.

The Chair: How do you spell your last name?

Mr. Skrynyk: S-k-r-y-n-y-k.

The Chair: Glad I asked you.

Mr. Skrynyk: You would never get it.

And my background: I mean, I'm born and raised in this area, from the Kinuso area, actually. I have family in High Prairie, graduated in High Prairie, so I'm well aware of that area, also. I was on council, MD 124, for 13 years. Currently the president of the UCPA, which is just new.

The Chair: This is Pearl Calahasen's old constituency?

Mr. Vanderwell: That's right.

The Chair: Her name came up in Edmonton as being a true mentor and someone that cultivated younger people to get involved in politics.

Mr. Vanderwell: Yes. Actually, I run into her and her husband at Walmart once in a while. They still live on the lakeshore here.

Mrs. Samson: I just have one question. Oh, I probably have more. I'm looking at the boundary. Going along with what my colleague Greg is asking, can you tell me anything about Kimiwan Lake and the McLennan town or whatever it is on the western boundary of Lesser Slave Lake? Is there any significant population or tie? I see the boundary goes right through the lake itself.

Mr. Vanderwell: Yeah. I'm not aware of that. I know that there's a fairly large French community over in that area in Falher and Guy and McLennan.

Mrs. Samson: Yeah. They show it on the map here: Falher, Donnelly, McLennan.

Mr. Vanderwell: That's right, yeah. I know that because some of the contractors that work for me are out of that area, and they're all French.

Mrs. Samson: Would they naturally travel into Slave Lake for shopping, that you know of?

Mr. Vanderwell: No.

Mrs. Samson: Go the other way?

Mr. Vanderwell: They'd probably go to Valleyview or perhaps over to Grande Prairie.

Mr. Skrynyk: Just to Dr. Martin's point there on why the population has difficulty in growing: agriculture is becoming commercialized, and large agricultural family farms are not there anymore, so that's part of the issue. Another issue that we have here is that we have a huge shadow population that works here.

Dr. Martin: Talk to us about that, if you wouldn't mind, sir.

Mr. Skrynyk: Well, we have a huge shadow population that come into the area, work with the industries, predominantly in the oil and gas, that do not live in this area. They come here and they work. There's the industry that drives this province. The GDP of northern Alberta is huge for this province. The people that come here to work are not counted in the census. But there is a large shadow population that works here in the wintertime in camps. We run into that same thing with the municipalities when we're doing our population census. There's the shadow population, that is difficult to track, but it is there. You don't run the resources of what we have here without people being here to do it.

Dr. Martin: Sir, could I follow up on that? Do you have a way of pointing out to us, perhaps just by pointing on the map, where those camps typically are located?

Mr. Skrynyk: Typically they would be in the Wabasca area. Red Earth would have more of them. Like, Wabasca has probably got more. Red Earth would have camps in there. Even Big Fish Bay has a ton of people that live in there year-round and work in the region. They rent cabins, and they rent annual recreational lots, where people live in their fifth wheels or in cabins and work in this region. The forestry and the fire – we're a tanker base here. Forestry brings in many pilots and things to fight fire. They all stay in places like Big Fish Bay. The hotels in Slave Lake and High Prairie are full constantly. Like, it's difficult to get rooms. So that's the shadow population that's not being counted.

1:45

Dr. Martin: We have heard of this long and loud from Fort McMurray and places over there for many years. I really wasn't aware of it here, so that's very helpful. For you, too, has it been a persistent factor, or is it recent?

Mr. Skrynyk: No, I believe it's been persistent. Like, I've been on council for years, and it's persistent.

Mr. Vanderwell: From my perspective it's actually grown over the years. We run a camp out at our facility here in the industrial park. We have employees that live in Boyle, and they travel over for their shifts. They'll stay four shifts, and they'll live in our camp, but they don't actually live within the constituency at all. We have a 22-person camp there, and, you know, the majority of those people have a farm or established place somewhere else.

A lot of them are younger people, a lot of millwrights that we hire on. You know, that age group, their free time is very important to them, so they will come up on a different shift schedule. They'll maybe be 10 days here and then seven days at home, and seven days will likely be a different part of this province. But they still work here.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

Mr. Vanderwell: So just like Fort McMurray.

Mr. Evans: I have a question on the shadow population. When they are living in camps, it sounds to me, based on what you said about the shadow population, that it would be more of an economic driver and less of a drain on, you know, municipal resources for example. But to be certain about that I need to know: are these other camps, like in Red Earth, so far away that they just stay in the camp the entire time they're working? They don't come into Slave Lake; they don't go to High Prairie, things like that?

Mr. Vanderwell: It depends. If you're in a camp that does provide you with meals and things like that, there would be really no reason

to leave. Some of the other camps are kind of a little bit more independent units. I'm thinking of our own camps, where we provide the room, but they come in to get their food in Slave Lake or they do their shopping and things.

Mr. Evans: When it was being discussed, say, the Wabasca camps and the Red Earth camps: would they be the types of camps where the people would stay in the camp the whole time? Then, if that's the case, if you could tell us more about sort of the numbers of the camps where they don't stay all the time, where they are more interactive with the community.

Mr. Vanderwell: Do you know more about the oilfield camps than I do, Mike?

Mr. Skrynyk: With certainty? No. I don't want to give you any false pretense here, but I'm just trying to think. In history in the oilfield camps – I'm not sure what it is right now, but it may not be the same people in the camps. Like, a company will book 20 rooms for the year just so that they have the capability of bringing people in and out as business requires. That is the standard practice in the oilfield, where a company will come in and book a certain number of rooms to be used by people in all aspects of their business. I don't know if that answers your question or not.

Mr. Evans: That was helpful. Thank you.

The Chair: Sir, you've been involved in municipal government, and you also referenced the census. I think you did, Mr. Skrynyk.

Mr. Skrynyk: Yes.

The Chair: Of course, when municipalities conduct a census, it's important for their relationship and their funding with the province. No doubt. Have there been any attempts by the municipal governments that you're aware of to try to quantify or count the shadow population?

Mr. Skrynyk: I think there have been some attempts to try to quantify it. It's very difficult. What do you consider shadow population? What's your definition of shadow population? What's the timeline of them being here? It's very difficult to quantify a standard. A standard has never been set out, to my knowledge, to that effect.

The Chair: We just know it's there.

Mr. Skrynyk: We know it's there. But, to my knowledge, I have no standard as to how it's quantified.

Mr. Vanderwell: A prime example, Justice, would be over in High Prairie. The Tolko mill had a fire a number of years ago, and then they've just recently started operations again. They would have had a large shadow worker contractor population that would have come into High Prairie and area to actually help rebuild that mill. And then, of course, once it's up and running again, then it would go back.

Mrs. Samson: Can I just make one comment? What I heard yesterday that really resonated, and it applies so much more importantly here in this riding, is that you have a large shadow population, but they're not counted anywhere, and had they been counted or if they were countable, we would not be in this dilemma about the low population number for this electoral division. That's the bottom line, really. I mean, population is where we start with drawing the boundaries. It's not where we end.

One of the items that they said – you know, we look at communities of interest and the geographical and boundaries that are clear and understandable and any other factor that we find relevant, and I find the shadow population to be very relevant in the north. When you go into camp and you're completely looked after for food, housing, and you just go and work, and then when you're done, you go home, and if there's an election, you're not voting here, you're voting there, that's causing the problem in your riding. Like, they get everything they need here, and you don't get the vote, and you also don't get the provincial funding that goes with it.

The Chair: Following up on that, let me ask. To your knowledge, do the First Nations in this electoral division self-report to Statistics Canada in terms of population or respond to the census? They have the option not to. Do you have any idea?

Mr. Vanderwell: I have no idea, but I would suspect that they do because their funding is per capita.

The Chair: Yeah. It's per capita universally, but for some reason some First Nations do not participate in the census, and I don't know why. But they do have Indian affairs, or if that's the right department, whatever the successor department is.

Mr. Vanderwell: To provide the information for the province and that type of thing.

Dr. Martin: Changing topics, I want to talk road time. Now, on an average day, in an average truck, how long would it take you to get from this town to Wabasca?

Mr. Vanderwell: An hour, hour and 10 minutes.

Dr. Martin: So that's really not an onerous journey except under hard weather conditions.

Mr. Vanderwell: You came down highway 88. You know how onerous it could be.

Dr. Martin: Yeah. That can get really bad. Let's just continue to do the thought experiment. It's an hour and a bit to there, and then to Red Earth – what? – two, two and a half?

Mr. Vanderwell: It's two hours to Red Earth.

Dr. Martin: All right. And out the top?

Mr. Vanderwell: If you're heading way up north there? That would be probably three and a half hours.

Dr. Martin: Yeah. Before you break into the next constituency area.

Mr. Vanderwell: Cadotte Lake would be – you're probably three hours to Cadotte Lake over on the west side there, on 986 I think it is. Actually, the furthest one, Calling Lake, which is way down in the bottom right, would be the longest.

Dr. Martin: If I want to visit the Gambler people, this is the Calling Lake route. So I'd have to go dip down and then come through . . .

Mr. Vanderwell: Through Athabasca.

Dr. Martin: Okay. What's that going to be?

Mr. Vanderwell: That would be a three-hour trip. I have chip trucks that run over that way every day, and it's two hours one way in good weather.

1:55

Dr. Martin: Yeah. Okay. Thank you. That's helpful. As you know, certainly here in Alberta we measure distance in time.

Mr. Vanderwell: That's right.

Dr. Martin: It's a nice way to get our bearings on what the transportation logistics are for effective representation.

Mr. Vanderwell: And we use our vehicles as time machines.

Dr. Martin: Yes, we do. Thank you.

The Chair: And offices.

Mr. Vanderwell: True.

The Chair: I think you mentioned that the MLA for Peace River will drive through your constituency on his way to Edmonton.

Mr. Vanderwell: That's right. Minister Williams. Yes.

The Chair: So from this town to Peace River: what's the drive?

Mr. Vanderwell: Is it four?

Mr. Skrynyk: No.

Mr. Vanderwell: Three and a half hours? Or three hours?

Mr. Skrynyk: Probably about two and a half or a solid three.

Mr. Vanderwell: Yeah, true. It's about five hours from Edmonton. We're about halfway up. It might be two and three-quarter hours.

The Chair: And he would come down 88?

Mr. Vanderwell: No. He'd come through High Prairie, probably. He'd come down to Valleyview.

The Chair: A much better highway that way.

Mr. Vanderwell: Yeah. Now, Dan could also come down 88 as well if he decides to go through La Crête.

The Chair: Right, which is in his . . .

Mr. Vanderwell: That's right.

The Chair: Actually, back to that. This may be a foolish, noneducated question, but we heard in Peace River that the government is making available some forestry land to be turned into agriculture. Any talk of that here?

Mr. Vanderwell: Oh, yes. Yeah.

The Chair: Oh, is there? Well, tell us about that.

Mr. Vanderwell: Actually, our company – my dad had a great vision. We're the largest owner of private land that a forest company owns. We've planted trees on those lands. So as La Crétian families grow, because that is one of the things that they do . . .

The Chair: That seems to be well known here.

Mr. Vanderwell: That's right. Yes.

. . . a lot of them are even coming down into the Slave Lake area, and they're looking for quarter sections of farmland. I'll get

approached from them quite often, Justice. You know: Ken, will you sell me a couple of quarter sections? I say: well, I won't because I'm growing trees; I'm growing future stock on them. But we do see that happening. The pressure is on, I think, on all the fringes to start to turn some land over to what we call the white zone so that it would actually be agricultural land. The forest industry in particular is not really opposed to that because it does make sense, some of the areas that they want, that it should be, you know, switched over to agricultural land and agricultural purposes.

The government of Alberta does have a difficult time protecting forested areas, so our industry is actually the only one that pays holding and protection charges to the provincial government. Unfortunately, they're having a difficult time protecting what we're paying them to do. Anyway, that's a Todd Loewen question.

The Chair: So your company or your family owns a lot of forestry land, and you're reforesting.

Mr. Vanderwell: That's right. We have Crown land, and then we have all of our private land.

The Chair: Okay. So you lease a lot of Crown land as well.

Mr. Vanderwell: Yes. We have joint forest management areas with other companies, and then we have timberlands that we bought under quota back in the '70s and '80s.

The Chair: Okay. So there's pressure on all the landowners, the Crown as well as . . .

Mr. Vanderwell: Yes. There's lots of pressure on Crown land. There are species at risk. There are the various Aboriginal lawsuits. There are special places. There are parks. I mean, it just goes on and on, what's happening. Really, the path forward, you know, just as a point of interest for our industry, when I speak to Minister Loewen on it and any minister I can get a hold of that's in forestry: we need to grow more trees per hectare. I mean, that's just like in farmland. They increased the amount that they get off per bushel. We need to increase the number of trees that we have on Crown land so that we can lessen the effect of the burden on land and what's happening with the pressures on land base.

The Chair: I always consider that people who plant trees have long-term visions and are not impatient people.

You know, we love the dialogue, and we love to learn, so you'll get more questions.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. I wanted to just have you talk to me about communications. How is the Internet here? Like, there was a reference to having meetings in your vehicle when you're on these long trips. Can you do that? Do you get Bluetooth when you're driving?

Mr. Vanderwell: There is fairly good cell coverage, Susan, in some areas. In Slave Lake, after the fires, Telus came in and actually put fibre optic within the whole community. That was one of their great moves to really help off-set what happened here in the town of Slave Lake.

Of course, we've got, you know, fibre optic coming through here. I have noticed a lot of fibre optic even out in the industrial park areas now, that are 12, 15 kilometres out of town. I do see that there. I know that they have it pretty well in all the education – you know, Northern Lakes College is all on fibre now.

There are some spotty areas. Like, as you head out of town, you get out about 20 or 30 kilometres, you'll hit a couple of dead zones, but by the time you're around the Fawcett area, which we had talked about earlier, you know, the cell coverage is pretty good. If that helps you.

Mrs. Samson: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. So the message you want us to hear is that you're a special electoral division. You know that you're on the knife's edge.

Mr. Vanderwell: Yes; .4, you said, right?

Mr. Clark: You need 241 people. They don't need to be over 18; they just need to be people.

The Chair: Okay. Good. Well, thank you very much for coming. Much appreciated.

Mr. Vanderwell: Thank you very much for the extended time. Much appreciated.

The Chair: We learn so much at each one of our stops, so thank you.

We'll adjourn the public hearing now. We're happy to chat informally if you wish.

[The hearing adjourned at 2:02 p.m.]



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

Hinton

Thursday, June 19, 2025
9:06 a.m.

Transcript No. 25

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission

Justice Dallas K. Miller, Chair

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Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Hinton

Public Participants

Linda Brown
Bernie Kreiner
Wendy Robinson

9:06 a.m.

Thursday, June 19, 2025

[Justice Miller in the chair]

The Chair: Good morning, everyone. Welcome to our Hinton meeting of the Electoral Boundaries Commission of Alberta. First, I'd like to thank you for coming. We look forward to hearing from you, and we look forward to a bit of a dialogue with the presenters. By way of introduction my name is Justice Dallas Miller. I'm the chairman of the commission, and I also serve as a justice of the Court of King's Bench of Alberta, mainly in southern Alberta.

The rest of the commission I want to introduce. Next to me is Susan Samson, a long-time resident of Sylvan Lake and an experienced municipal politician who has served as councillor and mayor. She and her husband ran a small business in that community. She volunteers extensively there, and for her volunteer activities she's been recognized in receiving the citizen of the year award and the Queen's diamond jubilee medal.

Next to Susan is Mr. John Evans, KC. John is a lawyer in Lethbridge, Alberta. He works with a firm known as Stringham, which is a province-wide firm. Most of his work is focused in Lethbridge, but he also conducts trials throughout the province. John's legal ability has been recognized by him receiving the King's Counsel designation, or KC. He also volunteers on the Alberta Judicial Nominating Committee.

Next to me on my right is Dr. Julian Martin. Dr. Martin is a retired history professor from the University of Alberta. He has advanced degrees from the University of Cambridge and volunteers on many committees and in his home city of Edmonton and now his home hamlet of Sherwood Park. Dr. Martin also serves on quasi-judicial tribunals for the province of Alberta.

At the far end of the table is Mr. Greg Clark, an entrepreneur who hails from Calgary. He is an entrepreneur and consultant, focusing on information and knowledge management. Greg has the experience of serving as a member of the Legislature for Alberta, representing Calgary-Elbow. He, too, is a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II medal. He currently serves as chair of the Balancing Pool for Alberta and consults and advises organizations relative to proper board governance.

We are your Electoral Boundaries Commission, and we've been tasked with proposing a new set of electoral boundaries for the province. A couple of things that we must deal with as a commission and wrestle with are, first of all, an expansion of the Legislative Assembly from 87 seats, which is the current number, to 89. The province has deemed it important to add two new seats to the Legislature, and it's our task to determine where those seats go. Our second task is to deal with the immense population growth that Alberta has experienced the last few years, and I'll talk about that in a second.

First, to give you some idea of what our responsibilities are. This commission was appointed by the Speaker of the Legislature in late March of this year, and from the time of our appointment we are on a time clock. We have met as a commission on a couple of occasions in the month of April, planning strategy and planning process and schedule. Then we started our public hearings in late May, and we have been on the road ever since late May. We have criss-crossed the province. This public hearing is our second last; tonight we are in Red Deer. We conclude our in-person hearings this evening, but we're also going to conduct a virtual hearing next Monday. Once we've completed all the public hearings, we will then commence deliberating. What will we be deliberating over? Well, we'll be working on our initial report or what has come to be known as the interim report.

As I said, we're on a bit of a timeline. By late October we must submit an interim report of our proposed 89 new electoral boundary lines. That report must be filed with the Speaker of the Legislature by late October. That will become public immediately, and the public will have an opportunity to respond to it. We encourage you to watch for that report in late October. We will then open up an opportunity for written responses to our initial report, and that will run through November and December. In January we will then conduct a second round of public hearings, hearing from members of the public very specifically in relation to our proposal.

After we've concluded that and receiving input to our initial proposal, we are then tasked with finalizing our final report, which is due in late March 2026, and it must be filed with the Speaker of the Legislature. Once that is filed, then the Legislature takes on the task of passing appropriate legislation, relying on our report in the manner they see fit.

As you know, Alberta is divided into several electoral boundaries – that's a map of our electoral boundaries currently – and each constituency elects one member of the Legislative Assembly. Voters in that riding or constituency or electoral division elect that particular MLA.

To give you some idea as to what we're faced with, it's helpful to compare what the last Electoral Boundaries Commission did. In 2017 the previous Electoral Boundaries Commission issued a report, and their report was based on a population of just over 4 million people. In 2017 the population of Alberta was estimated at 4,062,609. When you take that population and you divide it among 87 electoral divisions, you come up with a mean average of 46,697. That's not the target. The target is a range for each electoral division, and that range can vary from minus 25 of that mean average to plus 25. You can see the numbers for the 2017 commission. They had a range of 35,023 up to 58,371; 2017 was only eight years ago, but it's a long time ago in terms of Alberta's growth and in terms of changes to the province. This time around we are using a population of 4,888,723; that's almost 5 million.

You've probably heard news reports that Alberta has hit a population of 5 million, and that may very well be correct, but we are obligated under the legislation to rely on the most recent decennial census of Canada, which was conducted in 2021. Statistics Canada regularly updates those numbers, and not only does the federal government through Statistics Canada update those numbers; the Alberta government through the Alberta Treasury Board, its Office of Statistics and Information, updates and validates those statistics, those population numbers, on a regular basis. We've come to the conclusion that the best figure, the best population estimate we can rely on, is what we receive from Statistics Canada, filtered and verified by Alberta Treasury Board as of July 2024. That number is the number you see before you, 4.8-plus million.

When we take that number over 89 electoral divisions, we come up with a mean average of the figure you see, 54,929, almost 55,000. The target population per electoral division, then, is the minus 25 to plus 25 range that you see, anywhere from 41,197 to 68,661.

Of course, the population growth has not been uniform across all electoral divisions. It is largely concentrated in the two major cities, Calgary and Edmonton. Our task is to look at the population throughout the province, look at the boundaries, and come up with a proposal and a recommendation to the Alberta Legislature that provides for effective representation. That is the term that we use in Canada for proper representation. We do not use the American system of one person, one vote. We are very distinct from the Americans. We rely on effective representation, and that term has been used by legislators throughout the country and specifically

Alberta and by the courts that have determined whether boundaries are appropriate.

9:15

Now, in completing our task, we must consider several factors, and these are all identified in the legislation, the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act, that directs how we conduct our activities. First, we look at the relative density and sparsity of population across the province. Secondly, we look at common community interests and organizations that may be within the proposed electoral division. We also use geographic features. That is more prominent in areas outside the city, but even within cities we use geographic features like rivers, boundaries, roadways, et cetera. Communication and transportation lines are also factors that we will use in determining boundaries. Our task as a commission is to create understandable and clear boundaries for Albertans. That's important in order to provide effective representation. It's important for individuals to exercise their democratic rights so they know what division they live in and how they go about exercising their right to vote.

Finally, the legislation provides us with the ability to use any other appropriate factors that we deem important in creating boundaries. We receive that to a large extent from the public hearings that we've conducted. There is nothing that replaces in-person public hearings for us as a commission. We've learned a lot about this province. We've learned a lot about the regions outside of Calgary and Edmonton. We've learned a lot about what Calgary and Edmontonians want. Nothing replaces being in the community. For these last several weeks, while they may have been tiring for us, they have been exhilarating for us as a commission to see Albertans and hear from them directly.

Now we are here this morning in Hinton to hear from you. I have, I believe, a list, and I would call on Wendy Robinson, our first presenter. Please come forward and have a seat at the table to my left. We will try to get our map up for this electoral division. Identify yourself, tell us where you reside, and begin your presentation.

Ms Robinson: All right. Do I need to do anything with this?

The Chair: No, that will pick you up. By the way, the hearings are recorded. The recordings will be on the Electoral Boundaries Commission website. As well, they'll be transcribed by *Hansard*, and everything you say will be on our website eventually.

Ms Robinson: Okay. Good morning. My name is Wendy Robinson. Thank you for giving me a couple of minutes to speak with you all today. I came to this today wanting to speak specifically to West Yellowhead. It is the constituency to which I belong. I live by Nojack in West Yellowhead, and that is the far east end of the constituency here, so range road 112. That's about an hour and a half east. I'm a long-time resident from Yellowhead county. I grew up on the east end of this constituency. I moved away for several years and returned 15, 16 years ago to work in the area.

Where I live has been a part of the West Yellowhead constituency for only the last two provincial elections. Prior to that, our area was part of the Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland county constituency. I've been politically active in our local constituency association for about the last five years now. I also have a degree in political science, so this is, like, just something I love anyway. But I don't have a lot of really clear thoughts.

I just wanted to share with the panel today some of the challenges that I've seen from my work with the constituency association as well as having previously worked for Yellowhead county and worked with our council and understanding some of the challenges

they've had. Right now currently when it comes to municipal boundaries, it does not follow the electoral boundaries, which means that the Yellowhead county constituency has two MLAs with whom they have to engage on a regular basis, which complicates matters.

That was kind of what I had. I just have a couple of scattered thoughts that I thought I would share. I looked at what the purpose of the commission and this panel was, which, as you had spoke to earlier, was some of the common community interests, ensuring that that is the case for our different constituencies and that there is effective representation. Those are kind of my key points.

Coming from the east end and having been a part of different constituencies in the past and working within Yellowhead county and the breadth of the county, I feel like I have a pretty strong understanding of the different cultures that are available. Like, for example, on the east end we have a much more agrarian, agricultural focus. There is very minimal engagement with farming communities to the west. The far east end is much more agriculturally minded as well as I can speak to that the natural travel boundaries or patterns for people on the east end do not follow to the west. They go to the east. If I'm going to drive an hour and a half somewhere, I'm going to Edmonton, where there's a full range of services, right? People on the east end of the county do not frequent Edson, Hinton, or Jasper, particularly, for large amounts of time. They might go to Whitecourt. There is some movement up to Whitecourt for services, but that's about it. Yeah. The people on the east end of the county have much more rural, agrarian kind of concerns and interests.

Like I had said earlier, right now Yellowhead county has two MLAs that they have to engage with regularly. I am not with Yellowhead county anymore. This is just my experience from when I was with Yellowhead county. I'm not advocating on their behalf. But I have seen from that work the challenges that they can face having to have multiple MLAs as well as the fact that there isn't consistency in that boundary. That boundary for West Yellowhead follows down from Woodlands county, and it follows highway 22, and then it cuts off. A small portion of Yellowhead county is part of the Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland Constituency Association, just a sliver, about a thousand people. That would be my basic calculation, that about a thousand people have a different MLA than the rest of the county. The county is a little over 10,000, so about 10 per cent of the county has a different MLA.

As well, the challenge that I experienced in my work is that when it comes to government services, the boundary line there is different from that even. It doesn't follow the municipal line, and it doesn't follow the provincial constituency association line. Many boundaries in health, in children's services, education actually follow along highway 751, which would move the West Yellowhead Constituency Association west about half an hour. I don't know. We're Canadian. We use distances in time, right? That is more natural boundary, including the RCMP as well. I've done some work trying to advocate for some services, and the RCMP boundaries are so different than all the other boundaries, so it makes it even more complicated to try and drive any change or advocate effectively for our residents. Those are just a couple of the key points that I wanted to make about the West Yellowhead Constituency Association.

9:25

I recognize that we're a very large constituency, and trying to organize in this way has many, many, many challenges, but I also believe that it is important that there is some consistency in terms of the populations that are within a constituency association and that that is recognized in the new boundaries with the increased

population. We're rural. It's a challenge, but we know that. That is something that we fully acknowledge when we live rurally, and we can make it work. My only real concern is that east end of the county and how it doesn't really fit in with the way that the current boundaries are set up.

Those are my comments. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Let me just start, Ms Robinson. So in order to take out that 10 per cent of West Yellowhead county – right? Sorry.

Ms Robinson: East Yellowhead county.

The Chair: The name of the county is east Yellowhead?

Ms Robinson: No. The county is just Yellowhead.

The Chair: Yellowhead. Okay.

Ms Robinson: It's so complicated, right? West Yellowhead and Yellowhead. Yeah.

The Chair: I'm wondering if . . .

Ms Robinson: Can I show you?

The Chair: Yeah. If Aaron could maybe just move the screen – we can't see the screen – and if you could go up and show us what it would take to take . . .

Ms Robinson: So this is highway 21, and the municipal boundary line actually follows, I believe, the river, so it would actually bump out to the east kind of, closer to that . . .

The Chair: On the other side of 22?

Ms Robinson: On the other side of 22, yeah. Like, that is a boundary that's used in Alberta forestry, but that's about it. Yeah. It's not a huge area, but for some reason they have a different MLA than the rest of the county. It wouldn't take much to move that over to follow the municipal boundaries.

The Chair: And you're satisfied it's only about 1,000 people?

Ms Robinson: It might be, with the rural area, up to 2,000, but the hamlet that's in that area, Evansburg, is, like, 700 people.

The Chair: Okay.

Mrs. Samson: Before you leave – sorry.

Ms Robinson: Can I sit down again?

Mrs. Samson: Yeah. You can sit down.

The Chair: The commission will have questions of you, Ms Robinson.

Go ahead, Susan.

Mrs. Samson: Sorry. I just wanted to ask this question because I don't get what you're saying. Are you saying that the boundary on the east side should align itself with highway 22 or 751?

Ms Robinson: No. I think it should either follow the municipal boundary – right? – which is neither of those. It's actually the river.

Mrs. Samson: I'm not sure what you mean by municipal boundary. Are you talking about the . . .

Ms Robinson: Yellowhead county.

Mrs. Samson: Oh, the county boundary. Okay. So follow the county boundary on the east side?

Ms Robinson: Yeah.

Mrs. Samson: Are you offering up another option?

Ms Robinson: Yeah. Or highway 751, which is where there are a lot of administrative boundaries with government services.

Mrs. Samson: Okay. Sorry. I just didn't get what you were saying.

The Chair: You still get two MLAs, then, for that county.

Ms Robinson: You would still have the two MLAs, which is the challenge, but you know it makes it easier to advocate to specific MLAs.

The Chair: Sure. Refresh my memory. Where do you live? It's not on here. The name of your hamlet?

Ms Robinson: Nojack. MacKay-Nojack area. It's kind of in between Wildwood and Niton Junction. It's kind of right in between there.

The Chair: Okay.

Anything else, Susan?

Mrs. Samson: I actually do have a few other things. When you talk about travel corridors, does Whitecourt, which is similar in size to Hinton, have more services that attract people there, or would it be a similar selection of services in both communities?

Ms Robinson: I would say that it's probably similar. It's similar in size. It is a key provincial government service area, so there are lots of, like, the provincial government services that you might be looking for. I actually even think it's very similar in terms of the economies in those communities. People in Edson will travel to Whitecourt; people in my area will travel to Whitecourt, probably most specifically for health services. There are larger doctors' offices . . .

Ms Brown: More doctors, yes.

Ms Robinson: More doctors. Yeah. So people from even in the Wildwood, Evansburg areas would travel to Whitecourt for some services.

Mrs. Samson: Before Edmonton?

Ms Robinson: Well, they would go to Edmonton first, probably, or Spruce Grove. Like, there's an advantage to travelling east, right?

Mrs. Samson: Mm-hmm. You mentioned the agricultural industry more to the east of the riding. With a change in the boundary, do you feel that would eliminate that connection to the agricultural sector?

Ms Robinson: If it went west to highway 751?

Mrs. Samson: Yes.

Ms Robinson: Somewhat. There are still pockets of agriculture that happen further west, like in the Peers, Shining Bank, Fulham area, but it probably would because then the focus really would be on forestry, oil, and gas.

Mrs. Samson: Which are the main industries. And tourism?

Ms Robinson: Tourism to a degree, yeah.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Mr. Evans.

Mr. Evans: Just one question. You're talking about highway 751. Is that west or east of 757?

Ms Robinson: Which is 757?

Mrs. Samson: Right there.

Mr. Clark: West. It'd be right up from where you are in Nojack.

Ms Robinson: Yeah. It's, like, almost straight down from Whitecourt. Well, not quite but a little east of the Whitecourt down there. You have to do a dogleg.

The Chair: South and east of Whitecourt.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you. The last commission found that this electoral district was growing a bit faster than the provincial average at that time, and now it has just sort of flattened out, as it were. To what economic factors do you put that slowdown in growth?

Ms Robinson: You know, I'm not an economist. I'm not a hundred per cent sure.

The Chair: You're not a demographer?

Ms Robinson: You know, I would say a portion of it, for Yellowhead county in particular, is an aging population. You probably have a lot of people that might either be aging out, as I put it, moving away or passing away, and there hasn't been the influx of people into the area. You could also say automation. Economically we might be doing fine, but if things are being increasingly automated, that isn't bringing new people into the area. High cost of living. Also, like, not everybody is prepared to travel large distances, so it makes it harder for people to choose the West Yellowhead area as opposed to more populated areas.

Dr. Martin: Thank you. Those are good answers. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: Thank you. Just a couple of things. We've got a little bit of a GIS tool here. Your numbers are pretty much exactly bang on according to what we have, which are some estimates. Yeah. If we added the east boundary up to Yellowhead county, that's adding about 1,000. If we take away, as you say, we go up 751 to the boundary and all the way east, including to the edge of the Yellowhead boundary, I think is what you're talking about . . .

Ms Robinson: Yeah.

Mr. Clark: . . . it's about 1,000 as well, give or take. Yeah. Those are really helpful sort of options in terms of how we can maybe

understand, which is why we come and travel and get the literal lay of the land.

9:35

I'm curious if we can shift our attention to the other end over to sort of closer to where we are and even further west into Jasper. Can you tell me a little bit about Jasper and this area and how the kind of flows go? I presume it's east-west. Is there a connection, Jasper and Banff, or is it pretty much Jasper and Hinton and parts east?

Ms Robinson: You know, you have somebody else that's here that can probably speak to that better. My assumption is that it's probably more an east-west. There could be some travel down to Banff, but that's a really long travel, and it's not something you can do in the winter consistently, right? Particularly core, essential services, you're probably not going to choose that option. You would be choosing to go to the east to Hinton. I know some people will also travel west into B.C. for certain things, Valemount being probably the closest town there. I don't know if that happens quite as much, though. But, yeah, very much definitely, I would say, from Jasper in terms of services, collaboration with other municipalities, things like that, it definitely travels more along the highway 16 corridor east.

Mr. Clark: Great. Perfect. Okay. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you again for your presentation. Thank you for coming. I will excuse you to return to the audience. However, if you can stay and hear other presenters, that would be helpful because we have some time, and we can benefit from people who have gone to the effort to make a presentation.

Thank you.

Ms Robinson: Okay. Sure.

The Chair: Our next presenter is Bernie Kreiner.

Mr. Kreiner: Greetings.

The Chair: Good morning.

Mr. Kreiner: Good morning. Let me give you just a bit of context about myself. I grew up in Whitecourt and went to U of A in Edmonton and then had a career in local government throughout my working life from Fort McMurray, Slave Lake, and then Hinton.

I come from a perspective that democracy is a wonderful thing, and we are blessed in Canada to have a pretty functioning one, but I am a bit concerned about the perception of politics on the street in Canada, and that made me want to come and speak to you, not that you can change that perception directly, but there are some things that democracy can do with boundaries that will make people feel better and have better understanding of their governments. I did a random test at a coffee shop earlier this week. I asked 10 people what riding they were in and whether it was a provincial or federal riding. Five out of 10 passed, and the other five didn't. And this is in a coffee shop where I consider the people are smarter than your average Joe, so it was very interesting.

Nonetheless, I'll speak to my presentation because I'm speaking from a fairly high level on some thoughts. The purpose of democracy is to ensure all voices are fairly heard. We risk moving away from that in Alberta if we're not careful. Having fair electoral boundaries and a support structure for MLAs to engage with citizens to act in the overall best long-term interests of the public is very important, and I'd like to see that strengthened. I think part of it can be strengthened by sound boundaries. Perhaps this

commission's report can advance some of the ideas that I'm going to put before you.

I'm going to speak in two contexts. One is about the electoral boundary questions directly that your mandate has, and then others are what I call MLA support structures and solutions that might relate to better engagement. I know that many rural ridings might be pushing for: let's go tougher than the court decision in 1991 and have a greater than plus or minus 25 per cent ratio. I am not sitting here suggesting that at all even though I'm a rural Albertan. I want everyone's vote to count roughly equally in Alberta. That's fairness, as I see it, cut and simple. I don't want to play politics and make rural ridings special and that a vote counts more there than it does in an urban setting. I used in my presentation 5 million residents for the 89 ridings, but I think that the principle of overall fairness is: let's stay within the 25 per cent throughout. That's my first thought.

I would like to see the government simplified. While service boundaries are another topic that isn't within your mandate, which was mentioned by the previous speaker, certainly electoral boundaries between provinces and federal could be.

In fact, if you do the math, a federal population of a riding is about double what a provincial one is going to be under the new mandate, so why don't you just make life simple for rural Alberta and make two provincial ridings in every federal riding? And dare I say, in eight years let's be smart enough to jointly work with the federal commission on boundary reviews so that the provincial and federal boundaries are determined collectively and collaboratively at the same time in eight years. That's my fundamental thought. I mean, a bit of out-of-box thinking perhaps, because I know Albertans aren't always happy working out things with the federal government, but that, to me, makes democracy easier to understand for Canadians and Albertans.

That would mean that the recently revised Yellowhead riding, that actually got narrowed and goes further down the Rocky Mountains now . . .

The Chair: The federal riding.

Mr. Kreiner: The federal Yellowhead riding.

The West Yellowhead riding would be the north half of that riding. That would be my broad view.

We can talk about some of the interests and alignments and values that I think are somewhat different in agricultural West Yellowhead versus in resource-based and tourism-based West Yellowhead that actually, I think, support an approach like that. In fact, that was part of the consideration that the federal government made when they made the boundary follow the Rocky Mountains more and stretched it from Grande Cache down to that southern area near Banff.

At a bigger picture level I want to reraise the idea that we actually amalgamate between federal and provincial ridings and think about doing that together in eight years and maybe even looking at it more carefully for this round for provincial even though the federal has done its thing in Alberta. I've written my report in a more formal sense, two pages, and I provided it to your secretariat, but I'm just ad hoc'ing the main points from when I was speaking to you. That's where I stand on the boundaries questions as a citizen of Alberta.

What are suggestions of supplemental approaches that could improve democracy related to boundaries and effective electoral representation? I've given that a fair bit of thought as well, and I acknowledge the difficulty of connecting well in rural ridings. In fact, I went to one of these hearings back in Slave Lake in I don't know what year, and an Aboriginal gentleman played a marble

game with the commission. He gave the chairman of the commission the responsibility to pick six marbles, and then he put them under the chairs in the room in two different ways. One was an urban riding where we put seven marbles in one chair and five in the other and said: get six and come back to your chair. And then he timed it when he put 12 marbles in 12 chairs. That's the truth between an urban and a rural riding in terms of trying to represent them well. That demonstration was very effective, I thought.

So what about the idea of actually having and allowing any party to run two individuals as one MLA in a riding? This hasn't been done very often although it does exist in democracies in the world, but that would still require that that riding only has one vote in the Legislature.

The Chair: You're suggesting one party, two candidates.

Mr. Kreiner: No. I'm suggesting that any party can choose, instead of running one person as a candidate for MLA, to actually declare a team of two who would actually only have one right and responsibility to represent the party as one vote but would have two people doing the leg work in the riding.

This structure would allow a team and would allow a lot more connecting with the interest groups and the broad electorates in their riding. That is a true challenge. You know, how many parades do you have to be at on Canada Day, as an example? Not to say that's where a lot of effective engagement occurs, but before and after, at the pancake breakfast, that's what happens, right?

9:45

I also believe that all MLA offices in Alberta should be provided with a very high-tech and effective public engagement computer phone system—I see one of your panellists is in the communications field—that they could use. It's purely optional, but it would be a tool available to all MLAs, irrespective of their stripe. It should be updated regularly. It should be a tool kit that helps them engage in the most scientifically effective ways possible in a modern democracy. I don't know that that's happening well in Alberta today. I think that's another recommendation that could strengthen effective representation long term.

I provide a bit of out-of-the-box thinking for you because I believe that Canada's democracy is one of the best in the world, and I want it to continue. I do believe we should create a vibrant democracy that is fair to all concerned, and that's quoting one of the four-way tests of Rotary, "fair to all concerned." We need a structure that instills confidence, not cynicism, in Alberta. We don't want to be on the slippery slope that other democracies in the world are on right now.

Those are my thoughts, and I welcome your comments, questions, and clarifications.

The Chair: Great. Your written copy has been left with Aaron?

Mr. Kreiner: Yes, I have.

The Chair: Great. Thank you. Thank you for this very well-thought-out and challenging presentation. As I understand it, in Alberta's early history we did have two MLAs per riding in some instances.

Mr. Kreiner: But they had two votes, I think, at that time.

The Chair: Oh, it could be. I don't know.

Mr. Kreiner: I believe so. There are other democracies in the world that run the way I've suggested partially, and it's purely optional in most cases.

The Chair: Okay. I'm sure we've got some questions and dialogue coming.

Dr. Martin, anything you wish to engage in with Mr. Kreiner?

Dr. Martin: Well, thank you. We've heard in many, many parts of the province the difficulties of effective representation that are caused by distance, spotty communications, connectivity, having to drive roads in the winter, the usual sort of things you would expect. I wanted, really, to ask your opinion as to whether your MLA is able to get around to see most of the people in a calendar year.

Mr. Kreiner: He certainly gets to all the communities in the calendar year, for sure. It's a test. I mean, months ago he was put in as a minister, so that's definitely held him back from getting out and about as much as he had in the past. You know, he represents a lot of different municipalities and constituent groups from Aboriginal reserves and Métis settlements as well, so it's a real challenge to be out there because even currently it's a big riding. It's, I think, the fourth largest in Alberta, from what I can see on the map.

Dr. Martin: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Thank you. I do appreciate the creative thinking and also your commitment to democracy as a principle. I think it's why we're all here, our strong belief in that. So thank you, and thank you, all, for coming.

One of the challenges we have in Alberta, sort of a good news, bad news situation, is that we've added about 8 million – not 8 million. It's 800,000 people – it feels like 8 million at times – since the last time we did this. The vast majority of those people are ending up in Calgary, Edmonton, and surrounding areas. One of the things we need to balance out is that, for example, Alberta's two smallest constituencies up north, Central Peace-Notley and Lesser Slave Lake, have about 55,000 people, and Calgary-North East currently has about 85,000. You've got almost, you know, these large variances.

I think you've spoken to that plus or minus 25 per cent, which is pretty well established by jurisprudence and our legislation. West Yellowhead although not quite that dramatic when it was created was about 8 per cent over the provincial average and is now about 6 and a half per cent under. That sort of is the effect of West Yellowhead, sort of staying roughly the same but the rest of the province sort of moving up. That creates a bit of a challenge, but it's off-set by those vast distances, right?

This is all sort of this entire exercise: well, on one hand, yes, but on the other hand, yeah. There's a bunch of back and forth. I guess my question to you is just a little bit like Ms Robinson's. Do you have any thoughts or suggestions if we needed to amend the boundaries at all perhaps to add a little bit of population to start to balance things out a little bit? Is there a logical place to do that, or do you feel like there are other changes that you would suggest specifically for this constituency?

Mr. Kreiner: Yeah. I haven't looked at the big-picture challenge that you guys have in that context, but, to me, Whitecourt and the addition of that area doesn't feel right to me. Even the agricultural part that was spoken about: it's very culturally and economically different from, I'm going to say, even Edson, Hinton, Jasper, Grande Cache. We relate more to folks like Nordegg and Lake Louise and Banff. Even though it's not our travel pattern, that's what we relate to better.

I've watched that change since I moved here in 1993. I call it the change in how many per cent of our region is the granola crowd. The granola crowd is definitely real and has evolved for that territory that I've just described. So I'm more comfortable considering north-south a bit more in the riding, and that's what the federal constituency association changes were as well.

Mr. Clark: Okay. That's helpful. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Susan, any comments or questions?

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. Yes, I do have a few questions. In a north-south configuration you would keep Edson, Hinton together with Jasper and look at moving down through the parks.

Mr. Kreiner: Yeah. That's one scenario. You could include Rocky Mountain House or Edson. It depends. It's a bit of a juggling act.

Mrs. Samson: It is.

Mr. Kreiner: You guys have a big challenge in front of you to do that.

Mrs. Samson: Yeah.

This is a question off topic, but your relationship to Slave Lake. Were you employed in the Slave Lake area?

Mr. Kreiner: I was the town manager from '86 to '93.

Mrs. Samson: Can you add any suggestions to us about boundary changes up there? You looked at the big picture about balancing and populations, and, you know, they're in a bad way up there. They fell well below the average.

Mr. Kreiner: Yeah. I don't know. I believe in the principle that every vote should be relatively equal in power, so I think it's going to harm rural constituencies because that principle, to me, overrides anything else. I think it's mostly about having tools, and that's where I turn to the second half of my presentation about a team-based MLA system, where high-tech, effective, what I call interface systems could work better even though face to face is still the best communications tool we have.

Mrs. Samson: I think one of the things that we struggle with when we look at the different options that we're faced with, because there's minimal population in northern Alberta, is taking those ridings and carving them up, which, in effect, loses an MLA. Could you speak to that?

Mr. Kreiner: Well, you know, you could make arguments all over the map, like the fact that 90 per cent of the economic activity of Alberta is generated by the resources of – what? – 20 MLAs' ridings. There are all kinds of those considerations. But if you're really "democracy is about people," then, unfortunately, we have to bear our losses as a rural part of Alberta. That's how I see it. That's hard to accept, and I'm sure you're going to hear many presentations from folks who really would like you to swing the other way and make rural ridings extra special. I think I leave you with two possible tools that can make it somewhat better for democracy.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you. I appreciate that.

The Chair: Mr. Evans.

Mr. Evans: A couple of questions. Thanks for the presentation and the valuable information, and I'm going to see if I can get some

more out of you. Would you agree that there is – I'm interested in the granola crowd demographic. In thinking about, you know, an ED that is more north and south, is there less connection, for example, between Hinton and Edson and Whitecourt in terms of sort of the economic drivers?

Mr. Kreiner: I mean, for resource-based we're all the same around some of those drivers: oil and gas, forestry, and, more in our area, coal. Tourism is the one that the granola crowd values most. It's actually what I call quality of life.

There's another sector we don't talk about enough called the footloose sector.

9:55

The Chair: Sorry; the what?

Mr. Kreiner: The footloose sector. They're the folks that can live anywhere. They're living in areas like – well, you saw that happen in Cochrane and Canmore and those areas, and it's going to emerge in our area fairly quickly, soon, too. Those folks want the granola environment and the culture that's somewhat different than heavy industrial.

Mr. Evans: Yeah. Tell me about the granola crowd, the footloose sector, that you would say exists. Is there more in Hinton as compared to Edson?

Mr. Kreiner: Yes.

Mr. Evans: And then in . . .

Mr. Kreiner: Jasper had even more, so understand that. It's interesting when you watch the fire and what it did for Jasper. They stayed, and they still are there, for many months if not years now. The folks moved to Valemount and Hinton because that's where they feel most comfortable. That's the closest to the granola crowd that Jasper people have, all right? That's culturally comfortable for them, other than if relatives were putting them up somewhere else in Alberta or B.C.

I'm sorry. I didn't answer your question or let you finish.

Mr. Evans: No. You did, actually. That's helpful.

Then you would say that there is a connection. Thinking about the federal riding, if there was a corridor that captured a significant demographic like the granola crowd and the footloose sector in that north-south corridor, you would say that they would qualify as, for example, a community of interest.

Mr. Kreiner: Absolutely.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Sir, you've obviously done some research here. I didn't check, but tell me. The new federal riding: do they use highway 40 as the eastern boundary?

Mr. Kreiner: I haven't looked at it carefully enough. Sorry, sir.

The Chair: Oh, okay.

Your proposal, which I think you appreciate is a future idea – we can't or maybe we do have the jurisdiction to take what you're saying and lump two rural ridings into one federal one. Have you looked at the Ontario situation at all? As I understand it, the Ontario provincial boundaries mirror the federal ones largely. What you're saying is a halfway step to what they do in Ontario.

Mr. Kreiner: Yeah. I did not know that's what they do in Ontario. But my guess is that if you walked into a coffee shop in Ontario, they'd have a better sense of who represents them and who's federal and provincial because they relate to similar boundaries.

The Chair: Yeah.

Mr. Kreiner: The world is getting more complicated, but democracy should be fairly simple for the people, and it hasn't continued to be that.

The Chair: Yeah. Federalism is a fantastic governing tool, but it does confuse things sometimes.

Mr. Kreiner: Indeed.

The Chair: Any other questions or dialogue?

Mrs. Samson: I have one more. I hadn't looked down at this aspect of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. When you started the conversation around the granola gang, would it be a good fit, in your opinion, to take in Nordegg and to the crossing in that area, or would you go as far as Rocky?

Mr. Kreiner: Yeah. Rocky becomes a bit like Edson, where there are starting to become other factors, but I think it still fits. Whenever the agricultural sector has the dominant values, it's different than the granola crowd needs, okay? That's my experience. I don't know today how much Rocky Mountain House is affected by the agricultural, but I know there's agriculture on three sides of them. It's like Mayerthorpe, in a sense. Mayerthorpe is sort of the boundary of true agriculture in our area, shall we say, or Evansburg.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Kreiner, in our report we'll use common terminology, but if we use new terminology, we have to define it. Do you mind if we reference you when we reference footloose and granola sector?

Mr. Kreiner: Sure. I mean, those two are my words. I'm sure there are academic words that say the same kinds of stuff.

The Chair: Okay.

Well, thank you so much. You obviously put some time and thought into this, and we, by our quizzing and conversation, are interested in it. Thank you so much. I'll excuse you now, but please stay if you can to hear any other presentation.

Mr. Kreiner: Thank you.

The Chair: Is Linda Brown present, and does she want to present?

Ms Brown: No. I just want to ask a question.

The Chair: Yeah. Please come forward and have a seat. Identify yourself. Tell us where you're from.

Ms Brown: Linda Brown. I live just west of Hinton. I'm not as discreet as the other two presenters, so I'll just ask the question. Is there a political agenda here?

The Chair: Why do you say that?

Ms Brown: Well, in 2022 the feds redistributed the electoral boundaries to their benefit. Is this possible?

The Chair: Well, I don't know if you were here at the beginning, but we talked about this being an independent commission of the Legislature appointed by the Speaker. I don't know if it's on the website, but two of the members are appointed by the government side and two of the members are appointed by the Official Opposition, so this is an independent commission.

Ms Brown: Hopefully. Okay.

The Chair: I'm not sure I can speak to the 2022 federal system at all.

Ms Brown: Right. Okay.

Why are we redistributing the electoral boundaries? I heard everything that was said, okay? Just give me a direct answer, please.

The Chair: Okay. Why? Two reasons to start with. We're moving to 89 electoral divisions from 87, and we've had about 800,000 people move in to Alberta since the 2017 commission. If we left it the way it is, the representative culture would be fairly chaotic, and there would not be effective representation for Alberta.

Ms Brown: That was a very discreet answer.

Mr. Evans: Plus we're legislated to do it.

The Chair: Yes. We're mandated by the Legislature. The Legislature has said: thus shall you do.

Ms Brown: Right.

I can't really see that map. Are we enlarging or are we shrinking?

The Chair: Well, the last Electoral Boundaries Commission in 2017 pegged the population at 50,604, which I think Mr. Clark said was slightly ahead or above the mean average at that time. Now the population is 51,390, which is below the mean average of 55,000.

Ms Brown: Right. Okay. Good.

Good luck, guys.

The Chair: Thank you. We hear that a lot.

Ms Brown: Yeah. You're going to need it.

The Chair: Okay.

Anybody else want to present or any comments from the previous presenters? We've got a few minutes. We're happy to hear anything supplemental.

Well, thank you so much for coming out. I will adjourn the public hearing now. We'll remain for a few more minutes before we pack up and leave and go to our last presentation, which is in Red Deer this evening. Thanks for coming out.

[The hearing adjourned at 10:04 a.m.]



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

Red Deer

Thursday, June 19, 2025
6:31 p.m.

Transcript No. 26

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission

Justice Dallas K. Miller, Chair

Greg Clark

John D. Evans, KC

Julian Martin

Susan Samson

Support Staff

Shannon Dean, KC

Philip Massolin

Aaron Roth

Rhonda Sorensen

Christina Steenberg

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Clerk

Clerk Assistant and Executive Director of
Parliamentary Services

Administrator

Manager of Corporate Communications

Supervisor of Communications Services

Managing Editor of *Alberta Hansard*

Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Red Deer

Public Participants

Laveryne Green
Heath Gudmundson
Bradley Hodcraft
Jody Mercier-Layden

6:31 p.m.

Thursday, June 19, 2025

[Justice Miller in the chair]

The Chair: Good evening, everyone, and welcome to the public hearing for the Electoral Boundaries Commission of Alberta, the Red Deer date, Thursday evening.

First of all, thank you to those of you who are here. We are expecting a couple of other presenters that had put their names on the list. Thank you for coming and participating in this process.

By way of introduction, my name is Justice Dallas Miller. I'm the chairman of the commission, and I also serve as a justice of the Court of King's Bench in southern Alberta.

The other commissioners are, to my far right, Mr. Greg Clark, an entrepreneur and consultant focusing on information and knowledge management. Greg has served a term as a member of the Legislature of Alberta for Calgary-Elbow. He's also a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II jubilee medal. Currently Greg serves as chair of the Balancing Pool of Alberta and consults and advises widely with organizations and corporations relative to proper board governance.

To my immediate right is Dr. Julian Martin, a retired history professor from the University of Alberta with advanced degrees from Cambridge University. Dr. Martin has volunteered on many committees in the city of Edmonton and Sherwood Park and served on provincial quasi-judicial tribunals.

To my immediate left is Susan Samson, a long-time resident of Sylvan Lake, Alberta, and an experienced municipal councillor and mayor. Susan was named citizen of the year and received the Queen Elizabeth II diamond jubilee medal in 2012.

At the far end of the table is Mr. John Evans, KC, a lawyer with the province-wide firm known as Stringam. He works out of the Lethbridge office but conducts trials across the province, and his legal ability has been recognized by being the recipient of King's Counsel, or the KC award. John also volunteers as a member of the Alberta Judicial Nominating Committee.

We are your Electoral Boundaries Commission. If you have anything you want to leave with us in terms of written material, please leave it with Mr. Aaron Roth at the back – he'll wave – and he'll take that information for you.

We are an independent commission established by the Legislature of Alberta. We were appointed by the Speaker. Our task is relatively simple. We have to add two electoral divisions to the province of Alberta – legislation has moved from 87 electoral divisions to 89 for the next provincial election – and we must deal with the significant population growth that this province has experienced in the last several years.

To give you some perspective of our task, it's helpful to look at our timeline. We were appointed by the Speaker of the Legislature in late March of this year, and the clock starts ticking from the time of our appointment. In April we met as a commission on a couple of occasions to discuss process and dates and planning, and we commenced our public hearing process in late May. Since then we have been across the province. This is our last in-person public hearing of the first round. We will be receiving submissions on Monday virtually, and that day is filled up already. After we've completed receiving all the written submissions and all the public hearings and all the virtual hearings, we will begin deliberating on our report.

Our first task will be to have an interim report filed with the Speaker by late October. The legislation requires us to have that report in within seven months of our appointment. Then that will be released to the public, and the public will be able to respond to that, critique it, make suggestions, and we'll have another round of

public hearings. First of all, we'll have a round of written submissions throughout November and December, and then we will have hearings in January, hearing from the public and receiving further submissions. Based on that second round, if there are revisions required, we will make those revisions and complete a final report that must be registered and filed with the Speaker by late March of 2026. The Speaker receives that, it becomes public, and the Legislature will enact enabling legislation based on our recommendations.

Of course, if you're interested in the process and you know about what we're doing, you already know that each electoral division or riding or constituency – those terms are used interchangeably – has one Member of the Legislative Assembly. Individuals qualified to vote within that electoral division elect that particular MLA.

Again, by way of contrast, it's helpful to see what happened the last time around when Alberta had an Electoral Boundaries Commission report. Back in 2017 the Electoral Boundaries Commission provided a report to the Legislature based on a population of just over 4 million people, and at that time they had 87 electoral divisions to work with. The formula used by the previous commission: they took the population of Alberta at that time, 4,062,609, and came up with a mean average, after dividing the number of constituencies, of 46,697. That's not the target rate for each electoral division. The target is a range, and the range is outlined below, of anywhere down to minus 25 per cent or above up to plus 25 per cent, so a range of 35,023 to 58,371. That was what happened last Electoral Boundaries Commission in 2017.

We've had two general elections since then, and time has come now to do an up-to-date Electoral Boundaries Commission. Population has increased significantly in the province. The population that we will be dealing with and relying on is 4,888,723. When that population is divided by the number of electoral divisions of 89, the mean average is 54,929, almost 55,000. Again, the target population range, then, for each electoral division is minus 25, of 41,197, to plus 25, of 68,661.

The huge population growth has not been spread evenly across all electoral divisions, so we have to come up with a plan and draw boundaries that provide for what the law requires both in terms of legislation and in terms of case law. We must come up with a report that provides for effective representation. How do we determine effective representation? We do that by looking at several factors. These are all enumerated in the legislation that guides our work. We have to take into consideration relative population sparsity and density. We then look at issues such as common community interests within an area. We also take into account geographic features that will be helpful in terms of determining electoral boundaries. As well, communication lines, transportation lines across the province will also be considered.

Our ultimate goal is to come up with a report that provides understandable and clear boundaries for Albertans. We are also allowed to take into consideration other appropriate factors. It is somewhat of an open-ended or vague term, but that allows us to take into consideration things that we've heard as a result of our public hearings and include those in our consideration for the final report.

6:40

At this stage of the hearing we now want to hear from Albertans, and we've heard from Albertans everywhere from Pincher Creek to Slave Lake, Fort McMurray to Peace River down to Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, and Calgary and Edmonton and parts in between. This is our last public hearing, as I said, so we've got lots of time, and we're prepared to hear from anyone who is registered or nonregistered to present.

By way of record, is Michelle Baer present? No.
Preston Hoff? Okay.

Jody Mercier-Layden? Do you want to come forward? Oh, okay.
Anybody want to make your presentation? The two that scheduled are not here.

Mr. Evans: We can do a Q and A if you'd like. If you have questions, we can do that.

The Chair: Ma'am, do you have a question? Just come forward so the mic picks up. By the way, the hearing is recorded, and the audio content will be on the website. As well, it will be transcribed and on the website as well.

Just identify yourself, tell us where you're from, and what your question is.

Ms Green: My name is Laveryne Green. I'm Red Deer-South. My first question, I guess, is: can it be as simple as the bulk of the influx and increase of population are the two largest cities, Calgary and Edmonton? Is there a possibility of that?

The Chair: Oh, of the ridings going into Calgary and Edmonton? I think there's a very strong possibility.

Ms Green: Okay. That eliminates one of my concerns, I suppose, because of the sparsity – and you take in all those factors as well – for the communities that are rural. Am I clear enough?

The Chair: Yeah.

Ms Green: Sorry for my voice.

I wouldn't want to mix the two. I don't want to water down the concerns of rural areas versus the city because it's quite different. Those are kind of my questions and concerns.

The Chair: We haven't . . .

Ms Green: Got that far?

The Chair: We haven't nearly got to the point of completing a first draft, but as long as you don't tell anybody, there's a pretty good chance that Edmonton will get a new riding and a pretty good chance that Calgary will get a new riding.

Ms Green: Yeah. I mean, it makes sense.

The Chair: Yeah. And there's going to be a lot of adjustments between them and throughout the province.

Sorry, you're in Red Deer-South?

Ms Green: Yes.

The Chair: The population, again, is?

Mr. Evans: Pretty close to average.

Mr. Roth: Fifty-eight five.

The Chair: Fifty-eight five. So if you saw the formula, you're well within the target range.

Ms Green: We wouldn't have to change that much.

The Chair: Probably not. Well, no guarantees.

Ms Green: I don't know exactly where ours is, even, but if we're only adding two more . . .

The Chair: Ridings.

Ms Green: Yes. Then that would likely be the cities.

The Chair: Yeah.

Ms Green: I guess it's great that you're looking at everything. Maybe all of a sudden in August everyone will move to the country, the rural.

The Chair: Would have made our job a little easier.
Okay. Anything else? Any other questions?

Ms Green: From me?

The Chair: Yeah, or anybody. The person you're with.

Ms Green: That's all for me for now.

The Chair: Okay. Thanks.

Ms Green: Thank you.

The Chair: At the risk of putting anybody on the spot, those who came to observe, any questions that you might have?

Mr. Gudmundson: It's over?

Mrs. Samson: It might be.

The Chair: It might be. Yeah.

Mr. Gudmundson: Sorry. I didn't know it had started. What was this all about, like, just in a general overview?

The Chair: You missed the first five minutes, sir.

Ms Green: Yeah. Let's do it again.

Mr. Gudmundson: No. You don't have to. I was just coming through the lobby, and they said that this was going on.

The Chair: Okay. Well, you know what? I do a lot of the talking here at the beginning. I wonder if somebody else wants to talk and just share, maybe in a different tone or a different way, what we're doing.

Greg.

Mr. Clark: Maybe, if anybody is willing, could you tell us a bit about Red Deer? What's happening? You know, part of our consideration is where the growth is happening.

Red Deer, as it stands now, both the constituencies – as Justice Miller said, our target average is 54,929. The 4.8 million number we are using divided by 89 constituencies is how you get that number, and both the Red Deer constituencies are right around that average. On one hand, good news. Well done, Red Deer. On the other hand, I'm curious where the growth is coming from. Are you seeing a lot of new residents moving in? Are people living in the county – you know, sort of what's the general kind of economic situation? How is it going? And where do you think it's going to go in the next seven to eight years, plus or minus .5 per cent?

Ms Mercier-Layden: I'm not a good person to ask. I'm from Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

The Chair: Oh, okay.

Mr. Clark: Oh, great. Well, we're interested in the whole region. There you go. Okay. Talk to me about Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. That's a beautiful part of the world. Yeah. That one has grown but not – I've got a couple of different data sources here.

The interesting thing my data tells me – I'll just stall for time here while we do this – is that Rimbey is about 14 per cent under. It's grown: Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. This is sort of a trend that we're seeing. It's not that it isn't growing. That constituency is growing marginally, about 2 per cent, give or take, in the last seven or eight years. It's not that it's not growing at all. It's growing slowly and, from our consideration here, not growing as quickly as the rest of the province. That creates a bit of a challenge. At the same time there are other considerations – large geographic areas, certain interests amongst rural communities – that we need to take into account and do.

Yeah. Anything specific you want to tell us about Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre?

Ms Mercier-Layden: Sorry. I'm completely on the spot. I would just be concerned that the larger space you are spreading to meet that growth, that you are seeing in other constituencies, will diminish the ability of your representative to get everywhere. There are larger ones in our province, but maybe they don't have the centres of population similar to the one that we have, with so many municipalities, school divisions.

Mr. Clark: Go ahead, Justice. Sorry.

The Chair: I'm curious. One of the tasks that we have as a commission is to name the electoral divisions as well. Is Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre a satisfactory name, as far as you are aware, to people who live there?

Ms Mercier-Layden: It certainly represents the larger centres of the riding, the kind of triangle of where people are located. It's long. It makes a heck of an e-mail address. Yeah. I mean, the name suits the riding. The mountain part is a descriptor of what you expect when you head to that west country. So if anything changed, you'd maybe want to see the mountains stay in there if you took away the municipality names.

Ms Green: In terms of Red Deer-South – we've just moved to Red Deer maybe five years ago.

6:50

The Chair: From?

Ms Green: I suppose Didsbury most recently. He's a pilot, so he can live anywhere, so we shouldn't have chosen Didsbury. Anyway, what I've observed in that time frame with the influx of newcomers, in particular right where we are, is naturally quite a few of the Ukrainian folks. That's some increase that I've noticed.

I volunteer with C.A.R.E. a little bit, central Alberta refugee effort. That's simply called newcomers, so I would say African, French-speaking people, a lot of unfortunate countries that are trying to go somewhere safer, I guess. We're now just in a condo, and one lady that just moved in is probably late 30s although it's hard for me to judge age for another nationality, and I don't know her well enough to ask. It's always hard to meet people in condo situations. The people in cities pretend no one else exists, but in asking her, you know, how it's going being new to Red Deer, she said to me, "I feel safe," which was such an unusual comment when you meet someone – right? – for us as western Canadians in particular.

So we've helped people move here in terms of refugees – some are in Didsbury – I mean, all my life. The boat people, if you're old enough to remember that.

The Chair: Yeah.

Ms Green: It's not easy for these people, but we have more than we can handle now. It's kind of like if I have 1,200 square feet in my house, and I had an open border, and I had a thousand people in there. Those are issues, too, but I'm getting off topic. That's what I have observed, mostly, at this point.

The Chair: I'd be curious to know, if you compared Red Deer-South to Red Deer-North, which has more population growth?

Ms Green: I have no idea and no opinion. I rarely even go to Red Deer-North.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms Green: I have a sister there, but, yeah, I couldn't help you with that at all. Sorry.

Mr. Gudmundson: What is the population growth in Red Deer in the past year?

Mr. Clark: I happen to have that right here, and I can answer your question. Since 2016, when we last did this, the boundaries of Red Deer-North have grown 9 per cent and Red Deer-South have grown 7 per cent. Compared to the rest of the province, the province of Alberta has grown about 17 per cent in that time. So Red Deer is still growing in absolute terms, a little like Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, but just not quite as fast.

Mr. Gudmundson: Can you track where the growth is coming from? Like, it is from population increase through babies in Canada?

The Chair: Largely immigration into the province; immigration from other Canadians, from outside of Canada.

Mr. Gudmundson: Even Red Deer itself, right? The same: 13 per cent. Now, what's the population of Red Deer again?

Mr. Clark: Well, between the two constituencies it looks like it's about 110,000, give or take. So between the two constituencies, which make up the entire area, it's about 112,000, what I've got on mine. This is as of July 1, 2024. That's the last clean data that we have.

Mr. Gudmundson: When you're bringing immigration in, is it tracked to employment and unemployment, how it increases and decreases throughout that time?

Mr. Clark: No.

The Chair: I'm sure that data is available. It's not a factor for us.

Mr. Gudmundson: Because you guys are asking, what I heard there was: where you're seeing the job growth. Is it job growth or is it just population growth that you're looking at?

The Chair: Population growth.

Mr. Gudmundson: Oh. So you're not looking at the job growth side of it?

Mrs. Samson: No.

Mr. Gudmundson: Okay. That's all I got.

Ms Green: This just crossed my mind. Most of these people that I spoke of . . .

The Chair: Newcomers aren't yet voters?

Ms Green: They aren't able to vote for probably quite a while.

The Chair: But they're entitled . . .

Mr. Clark: We don't know that based on population.

Ms Green: No, but I'm just mentioning that that is true for what I've observed as the newcomers to Red Deer. I mean, we've met quite a few people who have moved here from Ontario, too. That was the other big influx.

The Chair: Right. But they're entitled to representation, and we need to make sure that any representation is effective. So the numbers irrespective of . . .

Ms Green: So you have your MLA, but if they aren't able to vote, how do they get representation?

The Chair: Susan.

Mrs. Samson: I can answer that. The MLA's job is to represent all the people who live in the constituency, whether they vote for him or whether they even vote, because people who are new, like your neighbour from Africa, might need health care services, might need to figure out where she can get English. It's a variety. So all the people are involved in the population count because those people will either be underaged and sooner or later they will be 18 and be able to vote; some people will die; other people will be not Canadians and during the time, in the next election, maybe they will become Canadians and eligible to vote. So we try to pick something that is not the voters to measure how big the province is growing, so they pick people and we pick all the people. It comes from the Canada federal census. That's where the number comes from. Everybody is in it, and it's just a snapshot in time.

Ms Green: Makes sense. Yeah.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

Ms Green: We work on a couple of CAs, so we represent them all. Yes. Thank you.

Do you have a question?

Mr. Hodcraft: All I was going to say is, like, you mentioned that Red Deer-North has grown more rapidly than Red Deer-South. I find that astonishing. Mind you, maybe I don't travel around town enough, but I see a lot of building in the south, and I haven't seen it in the north, but maybe I don't get out much.

Mr. Clark: Well, and where the line is drawn is not probably what you would naturally consider north and south.

Mr. Hodcraft: Right.

Mr. Clark: It's drawn at – what is that? – 50th Street. Geographically the Red Deer-North constituency is quite a bit bigger. You see it on the map there.

The Chair: Maybe, just as we wrap up here, keep in mind – and feel free to spread the word. I know there's a lot of social media advertisement about the commission and its work, but if you want to keep those dates in mind, there will be a report, as I said, coming out in October that will be called the interim report. The public will certainly have access to it and have an opportunity to respond to that in relation to any and all ridings. If people are concerned about that, that's the time for them to reach out again to the commission.

The website: you probably had access to it. By virtue of coming here, you've probably seen the website. It's abebc.ca.

Ms Green: Sorry?

The Chair: It's abebc.ca.

Mrs. Samson: On the back of the card.

The Chair: If you received it.

Okay. Well, if there are no more questions, no more presentations – we've heard from one of the scheduled presenters that she's had to cancel – I'll adjourn the public hearing.

We will have our last day on Monday.

By the way, Mr. Roth, can members of the public observe our virtual hearings?

7:00

Mr. Roth: Yeah. The YouTube channel.

The Chair: Okay. If you go to the website via the YouTube link on the website, you will be able to observe our final day on Monday, which is both the morning and the evening, of several presentations.

Mr. Roth: I'll add that the YouTube channel has the audio of all the meetings that are available as well.

The Chair: That have transpired already.

Mr. Roth: And all the transcripts are posted to the website as well.

The Chair: Okay.

Thank you very much. Thank you for coming out, and keep your eyes open for the report in October.

[The hearing adjourned at 7 p.m.]



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

Virtual

Monday, June 23, 2025
9:03 a.m.

Transcript No. 27

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

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Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Virtual

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Patricia Williams

Justin Wright, MLA, Cypress-Medicine Hat

9:03 a.m.

Monday, June 23, 2025

[Justice Miller in the chair]

The Chair: Well, good morning, everyone. I want to welcome all of you to our very last day of public hearings, in the first round, for the Electoral Boundaries Commission. By way of introduction, my name is Justice Dallas Miller. I'm the chairman of the commission, and I will very briefly introduce my co-commissioners. If you want any biographical information on us as a commission, you can find that on the EBC website.

Susan Samson from Sylvan Lake is to my left, and to the far left is John Evans, KC, of Lethbridge. To my immediate right is Dr. Julian Martin, and to his right is Mr. Greg Clark. Julian Martin is from Sherwood Park, and Mr. Clark is from Calgary.

By way of background – I hope you'll be able to see the PowerPoint here shortly. We are an independent commission appointed by the Speaker of the Legislature for the express purpose of taking a look at Alberta's electoral boundaries and refashioning and redesigning a new set of boundaries for the next . . .

Mr. Wright: Sorry to interrupt, folks, but I think we've lost you. Judging by some of the reactions of the other cameras that are on, they too are not hearing anyone.

The Chair: Okay. Is everyone in the lobby, Mr. Roth? Yeah. Okay.

By way of background, this commission was appointed by the Speaker of the Legislature in late March of this year. Once we receive our appointment, the clock starts running in terms of the timeline for the commission. In April we met briefly as a commission to discuss process and schedule, and in late May we started our first round of public hearings throughout the province. We started in Pincher Creek in the southwest corner, and we've criss-crossed across the province. We're concluding our public tour with this day of virtual hearings, and we have a full morning and a full evening of presentations.

Our task is to do two things as part of redrawing the boundaries. The Legislature has expanded the Legislature through its most recent act from 87 seats to 89 seats. Of course, in each electoral district, the voters in that district elect the MLA. This is the first time there's been an expansion of the Legislature in some time. The reason the Legislature has expanded the number of seats is largely due to the explosive – I'm not exaggerating – population growth in this province over the last eight years.

It's helpful to get some perspective on our task. If we look at the last Electoral Boundaries Commission, in 2017 that commission issued its report on 87 boundaries, and they dealt with a population of slightly over 4 million people. The formula that that commission used was to take the population of, I believe, 4,062,000 and some and divide it by the number of ridings, 87. That gave them a mean average of about 43,000 and some persons in each riding – can we have that screen? Yeah, 46,697 individuals in each electoral division. Of course, that is not the target number for each electoral district; rather, we have a range under our system in Canada of as low as minus 25 per cent to as high as plus 25 per cent. You can see the targeted range for the ridings as a result of the 2017 Electoral Boundaries Commission, from 35,000 to just over 58,000.

Our task and our population for this commission is a significantly larger population, 4,888,723. The mean average of 89 ridings is therefore 54,929. The target range is thereby 41,000 at the low end and almost 69,000 at the top end. That's the targeted range for the electoral divisions that we must fit each electoral division in.

Alberta's growth has not been consistent across the province. It's been largely concentrated in the two larger cities. We will obviously

look at that, but we will also be guided by certain principles in the legislation. That includes dealing with the relative sparsity and density of the population in order to arrive at effective representation. So we will be looking at sparsity and density of population.

9:10

We'll also be looking at common community interests. Those are important factors in urban areas and in rural areas, but that is certainly a factor we will be considering. We'll also be looking at geographic features, which predominantly will be features for us to look at and consider in a rural context. Communication lines and transportation routes will also be a factor in designing the boundaries.

And, finally, our task as a commission is to come up with understandable and clear electoral boundaries so that Albertans understand the electoral division that they reside in, where they vote in, and who their MLA for that division is.

The legislation also gives us the catch-all of other appropriate factors to consider in drawing the boundaries. And that heading covers the type of information we will hear and we have heard in the public hearings. So that's a basic summary of our work.

We've been on the road now, this would be our fifth week, I guess. After we've completed today's hearings, we will commence our deliberations this week and start to put pen to paper. Our task and our deadline is to come up with an interim electoral boundaries report by late October. That will be filed with the Speaker of the Legislature and will be made public, and there will be opportunity to comment and address our interim report throughout November and December. Then in January we will have a further round of public hearings, with a view to complete our final report and have that filed and registered with the Speaker of the Legislature by late March of 2026.

That's the background information, which I hope is helpful to those of you who are in the lobby and were present for it. We will start right on time for 9:15 for our first presenter, Mr. Justin Wright, MLA. Sorry; one thing I should have said is that we have 10 minutes for presentation, and we will allow five minutes for question and dialogue from the commission.

Mr. Wright: Well, thank you, folks. I don't think I'm going to be anywhere close to the 10-minute mark, but I will do what I can to present in a concise way my thoughts on the Cypress-Medicine Hat and Brooks-Medicine Hat riding boundaries. Thank you so much for your time on this important work.

It is important to ensure that your work is being focused on the undertaking to represent Albertans in the best way possible. I have submitted a report that strongly supports maintaining the current electoral boundaries for Cypress-Medicine Hat and Brooks-Medicine Hat constituencies. In this submission it reflects not only a practical argument but a principled one that representation should be reflecting of real regional cohesion and not just population numbers on a map.

Medicine Hat and its surrounding communities have become increasingly integrated across economic, educational, cultural, and service lines. The current what I call rural, which is a combination of rural and urban, is not only functional but foundational on how to best represent and deliver the expectations of this region.

In the rural representation, blended ridings such as Cypress-Medicine Hat and Brooks-Medicine Hat are more than just geographical compromises; they are a means to represent in a robust way for the regional economy. As an MLA representing both urban and rural communities, and in enriching my understanding of what the needs are down here, it ensures that the legislative process, that

I walk through on a daily basis, is that of a diverse view, meeting the needs and understanding the balance of urban centres as well as rural economic growth.

While urban centres often drive economic growth, our rural areas supply the resources and cultural backbone. Together they form a cohesive constituency that is greater than the sum of its parts. This blend ensures better governance where urban priorities such as infrastructure, health care, and innovation are harmonized with rural concerns such as agriculture, transportation, and land use. It also produces more versatile grounded regulators.

I feel in this area two MLAs are a necessity and a luxury. In a time where regional voices are at a risk of being diluted, maintaining two constituencies that are blended, anchored both in urban and rural, is not just a luxury; it's a necessity. It ensures double the advocacy in the Legislature, better accessibility for constituents, and more resilience in pushing for local priorities. Considering that the challenges of our region are actively managing urgent care investments, postsecondary innovations, major infrastructure upgrades, school expansion, and energy diversification, these files are complex, demanding more than a single MLA delivering a voice of rural needs and can reasonably manage across a vast and diverse region.

The next point I'd like to point out is that Medicine Hat, due to its isolation and distance away from major shopping centres and major living centres, has become the anchor of southeastern Alberta. With Medicine Hat, it is the only major economic service hub between Regina and Calgary. With its services and cultural institutions, it provides critical infrastructure and leadership to a large geographical area. When we look at health care, our regional hospital services the lion's share of southern Alberta, specifically from the southeast and north-southeast perspective as well as with our newly announced urgent care centre and specialists that are servicing much of southern Alberta for health care needs.

In education the Medicine Hat College provides an in-depth, comprehensive community college approach to postsecondary with its satellite campus in Brooks. It plays a key regional role in postsecondary access with folks coming from Saskatchewan, northern Alberta, southern Alberta, southern British Columbia, and even as far away as Manitoba and our international students as well.

On the economic leadership with the transformation of the Medicine Hat chamber of commerce to the Southeast Alberta Chamber of Commerce, Medicine Hat's reach goes well beyond its corporate borders and up into areas such as special areas, into the Oyen area, as well as all the way to the U.S. border. Even the business community recognizes that regional interests must be the approach for a holistic take on representation rather than just rigid geographic or political lines. One of our major community foundations is also representing a large area very similar to the Medicine Hat chamber of commerce, that being the Community Foundation of Southeastern Alberta. These alignments reinforce the need to maintaining constituencies that reflect these evolving economic and institutional realities and not sever them arbitrarily.

Medicine Hat also has a large crossregional service integration. The Palliser Economic Partnership is a prime example of the need for regional blended constituencies. It services a larger corridor from Oyen to the north to the U.S. border to the south and the Saskatchewan border to the east and the Forty Mile border to the west. This is precisely the footprint encompassed by Cypress-Medicine Hat and Brooks-Medicine Hat currently. Splitting these ridings would weaken the alignment with economic development efforts and fracture collaborative movement that's happening down here.

Similarly, if we look at the education side of things, the Prairie Rose school division serves nearly the entirety of the territory of both constituencies and stretches into others even. Education is one of the more pressing issues constituents face, and redrawing these lines would result in confusing representation, policy fragmentation, and less efficient local advocacy.

Finally, let's address the question of representational fairness. Medicine Hat currently enjoys more direct representation per capita than other cities like Red Deer, Lethbridge, Airdrie, Grande Prairie, but it is proportionate to the complexity and breadth of what our regional anchor needs.

9:20

Medicine Hat serves as a regional capital responsible for supporting dozens of surrounding municipalities, counties, and even, if we take a look into Saskatchewan, First Nations. This is not just about city interest; it's about urban and rural residents who rely on Medicine Hat for education, medical treatment, commerce, and community. Reducing or changing up the split of representation down here would result in what I feel to be undue harm to rural and urban Alberta representation, the very people who feel that they could potentially lose a familiar voice in Edmonton.

In conclusion, I don't feel that this boundary redraw is necessarily a political issue. It's a matter of effective and equitable representation. Blended ridings serve our communities well because our communities themselves are blended in practice. Medicine Hat must continue, in my opinion, to be represented by two blended MLAs who together reflect the full character of diversity and ambition of southeastern Alberta. On behalf of all those who rely on cohesive, regional, accessible governance, I respectfully urge that you do not change the boundaries of Cypress-Medicine Hat or Brooks-Medicine Hat.

Thank you for your service and consideration.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Wright. It's always helpful to get someone who drives the roads and knocks on the doors present. A quick question for clarification, and then I'm going to turn it over to the rest of the commission. Does your riding currently include the county of Forty Mile?

Mr. Wright: No, it does not.

The Chair: Okay. There is a fair bit of feedback about the confusion of the boundary within the city. Wouldn't you agree that that needs some adjustment or clarity? It doesn't really follow great roads or streets necessarily, from what we've heard.

Mr. Wright: Well, it follows, actually, two of our very major networks. It follows highway 1 and highway 3. When we look at the map of Medicine Hat, Brooks-Medicine Hat and Cypress-Medicine Hat: the easy way to explain the division is the river, but the actual division is the river, highway 1, and highway 3. The river comes into the west of town to highway 1, and then highway 1 comes down to highway 3, and highway 3 you follow all the way downtown, and then it connects to the river again. So there is a very simple way to look at it, and that's the division of highway 1 and highway 3. Highway 3 also becomes known as Gershaw Drive.

I know when I was at the meetings in Medicine Hat that you fine folks put together there that had great folks turning out, highway 3 was already a divisional request that was made, and while those folks seemed to misunderstand that Gershaw Drive is highway 3, it's got a pretty clear division. I think the big challenge we've got is that so often people just look at it as the easy way. The easiest way is to say the division is the river, but down here the problems with Medicine Hat don't stop at the river. They're something where

each constituency works really hard to represent in an appropriate way.

The Chair: Okay. So you're content with the way it's divided, then?

Mr. Wright: Yeah. If we were cutting down side streets in a very confusing way, I would wholeheartedly agree. But given the fact that you're following very major arteries in the community, I am inclined to disagree with their take on that.

The Chair: Okay. Let me turn it over to the rest of the commission. We've got about five minutes. Mr. Evans, any questions?

Mr. Evans: Just: what do you think about the name?

Mr. Wright: I think it represents exactly what it's supposed to be doing. If we take a look at my riding of Cypress-Medicine Hat, we're representing the historical Cypress county as well as the Cypress Hills in that name but also representing Medicine Hat. When we take a look at Brooks-Medicine Hat, I think it represents the two main economic and regional anchors in that space. As I mentioned, the Medicine Hat College has its Brooks location, that is playing vital roles in postsecondary spaces. I think including Brooks-Medicine Hat and Cypress-Medicine Hat as is represents the important features of each of the ridings.

Mr. Evans: What about Medicine Hat-Cypress, Medicine Hat-Brooks?

Mr. Wright: I would disagree. Just when I structure out names and look at different pieces, I like to try to do it alphabetically. I find it sounds more professional when it's alphabetical, but that's just my personal take on it.

The Chair: Okay. Susan, any questions?

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for your presentation, MLA Wright. I did read your submission, so it's good to be refreshed on that. What I did hear when I was in Medicine Hat was that people were not sure about Brooks being in the riding as a community of interest. Could you speak to that?

Mr. Wright: Yeah. You know, often we joke in rural or remote Alberta that home is where the nearest Costco is, or at least that's the joke. When we take a look, Medicine Hat has a draw that goes beyond its corporate borders into surrounding areas. I come with a business background where we would regularly have business or customer interactions with as far out as Cluny to the north and west as far out to Burdett on the south and east and then, obviously, into Saskatchewan. It would be not uncommon to pull folks from there.

Why I bring this up is that it's incredibly relevant to know where your pool is in regard to folks that are impacted by what happens in Medicine Hat. With the Brooks campus of the Medicine Hat College being located in Brooks as well as it being one of our major destinations in which we pull folks for commerce – we have organizations in town, a great number of organizations that I have not gotten to talking about that represent folks, you know, new-to-Canada individuals as well as people that are coming for health care, whether it's specialist appointments, heck, even doctor's appointments. We regularly get folks from Brooks into Medicine Hat as part of their day-to-day life.

The Chair: Mr. Wright, I'm going to have to slow you down there. We're kind of cautious of time here. I need time for two more questions.

Dr. Martin, any questions of Mr. Wright?

Dr. Martin: Yes. Thank you very much, and thank you for your presentation, both your submission and your synopsis today. I want to go back to your remarks about – I think I can quote it – better and more grounded regulators. Could you put some meat on that phrase? You are offering it as a benefit to the current configuration?

Mr. Wright: Yeah. Perhaps when we take a look at the breakdown that we see right now in a one-side-or-the-other voice, having a blended riding gives us a better understanding of the needs that are faced by both urban and rural constituents. The main balance that I hear often from a number of my colleagues on either side of the aisle is that they only hear one side of the voice. Alberta has got a long-standing history of both representing our main cultural and historical rural needs as well as the economics of that but also balancing the needs with the ongoing urbanization that we are seeing. It's just simply to call out the fact that as things are changing, there are a number of things that stay the same. Being able to have your finger on the pulse of what's going on in rural and urban gives you a better understanding of how to represent those diverse voices.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Wright.

Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: I'll try to be quick here. I know you're Cypress-Medicine Hat, but I would like to ask a little bit about Brooks-Medicine Hat. Around Brooks, places like Vauxhall, Bassano, that are not currently part of that constituency, perhaps points east down highway 555: is that part of, would you say, the Brooks catchment? Do those folks tend to go north-south, east-west? Like, what does that sort of catchment look like?

Mr. Wright: To be honest, I wouldn't be able to speak to Bassano or Vauxhall. I can say from my prepolitical life that getting folks from Bassano and Vauxhall was not uncommon down this way, again, being the only major shopping centre between Regina and Calgary. Outside of that, I couldn't begin to expand on Vauxhall and/or Bassano to help you out. Sorry.

9:30

Mr. Clark: Would you say then that that maybe counts as having quite a bit of a difference between those communities if you're not that familiar with their patterns?

Mr. Wright: If I go back to my high school days, we used to help out with the Vauxhall rodeo as part of our teambuilding for football. Medicine Hat's impact on Vauxhall: I would say what's good for the goose is good for the gander. When it comes to Bassano, you know, Bassano is certainly more tied in with Brooks, going back to your first portion of that question.

But truth be told, the reason why I say this is that I personally have my focus on my riding as well as what sandboxes key stakeholders from my riding play in. As an example: with the Medicine Hat College that I've talked about, the Medicine Hat regional hospital as I've talked about, a number of specialists in there have patients or students or facilities that are in those areas and add to the tapestry. That would be what I'd be able to offer you.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Wright. Thank you for your presentation and for coming. I'm told that when I excuse the presenter from this format, if you want to listen to the rest of the morning's presenters, go to our website's YouTube channel and you can hear the rest of the morning. That's just a suggestion if you wish to stay and hear what's being said. By the way, everything that's being presented here is being recorded, and the audio will be up on our website eventually, and written transcripts via *Hansard* will also be on our website.

Thank you again, Mr. Wright.

Mr. Wright: No worries.

The Chair: We now move to Chris Dovey. Mr. Chris Dovey, can we hear you by unmuting possibly?

Mr. Dovey: Hang on. Sorry. Can you hear me now?

The Chair: Yeah, we can.

Mr. Dovey: Oh, great. Sorry. Thanks.

Thank you, commissioners, for giving me the opportunity to participate. My name is Christopher Dovey. I have lived in the neighbourhood of Forest Heights in Calgary-East for over 25 years. Over this time I have endeavoured to help my community wherever possible. I have sat on the parent councils of Holy Family elementary, Bishop Kidd junior high, and Father Lacombe high school. I have also sat on the citizens' land-use committee for the David D. Oughton site, the board of the Albert Park-Radisson Heights Community Association, and the Forest Lawn ethnocultural association.

I want to speak to the commission today about Calgary-East. First, Calgary-East has a unique composition. Its boundaries need to be aligned with Calgary's municipal boundaries and should not include parts of neighbouring rural communities. The complexion of Calgary-East is visibly and demonstrably different from bedroom communities like Chestermere. Calgary-East is practically an inner city community with visible minorities and a high proportion of technical, skilled, trade, and blue-collar workers. Calgary-East has a high population of low-income Calgarians, ESL Calgarians, as well as a high percentage of renters.

Contrast this with a community like Chestermere and the difference is vivid. I have rarely if ever interacted with citizens of Chestermere, nor have I ever met anyone from there in my various community engagements over the years.

According to the 2021 census approximately half of the residents of Calgary-East identify as a visible minority. Within this there are 18.9 per cent who identify as Black, 28.6 per cent as Filipino, and 21 per cent as Southeast Asian. Further, Calgary-East has the highest percentage of female sole-parent households in Calgary. From a newly constructed major roadway, which includes a dedicated express transit route to downtown, the continued vibrancy of International Avenue, a fully renovated Forest Lawn library, and, finally, the development of the David D. Oughton site, Calgary-East has worked hard to connect better with the city of Calgary as a whole and provide better services to its constituents.

Growth in Calgary-East is evident from the continued development of new home builds and mixed-use builds popping up throughout the community. These homes provide much-needed inventory for people looking to get into the housing market in a more affordable way than other communities in Calgary.

Some issues that affect Calgary-East and not hybrid Calgary-East/rural/Chestermere: families dependent on breakfast and lunch programs in schools; affordable housing; rent controls; caps on insurance; living wage, not a minimum wage; many of the

constituents are working multiple minimum wage part-time jobs; many families are relying on the food banks to feed their families; little to no support for English language learners; no extra funds to support extracurricular activities for youth; an increasing unhoused population; and different demographics, which are paramount, causing inequities in schools and education. The Greater Forest Lawn area was designated as high needs in the early 1990s, with special funding for schools. If the boundaries of Calgary-East are opened up to include neighbouring rural communities, the working-class, racialized voters in this riding will be underserved. Their voices will be diluted.

Second, the area north of Calgary has seen rapid growth since the last commission was struck. This demands another seat. The voters in the north would be better served if another seat was added to address the significant increase in population that the area has seen.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much for that presentation. I believe that you may have been the first person to speak specifically to Calgary-East.

I'm going to start with Mr. Clark for any questions or comments.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Thank you very much. I'm just looking at my data here. I just wonder if you could maybe comment specifically on the growth patterns in Calgary-East. We look at a map there. I think what you say seems to resonate in terms of there is quite a, you know, sort of a physical gap, I guess, between Calgary-East – there it is, if you can see that, just the words "Calgary-East" and the population numbers there – east of Stoney Trail. Can you tell us where the development is happening and again maybe just speak a little bit to the sort of connectedness of Calgary-East and perhaps in particular, I understand – is that Forest Lawn there, just on the on the left there, 17th Avenue SE and 36th Street? Is that Forest Lawn part of Calgary-East? So two questions: where's the development and just confirming where the communities are.

Mr. Dovey: Yeah. You're quite correct about communities and the dividing lines. I see a lot of development occurring in my area, which is Radisson Heights, and surrounding on 36th Street SE going towards 17th Avenue, so from Marlborough Mall to 17th Avenue there are seven new builds, multihousing units being built around there. There are a few others happening in Southview, and there are a couple of larger scale mixed-use facilities which are happening or have happened on our portion of 17th Avenue, International Avenue, before you get to that dividing line. So those would be kind of the major ones.

I'm not entirely certain since I'm no longer involved in what's happening with the David D. Oughton site, but it is being remediated. It's all plowed down. As far as I understand, it's going to be a combination of a large affordable housing, multifamily, and mixed-use development area. So those would be kind of the major projects that I've noticed. In the last couple of years I've certainly noticed a lot more, you know, single-family homes, new homes being built and things like that as I kind of bike and walk around the community.

Mr. Clark: That's really helpful. Thank you.

Mr. Dovey: You're welcome. Thank you.

The Chair: Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you for your presentation, sir. I wanted to come back to – the map stimulated me to ask: do you have thoughts about

development within the existing boundaries on the eastern side of the orbital freeway?

Mr. Dovey: Can you sort of clarify for me where specifically you're talking about there?

9:40

Dr. Martin: To the east of Stoney Trail.

Mr. Dovey: I'll be honest. That's not an area I'm terribly familiar with, so I'm not really certain what . . .

Dr. Martin: Well, the thrust of your concern was about somehow blending things up with Chestermere, but you've got a huge block of territory existing within the existing electoral district footprint. Do you anticipate growth in that area?

Mr. Dovey: Sorry. I understand what you mean. I certainly do. I certainly see that there's no possibility that growth won't occur there. My concern right now would be that, you know, growth there is pretty minor and, probably by the time the next Electoral Boundaries Commission is struck, we might be having a very different conversation. At the moment, though, I think my focus is more on the complexion of Calgary-East as it currently stands, as I outlined in my presentation, the various demographic issues that affect that. I'm a very good example. I'm someone who lives there and works downtown, and if I take transit, you know, I'm downtown in 12 minutes. As you go further along and further out, you know, that becomes a little more different.

The other thing to me and, I think, to a lot of my colleagues that's a concern is this idea of coupling us up specifically with Chestermere, which is a very, very different community, more of a bedroom community, much higher income, very, very different complexion. It will cause incredible dilution of the demographic complexion of Calgary-East.

The Chair: Ms Samson.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for your presentation. I don't have any questions at this time.

The Chair: Doctor.

Mr. Evans: Good morning. Thank you for your presentation. I've got a question on: are you in ward 9 or ward 10 of the city?

Mr. Dovey: Ward 10.

Mr. Evans: Okay. The city boundary jogs along towards Chestermere on the south side of highway 1, correct?

Mr. Dovey: Yes.

Mr. Evans: Okay. So it would appear to me that there's significant growth in that Elliston Lake area and farther south of there as well. Also, on the east side of Stoney Trail, on the south side of 17 Avenue: you'd agree with me there's significant growth there and on the south of 17 Avenue as well?

Mr. Dovey: Yeah, there is. So, I mean, my concern there would be that perhaps we're looking at the creation of another riding in the future, which, as I said, could be something the next time an electoral boundaries committee is struck. It might have a riding that might include a little bit of that and make that a kind of – I don't know – Chestermere-East kind of thing, but right now for the foreseeable future, again, I think that the demographics and the

distribution of income and the distribution of population doesn't make sense.

Mr. Evans: Is there more growth beyond that Good Shepherd area? That would be just north of 17 Avenue, right up around 100 Street SE.

Mr. Dovey: Yeah. Again, I'm not terribly familiar, so I couldn't speak to that.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much for your presentation and for attending. As I said, I think you can switch back. If you want to hear the rest of the presentations, go to the YouTube channel on our website. You're excused, Mr. Dovey.

Mr. Dovey: Thank you.

The Chair: Our 9:45 presenter, Christopher Spearman.

Mr. Spearman: Good morning.

The Chair: Good morning.

Mr. Spearman: Can you hear me?

The Chair: Yes, we can hear you.

Mr. Spearman: Okay. Thank you very much for the opportunity to present today. My name is Chris Spearman. I had the honour of serving as the mayor of Lethbridge for eight years, from 2013 to 2021. I'm here today because I heard that there might be a proposal to split up representation in Lethbridge into four hybrid ridings, basically partially rural and partially urban, and I'd like to speak against that proposal.

I think that type of proposal is one that doesn't really serve the city of Lethbridge well. Lethbridge is alternately either the third-largest or the fourth-largest city in Alberta. It has unique interests as the hub of southwest Alberta, and the regional interests, whether they be economic or otherwise, are best served by other organizations. There are multiple regional organizations, like southgrow regional initiative and the Economic Development Lethbridge, others which address economic development issues and which collaborate. They work with the cities.

When I was the mayor of Lethbridge, I would host a meeting every month, every Friday. Basically, it was the mayors and reeves of southwest Alberta, where we collaborated on multiple issues. I think it's important to maintain political representation for the city of Lethbridge that fully understands the complexity of the issues that a city like Lethbridge faces.

The challenge that I always had when I was the mayor was that I was able to work with our local MLAs, but we had a city that basically was facing big-city challenges but was only a small city and didn't receive the same resources that big cities got. For example, dealing with poverty. The cities of Edmonton and Calgary received subsidies so that the people who were living in poverty could access transportation. Lethbridge and Red Deer and other mid-size cities didn't get that same type of funding even though we faced those challenges. I think dividing up the city and having a rural-urban representation doesn't provide the necessary understanding to focus on similar issues like that which face mid-size cities.

I think it's important that the representation for Lethbridge not be diminished, that the MLAs representing the city be focused on what's important to Lethbridge and leave the regional issues to the

local politicians and the local organizations that are already set up to deal with that. We work effectively with Economic Development Lethbridge. We work effectively with the Chamber of Commerce, with all the other organizations that represent a variety of interests.

It's important not to undermine the role of municipally elected officials either and not to confuse them with the responsibilities of elected MLAs. I don't see any advantage – in fact, I see significant disadvantages – to having blended hybrid MLAs representing the city. There are some challenges. There are some differences between what urban municipal MLAs have to deal with and what rural MLAs have to deal with, and I wouldn't want to put MLAs in those positions. I think municipal elected representatives need to deal with MLAs who share the same concerns and the same issues and can focus their advocacy in Edmonton on the cities and the residents that they represent.

There are specific issues which are unique to urban areas – they're dealing with population growth; they're dealing with urban transportation – that are unique to cities and which MLAs need to focus on. There are also, I'm sure – I live in a rural area now – areas in rural areas which rural MLAs should focus on, and I don't think hybrid representation will serve either very well.

That's largely the essence of my presentation. I think it's important to recognize that, in terms of democracy, we can look at how representation in the city has changed over the years. Back in the '80s we had Progressive Conservative representatives. In 2015 they completely flipped to NDP. Both ridings represented NDP. Right now we have one NDP representative and one UCP representative. It's healthy when representation changes. I think that's what you get with the city of Lethbridge and urban areas. There's generally less change in the rural areas, and I would not want to move to a situation or a representation process which consistently elected one party and not the other.

That's the essence of my presentation today. I'm open to any questions you might have.

9:50

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, sir.

Mr. Evans, any questions or comments of this presenter?

Mr. Evans: Good morning, Mr. Spearman. Thank you for your presentation. If I understood what I heard, your concern is mostly as it relates to the electoral outcome of one party versus another in terms of changing the boundaries. Is that right?

Mr. Spearman: No, not exclusively. I think I talked to the effectiveness of representation for the city as well: the uniqueness of the issues in an urban environment versus a rural environment. I'm not confident that a blended riding would make that any better. I think we need to have the city of Lethbridge, like the cities of Edmonton and Calgary, have representatives that are focused on urban issues . . .

Mr. Evans: Mr. Spearman, if I might interrupt for just a second so I can ask you a further question. You'll agree with me that the factors that you're talking about in terms of – and I'll just list some of the responsibilities listed under the MGA for the municipalities: safety, health, welfare, activities of people, nuisance, transportation and transportation systems, business and business activities, public utilities. As a former mayor you'd agree those are responsibilities of the municipality and don't fall within the direct mandate of an MLA. Can you explain to me what would be unique in terms of those municipal responsibilities vis-à-vis a councillor in the city of Lethbridge versus a councillor and a reeve in the county of Lethbridge or county of Cardston or county of Warner?

Mr. Spearman: Yes. For example, transportation was one of the issues you listed, and I gave an example of how the cities of Edmonton and Calgary lobbied successfully with their MLAs to receive a benefit for those people who live in poverty, a transportation grant from the provincial government. You know, we need to be able to have our MLAs lobby for those types of things as well even though those are municipal responsibilities. When we feel that our municipality is not receiving the same benefits, we need to have our MLAs working with our municipal elected representatives as well to advocate for our citizens and their needs.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Spearman.

The Chair: Susan, any questions?

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for your presentation, Mayor Spearman. I have a question. We heard a presentation when we were in Lethbridge regarding the need for the hybrid riding, and I understood that it was important because of the economic development and investment in the rural that we needed to band together the city and those four regions surrounding it. Could you comment on that?

Mr. Spearman: I don't believe that at all. I was employed in the agrifood sector before I was mayor. I worked in the industrial sector in the city of Lethbridge. I was a founding member of Economic Development Lethbridge back in 2003, and when I was mayor, I was the vice chair for eight years of Economic Development Lethbridge.

The county of Lethbridge has a representation. The board has 25 members. I led an economic development trip to China and Japan in 2017. We had representatives from southgrow regional initiative that economic development tour. We collaborated together with economic development and the communities around us. Economic development is one aspect of what municipalities do. Smaller municipalities rely on those regional organizations like southgrow to do a lot of their economic development work, and that's work that's separate and apart.

We work together with our MLAs and with the provincial government and with the federal government to support economic development attraction as it is, and I don't believe that creating hybrid ridings is going to enhance that in any way. In certain investments within the city of Lethbridge, because we're one of the few, like, that have – we supply water and waste-water services on a regional basis. That needs to be managed. We need to collaborate with our communities. For example . . .

The Chair: Mr. Spearman, I'm going to ask you to maybe cut it short because we have a couple more questions and I'm under a time limit here. I'll move on to Dr. Martin. Sorry about that.

Mr. Spearman: Okay.

Dr. Martin: Thank you, Mayor. I just want to say that I understand exactly the argument you're making, and thank you for making it so clearly. I am puzzled, however, about the notion that having – I mean, let's say we have a thought experiment. Let's think of some hybrid ridings. You've got additional MLA advocacy, not less. We've heard from an earlier speaker today, as a matter of fact, that that enriches their advocacy, to have several points of view, and every politician I know is able to advocate for several things simultaneously. So where's the problem?

Mr. Spearman: That hasn't been entirely my experience. When I've dealt with rural MLAs, I think they do a reasonable job, but the

rural perspective is unique from the urban perspective. I think people who are specifically from the city, you know – as I've said, I think Lethbridge deserves what Calgary and Edmonton already have, and that is MLAs that are focused on fully understanding the needs of an urban centre.

Mr. Clark: Great. Thank you. I'm wondering. In your time as mayor, either before that time or since, has there ever been any consideration of annexing Coalhurst, Broxburn, maybe as far away as Coaldale? If so or even if not, would you agree that that proposal would not be embraced very warmly by those communities because of their significant distinctions from the city of Lethbridge?

Mr. Spearman: I think that's true. I think municipalities have to respect what each are doing. Each are specialized in what they are. There have been some efforts to deal with regional municipalities. We have considered in the past: should we be regionalized with the county of Lethbridge – the county of Lethbridge is one of the poorer rural counties in Alberta – and would they benefit from being part of the city of Lethbridge? The challenge is always going to be levels of taxation. Urban centres generally have higher levels of taxation because they provide more services, and rural areas and rural municipalities are more reluctant to join with larger urban areas because they don't want to inherit some of those costs.

A few years ago we regionalized our police force with the town of Coaldale, and very quickly they were unhappy with the cost structure. They subsequently asked to get out of that agreement, and we agreed they could, and they decided to go pursue the RCMP. I think it's an example of how rural needs are different from urban needs. We need to provide those level of services in the city that rural areas don't necessarily need to have or want to have and don't want to pay the cost of.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Spearman.

I'm going to take this opportunity maybe just to comment. Our responsibility as a commission is to ensure effective representation for Albertans, and a not so recent court challenge to Alberta's boundaries, a few decades ago, painted the picture in very simplistic terms. Effective representation in Alberta can be achieved by either increasing the number of MLAs or, secondly, eliminating the number of more rural MLAs or, thirdly, come up with hybrid ridings. Those are the only three possibilities for us to keep effective representation for Albertans. The reality is that two new ridings are probably insufficient given Alberta's population growth. You made the comment about Lethbridge being the same as Calgary and Edmonton. I'm sorry; it isn't. It can't be now because of the huge population growth that both Edmonton and Calgary have experienced. It's not been quite as significant in the other cities.

10:00

I hope you appreciate the mandate that we have. We have to adhere to effective representation, which is grounded in section 3 of the Charter of Rights, and we have very few options in terms of redrawing the map. I probably should put that in my introductory comments.

Thank you very much, Mr. Spearman, for presenting, and thank you for helping us stay on time as well.

I'm going to move to our next presenter, Leona Esau.

Ms Esau: Good morning. We actually have a presentation. I'm just going to share it on the screen. Myself and my colleague Megan Stewart will be delivering the presentation. I just want to make sure that you can see our presentation.

The Chair: Yes, we can. Thank you.

Ms Esau: Thank you. Again, we are Leona Esau and Megan Stewart in the government relations and grants department at the city of Airdrie. Thank you for this opportunity to provide input to the 2025 Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission review. As a fast-growing municipality, we believe our unique population and development trends should be considered as new provincial electoral boundaries are redrawn. It should be noted that our presentation today is based on our submission from May.

I hope that switched over. Sorry; I cannot see my presentation. Does the presentation have current representation challenge at the top of it?

The Chair: No, it doesn't.

Ms Esau: Okay. Hang on. Sorry.

The Chair: We can't apparently help you because we don't have it. You're going to have to work on moving the slide on your own there.

Ms Esau: Yes, that's what I'm – yeah, there's something not working. Is it back up again?

The Chair: Are you able to send it to info? Please send the slide deck to info@abebc.ca, and then we may be able to help, take control.

Ms Esau: Sorry about that.

The Chair: Yeah, feel free to – one of you present, and we'll try and get it up as soon as you're able to send it to Aaron.

Ms Esau: Sure. The city of Airdrie is Alberta's fastest growing city and is currently underrepresented in the Legislature as our two existing electoral divisions exceed the provincial average by 37.6 per cent and 23.8 per cent respectively. Today we'd like to share three redistribution scenarios for consideration, that would create more equitable electoral boundaries while accounting for our exceptional growth trajectory, which is projected to reach 135,792 residents by 2034. Our proposals would help create electoral divisions that maintain balanced population levels during the next electoral cycle, ensuring sustainable and fair representation.

Airdrie is currently divided between two electoral divisions, Airdrie-Cochrane and Airdrie-East. According to the commission's own data these divisions significantly exceed the provincial average population: Airdrie-Cochrane, with almost 76,000 residents, and Airdrie-East, with approximately 68,000 residents. This substantial deviation from the provincial average of 55,000 residents per electoral division means that citizens in our community have less proportional representation than those in many other Alberta constituencies, and the significant growth anticipated for the community in the next 10 years is not accounted for.

Did you receive the presentation by any chance? We do have a map on this next one. I can speak to it. The map just divides Airdrie into four quadrants and shows the significant population in each one of our quadrants. Although our 2025 census numbers have not been released yet – these are based on our 2024 data – we do know that we will be over 90,000 people when our census information is released here in a couple of weeks.

Our next slide just shows some growth with our planned areas. Then if the presentation is there, it's Airdrie's exceptional growth. In our fast-growing province many people are choosing to call the Airdrie-Cochrane area home. From 2016 to 2021, when the provincial growth rate was 4.8 per cent, Airdrie's population

increased by nearly 20 per cent. Our population is projected to reach nearly 109,000 by 2028 and 136,000 in less than a decade.

The Chair: We have it now.

Ms Esau: Oh, thank you. There we are. It's that one there.

This exceptional growth is demonstrated by our recent development activity: 15 residential communities currently under construction, almost 30,000 occupied dwellings, and 1,428 housing permits issued last year alone, accounting for 42 per cent of Alberta's housing starts outside of Calgary and Edmonton. This is unprecedented growth that demands boundary redistribution consideration. We appreciate consideration for boundaries that can accommodate our current population disparities and anticipated future growth, ensuring fair and effective representation for our residents over the coming decade.

On to the next slide, and I'm just going to turn it over to Megan for the scenarios.

Ms Stewart: Thank you, Leona.

Here's just a quick look at our three proposed redistribution scenarios. Just move to the next slide, please. We recognize – in this chart you'll see the numbers here – that several of our scenarios may start out slightly below the average, but they'll quickly grow to appropriate levels, and we'll likely exceed the average again before a future review begins. The population data we've used is based on our 2024 municipal census data and population estimates from our newly occupied dwellings. Estimates of current and future population reflect population growth within the city of Airdrie municipal boundaries, but in this chart here we've reflected a conservative estimate for the rural areas.

If you just want to go to the next one, it's just kind of a series of maps that we'll move through fairly quickly. Our first scenario is a north-south division. This was the map similar to when Leona's slides were just getting pulled up. It's a north-south division using Yankee Valley Boulevard, one of our major thoroughfares, to divide the community. This scenario includes the community of Crossfield to the north, and it doesn't add in any rural residents. This is just city of Airdrie population data and the town of Crossfield data but doesn't include rural, which would obviously increase the numbers.

The next slide will show the future population estimates, and, again, just represents what we know for our own Airdrie population growth. They don't account for any growth within the town of Crossfield and obviously no growth for the rural areas.

If you move to the next slide, it shows some potential north riding boundaries, which could include all areas north of Yankee Valley, including the town of Crossfield and rural route 772 to the west, township 290 potentially to the north, and rural route 791 to the east. The southern riding would go to the Calgary city limits, which is consistent with where the Airdrie ridings exist today.

To the next slide; we're showing one proposed east-west scenario. This one doesn't include the town of Crossfield, and it would divide Airdrie basically along the CPKC rail line for the most part between an east-west division.

In the next slide we see the change to the future growth with population increases in our NSP areas. Again, this map and these numbers do not include any rural population.

10:10

The next one, our final scenario, is again an east-west division, just like the one we looked at before, but this one does include the town of Crossfield. It uses primarily the CPKC rail line. The numbers here just include city of Airdrie numbers currently and town of Crossfield numbers currently. The next map shows the

future increases. So the two options here are pretty well balanced, with the population numbers fairly consistent.

The last map shows some potential geographic boundaries along the same, similar lines: rural route 772 in the east, rural route 791 to the west, then township 290 at the north, and the city of Calgary boundaries along the south. We believe that these scenarios, especially the one you're seeing here on the screen, offer multiple benefits, more equitable representation for Airdrie residents, recognition of our significant population growth to date, a combination of our projected future growth and use of readily identifiable geographic features like our major roadways and the rail line as boundaries.

Next slide, please. We recognize that changes to our Airdrie ridings will have a ripple effect on those around us. We've also tried to consider, in our proposal, to support regional boundary challenges, not just Airdrie's. You notice that several of our proposed scenarios include the town of Crossfield within our proposed electoral boundaries. This recommendation is based on the concentrated growth along the QE II corridor. Crossfield residents identify closely with our urban voters in Airdrie, sharing similar concerns, service needs, and community interests.

This change would also facilitate other beneficial boundary adjustments further north along the QE II, potentially allowing the town of Bowden to be moved into Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. Modifications like this would also help accommodate growth in the Sylvan Lake, Red Deer county region and maintain minimal deviations in multiple ridings without creating undue disruption to community representation.

In the rural areas, in addition to our own city boundaries of Airdrie and the town of Crossfield, our proposed scenarios could incorporate some rural voting stations in the areas surrounding Airdrie. These rural districts could add approximately 2,500 to 3,000 residents to the electoral division populations that we were seeing on the slides, in the maps. These areas have significant social and economic connections to Airdrie, residents regularly commuting to the city for work, shopping, recreation, and other services.

Finally, while our submission focuses – oh, sorry; just one more note on that other side. While our submission focuses primarily on Airdrie's electoral boundaries, we would support the creation of a dedicated Cochrane electoral division that would include the Bearspaw area, which would have strong community ties to Cochrane.

Ms Esau: Next slide, please. It should be noted that the town of Cochrane is the second fastest growing municipality here in Alberta. The city of Airdrie appreciates the complex task before the commission in balancing population equity, equality with community interests across Alberta. Our proposed scenarios address both immediate and long-term representation needs for one of Alberta's fastest growing communities. Our proposals create community-focused ridings that reflect natural boundaries, travel patterns, and shared interests. The inclusion of Crossfield and surrounding rural areas in specific scenarios strengthens regional cohesion while facilitating beneficial adjustments to neighbouring electoral divisions.

We welcome any questions or requests for additional information that would assist the commission in its important work. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Esau and Ms Stewart, for this very timely – let me assure you that we have wrestled already with Airdrie, and we have seen maps and we've had presentations. I don't want to say that great minds think alike, but maybe they do. Very quickly, I wish we had more time with you. I'm going to limit

it to one question per commissioner, very succinct. And please stay around. If we have time at the end, maybe we'll try to bring in more time.

Mr. Clark, a question?

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Thank you. Great to see you. We also received a submission from Crossfield which aligns with your suggestion, so that was sort of a question answered. I'm curious if there has been any consideration given to creating sort of one completely urban Airdrie constituency and then one hybrid, a little bit like how Grande Prairie is right now. If you've looked at the map, there's a purely urban Grande Prairie, and then there's a Grande Prairie-Wapiti with the surrounding area. Had you given any thought to that? Even if not, do you think there would be any value in doing something like that?

Ms Esau: We had run some numbers that did have one primarily urban riding and then a hybrid riding, including the town of Crossfield. With the development that's occurring in Airdrie – one of the slides in the very beginning just showed our projected population based on our neighbourhood structure plans that have been approved – very quickly we would outgrow that urban riding. We just could not find a boundary that would allow a riding to be to be within and not outgrow by population over the 10-year period until the next electoral boundaries redistribution commission. So we really struggled – we really struggled – with that one.

Mr. Clark: That's great. Thank you.

Dr. Martin: Thank you very much. It's always wonderful to meet people who, like the commission, are map and demographically obsessed. We are familiar with what you're talking about, we totally get it, and we congratulate you on doing the hard labour of putting together those scenarios.

My question is specifically about the growth projections. Everybody talks about growth projections, but I really am interested in what is imminent and tangible. In your case I suspect that's the number of development permits. For obvious reasons we would like to hear about growth, high probabilities of population growth within the next five years. I wonder if you could speak to that on the basis of the permitting evidence and any other evidence that you have to hand.

Ms Esau: Sure. Last year, as I noted, Airdrie permitted 1,428 doors in our community, which was 42 per cent of all of the homes permitted outside of Calgary and Edmonton, so 42 per cent of all the doors built or permitted were done here in Airdrie and the rest of the province. What we know is that we have slowed slightly this year, but we are seeing more multifamily and townhouse units come on the market as affordability continues to be a challenge for Albertans. We expect that our numbers will continue to grow like we saw last year. Airdrie really is a community of choice. For example, I drove across our community from the far northwest to the far southeast this morning in 10 minutes. There is a real desire for especially families to come live here. Even in speaking with our development community, we do not see that growth slowing beyond, I guess, what the population of the whole province would.

The 20 per cent growth rate that we had, that we referenced early in the presentation: we're expecting that again. Even our own growth estimates: we have surpassed that and now require a major waste-water upgrade to accommodate future growth. We can get you the numbers. We can send those separately to you if you'd like.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for your presentation. I know that you didn't dwell at all on the fact that Cochrane is within your riding, but can you speak to how it is, the lay of the land, on-the-ground reality, having two major centres, two large urban municipalities, Cochrane and yourself, in the same riding when we look to understand representation?

Ms Esau: Sure. As you know, right now we have the Airdrie-Cochrane riding, and then we have Airdrie-East. For us our Airdrie-East MLA does live within our riding. The Airdrie-Cochrane representative lives in Cochrane. Cochrane is growing, and so is the surrounding area. If you look at Harmony and Bearspaw, all the way along the 1A is continuing to grow. When you look at the numbers between our two municipalities, we're already over that threshold.

10:20

I think it has been difficult for the MLA for Airdrie-Cochrane to effectively represent both communities. Although we're similar in terms of the infrastructure that's required to support growth, our communities are significantly different from one another. Where we have experienced some challenges is that although we have two MLAs, I don't think we've always had two MLAs that were focused on Airdrie. If we do continue to grow with the numbers that we presented here, we will – I don't even know what the word is I'm looking for. If we continue to grow the way we are and south of Airdrie continues to grow along the QE II, we will very quickly – very quickly – be some of the largest ridings outside of Calgary and Edmonton again.

I think for us, and even the Premier speaks about this, the QE II corridor really is the area for concentrated growth to occur between Calgary and Edmonton. We're seeing that when you drive from Calgary now to Airdrie, it's only going to [inaudible], and development will be on both sides of the road. It will almost feel like one urban centre rather than going from Calgary to rural Rocky View county and into Airdrie, so we are just going to continue to grow both residential and nonresidential.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: John, questions?

Mr. Evans: I want you to speak to the growth and juxtapose the growth on the south side of QE II, so the southwest and the southeast. It seems to me that there is a choking point or a bottleneck on the southeast, but the southwest will continue to grow. Is that also true with respect to the northwest of Airdrie, so the west side of the QE II going north?

Ms Esau: Sorry. We're just looking for our map here. Most of our development, really, is concentrated in that southeast, and you are correct. We're up against our boundaries there. There are a couple of quarter sections still to be developed out. There are still some to be developed out there. We're primarily seeing our construction in that southwest and in the northwest, and even in the northwest it's along the hill up and over to the old Centre Street and range road 11, 13 – I think it's 13. Range road 13.

Mr. Evans: Is the growth faster on the south versus the northwest?

Ms Esau: Yes.

Mr. Evans: And is there a larger area to develop and easier develop on the southwest as opposed to the northwest?

Ms Esau: Yes.

Mr. Evans: Okay. That's what I needed to know. Thank you.

The Chair: Well, thank you so much. I know all of us probably have more questions, but time, our mortal enemy, is marching on here, so I have to cut this presentation short. As I said, you can follow the rest of the audio on our YouTube channel. We'll see if there are any no-shows, and if you want to continue more, we might be able to do that. Thank you so much for presenting.

Ms Esau: Thank you.

The Chair: Our next presenter and our last presenter before our morning break is Patricia Williams.

Ms Williams: Good morning.

The Chair: Good morning.

Ms Williams: Can everyone hear me?

The Chair: Yes. You're 10 minutes late in starting.

Ms Williams: My name is Patricia Williams. I'm here to present my comments on Lethbridge. I wasn't aware that Chris Spearman was going to present ahead of me, but some of the things I'll say will be similar. Some of them will be different.

I live in Lethbridge-West, and I've been here for 35 years. I've never been a politician. I've never been elected to anything. I'm a retired respiratory therapist, and the last 12 years of my career I worked in a position for AHS that provided service to several rural communities in the surrounding area, including Fort Macleod, Picture Butte, Taber, and Milk River. My thoughts and ideas come from my position as a health care worker interacting with these rural communities and the people that I saw there.

I've read the transcript of the May 29 meeting and note the statements of several community members who cite some good reasons for maintaining the status quo and keeping the constituency boundaries for Lethbridge-West and Lethbridge-East consistent with municipal boundaries. I've also read the presentation that is distinctly different in proposing to divide the two constituencies into four, which we previously discussed. This looks nice and well organized in theory, but I have some concerns about how it would work in reality.

Calgary and Edmonton – and I have lived in both – tend to look at everything outside themselves as rural. I do not consider myself to be living in a rural community. Lethbridge currently has a population of about 111,000 people, a university, a polytechnic institute, a symphony, a full-service hospital with an intensive care unit and specialists, a full-time professional fire and ambulance service. This is a city.

There is no precedent in Alberta in a community of Lethbridge's size to be divided into four ridings. The presenter of this model compares Lethbridge with the two ridings in Medicine Hat, which incorporate large rural areas from Brooks, east to the Saskatchewan border, and south to the Montana border. Medicine Hat has a population of about 67,000, which is a bit large for one riding but not big enough for two. In addition, there is a large area of rural population that isn't terribly large, and the combined rural-urban ridings serve a purpose in that area. Applying this model to Lethbridge would have no advantages for the city at all. In fact, dividing a city of 111,000 people that hasn't even adopted a municipal ward system into four quarters would make no sense at all.

There are some parallels between this model of electoral boundaries and the rural job I worked at. Lethbridge was, in theory,

my home base, but after one of AHS's reorganizations I did not have a home base here any longer. I was tasked with Milk River on Tuesday and Taber on Wednesday and Fort Macleod on Thursday and so forth. If the weather was bad and it was not safe to travel, I had a problem. Working from home was not an option in those days.

One of the first things I learned in this job was that each community was different from Lethbridge and different from each other. Communities varied in size and the health care resources they had, but on paper they were all the same. It solved a problem for management to be able to say that those places had an RT assigned to them one day a week, but they weren't the same. Taber had 10 doctors while Milk River struggles to keep one or two.

The next thing I learned was that I was dealing with people with health care issues, not just sites and equipment. Some of these people had values and needs quite different than mine. My goal might be to get a test done as soon as possible to make the doctor happy. Well, Joe maybe couldn't care less about his test because he was in the middle of harvest, and he wasn't going to do his test until harvest was done. Mary's child might be referred for an asthma appointment, but Mary wasn't able to take time off from work to bring the child to the appointment because she worked in another town. The fact that I came to the community one day a week and had little flexibility in that didn't really help.

All I'm saying is that there are differences that are significant between rural and urban folks. After years of working in those communities, I never did fit into most of them very well. I was still a therapist that was sent out from Lethbridge. The rural-urban model for electoral boundaries might produce the same kind of dysfunction if, for example, Lethbridge-West had an MLA living in Crowsnest Pass or Cardston.

One of the participants on the May 29 meeting stated that having rural areas included in the Lethbridge ridings dilutes the democratic legitimacy of Lethbridge voters. I went back looking at what we've elected over the past 30 years in both Lethbridge-West and Lethbridge-East. They've elected a mix of parties: NDP, UCP, Liberals, PCs. This is distinctly different from the surrounding rural areas, which are consistently conservative. You know, whether conservative with a small "c," whether it was labelled UCP or Wildrose or PC or whatever, they vote consistently conservative. For us to be included in that really dilutes what we're voting for.

Belinda Crowson, who is our local historian, noted that Lethbridge has had no rural elements in its electoral boundaries since 1909 and that the two-riding system we have today came into existence in 1969. This model works for Lethbridge, and I would respectfully ask that you please don't try to fix what isn't broken.

Thank you for your time.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Ms Williams.

Very succinct, one-line questions from the commissioners.

10:30

Mr. Clark: Maybe more just a comment – and I'm cognizant of the time here – but the thing you've said here that struck me the most is that even when you've worked a long time in one rural area with a group of folks, you were still from Lethbridge. I guess maybe if you, in 60 seconds or less, can just expand on that a bit.

Ms Williams: Part of the problem with my job that made it so dysfunctional is that I didn't belong to any one place. Like I said, it was a solution for management. It was like: one day a week, I was there; the rest of the time, I was not there. It was really hard for me to actually say: I was Taber's respiratory therapist. I thought of myself as Taber's respiratory therapist, but when I left nobody really seemed to care, and frankly when I retired my job

disappeared. It was actually dismantled and pieces of it were given, like this four-riding model, to other places. Then my job was given to someone in Medicine Hat and they turned it into something else, which didn't make me very happy but there was nothing I could do about it.

The Chair: Okay. Julian, anything?

Dr. Martin: No, thank you.

The Chair: Anything, Susan?

Mrs. Samson: No questions.

The Chair: Anything, John?

Mr. Evans: No questions.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much, Ms Williams.

We are going to sign off now for our break and reconvene at 10:50.

[The hearing adjourned from 10:31 a.m. to 10:45 a.m.]

The Chair: Well, we're all ready. Maybe we can start things up and see if our next presenters are ready. Good morning, Ms Batten, Diana Batten. It looks like you're here. We're a minute early, but let's get started. We can always use time on the front-end. Please introduce yourself, tell us what riding you represent, and proceed with your presentation.

Member Batten: Perfect. Thank you so much. My name is Diana Batten. I am the proud MLA for the beautiful riding of Calgary-Acadia, and it's with gratitude that I join the conversation today about the future of fair and representative democracy here in Alberta. I suspect many of us, me included, may from time to time take democracy for granted. Maybe we see it as a given as opposed to the privilege it truly is, and we forget the important work that is done every day in support of this province. I want to just take a quick minute to thank you all for undergoing this important work on this commission. It is so important, and I am grateful for you reflecting on the solutions and concerns that Albertans are bringing forward.

As I mentioned, I have the privilege of serving Calgary-Acadia in the Legislature for just about two years. The southeast riding is home to nine communities, including Manchester, Kingsland, Haysboro, Southwood, Canyon Meadows, Willow Park, Maple Ridge, Acadia, and Fairview, all of whom have shown incredible growth and re-engagement in their community. I specifically use the term "re-engagement" because, of course, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, when we were all told to stay apart to keep each other safe, what we didn't realize was the social consequence of those actions. So very similarly to our social gatherings ending, we saw disconnection between residents between communities. But, fortunately, in the last two years these connections have seen a reboot across and between the different communities in Calgary-Acadia. The community associations are combining resources, they're holding events together, and are bringing forward concerns and solutions to their local representative, which, of course, I appreciate greatly as it facilitates me actually representing them effectively.

Prior to becoming the representative for Calgary-Acadia I served as a registered nurse, and the reason I bring that up is for context. When I'm thinking about the idea of effective representation, I can't help but draw kind of a parallel between the two different types of

service. Regardless of whether or not I'm setting up a shift assignment inside an intensive care environment or discussing the physical boundaries for the provincial riding, there's a few things in common to consider. Who are you serving? What do they need or want, and how closely are they located? Think patient rooms or communities that are adjacent to each other. Of course we have to consider the population – right? – what the population has done since the last commission and, of course, try to anticipate where it's going to go. I know that's the tricky part.

Let me share some of the known expansions and different connections that are scheduled in Calgary-Acadia. I initially want to talk about Calgary's light rail transit system, or LRT stations. Of course, those systems enable folks to connect between communities, and they facilitate collaboration between different people and different businesses, and those stations tend to bring high investment to the area. Unfortunately, it also brings some concerns of safety and security, which, unfortunately, because someone could use the rails kind of as a quick getaway, the communities of Calgary-Acadia have been dealing with this as a group for years now, as they literally have an LRT rail that runs right down the middle of them. We currently have seven LRT stations in the riding of Calgary-Acadia. We are looking at adding three more, one of which is the midtown station. It is a privately contracted 35-acre LRT station, mixed-use residential. When it is at full capacity, it's supposed to be about 10,000 residents.

We also have the Highfield station. That one is part of the anticipated green line. It would be located in the heart of Manchester, just up the street from the Calgary Food Bank and within walking distance of the Burwood Distillery, also small businesses like Village Brewery, that's right there.

We also are excited about the 26th Avenue southeast station, which technically resides in the riding of Calgary-Buffalo however will serve Calgary-Acadia as that station is being located directly beside the Crossroads Calgary farmers' market, which is very exciting because that's actually the one and only farmers' market we have in Calgary that's connected to LRT. That's very exciting.

Other growth that we're anticipating: the east side of Macleod, north of Glenmore, so if you think of it as kind of across the street from Chinook Mall. There are plans to develop that entire area. It sounds very similar to what they're doing at midtown. Again, we can anticipate a mixed use of commercial on the bottom and then residential up top. It's about the same square footage-ish as the midtown station, so I think it's fair to assume that we're talking about another maybe 5,000 to 10,000 residents inside there.

Then just looking at a few places that we haven't quite developed yet. Manchester, for whatever reason, has seen a lack of development. There's a whole history of Manchester that I won't get into here. But one of the main reasons that it hasn't been developed is lack of infrastructure. The addition of an LRT station will really bring some of that explosion of investment, perhaps housing, definitely commercial, and encourage folks to, of course, travel along the line.

In terms of where Calgary-Acadia is now. The housing dates back to about the 1960s. What we're seeing is the shift, where we have original homeowners who are downsizing and moving into seniors' homes or condos in the community, and then we have new young families moving in and new-to-Canada families moving in. It's really exciting. We're seeing a higher demand for seniors centres inside the riding. Folks want to stay where they've always lived, right? They invested in their home, they've now downsized, but they have built their lives in that community and so they want to stay there. So we're seeing a higher demand for seniors' homes.

When we think about the residential lots, they are big, right? They have large yards, large gardens, a large space. What we're starting to see are laneways and garden suites, cohousing, and multiple generations inside the same home.

Thinking back to the nursing assignments, I mentioned that proximity matters. Part of what I've been describing is just showing that the similar things that these different communities inside the riding of Calgary-Acadia work through and to show the collaboration that's already there, which is really important for me as I try to serve each and every one of them, understanding that having more connection points with them allows me to better serve them. That proximity is really important if you just think about the logistics and the reality of shared concerns.

We think about things like the proximity to Macleod Trail. Macleod Trail runs right down the riding. It's fantastic. Brings lots of businesses, but it also brings complications for these communities. For instance, we just had Chick-fil-A open on Macleod. It was very exciting. It caused a lineup on Macleod all the way down to Heritage. Now, not super awesome for the communities to deal with. However, bringing in Chick-fil-A is fantastic in terms of bringing folks down into Calgary-Acadia and, obviously, contributing to businesses there. The community, when that happened, got a little upset because, of course – Macleod is a busy street, and closing down one of them for a drive-through kind of threw a wrench into folks' plans. Now, when Krispy Kreme opened – yes, we also had Krispy Kreme open just down the street – the city worked with them so that their queue for their drive-through does not go onto Macleod; instead, it actually goes to kind of a field next door to them. Those are things that came up because the communities got together and said: "Hey, hey, hey. No, no, no. We want this to work, but let's work together."

Again, thinking back to the nursing assignment ideas. When deciding how to cluster care, proximity matters. I would never assign someone a patient on this floor, a patient on the next floor, and maybe in another building. Even if they all had exactly the same needs, logistically, resources are low, including time. It would make much more sense to have those folks clustered. Not only can you simply be in the area a lot more – right? – gaining more of that kind of organic communications and exploration, but you're there to actually serve that community. They have similar physical boundaries, they have similar housing, similar concerns, similar turnover inside their population.

Speaking of physical boundaries, Calgary-Acadia has solid physical boundaries, the Bow River to the east all the way down to Anderson. We have Elbow Drive and 14th Street to the west, and Glenmore, Macleod, and 26th Avenue and Blackfoot to the north. A little less clear.

10:55

Now, there's of course a number of different things. I could go on forever and talk about Calgary-Acadia and how amazing it is, but that's not the point of the conversation. The big things I would like to bring forward for the committee to consider are kind of the main ones that I had brought up initially. Who are you serving? It could just be the literal number of folks that you're serving. I believe that it's about 55,000 is what we're going for, and Calgary-Acadia right now is about 54,000 if my numbers are correct. If you think about even just the two major – like, midtown and whatever happens across from Chinook there – those alone, they both bring 10,000 residents; we're to the upper limit of the goal number.

The big thing too is that the Calgary-Acadia communities have really shown this organic collaboration, right? I think COVID, the pandemic, everything put things into a slightly different context for

folks, and so this idea of working with one another is really, really at the forefront for these folks. I'd mentioned just briefly that we're seeing that collaboration between all the communities, which is just really, really cool because previously it very much seemed like it was a barrier.

Then lastly, before I take questions, I just wanted to mention that in terms of: where should we put the two additional seats we're seeing? My understanding is that the largest growth that we've seen in terms of numbers have happened in the two big cities, Calgary and Edmonton, and so that's where I would expect that representation would go. Again, reflecting back on population it stands to reason that we would have more representation in the spaces that have a higher population, right?

With that, I will end.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Ms Batten. By way of trivia, do you know that Calgary-Acadia is riding number 1 in the province? We list them numerically.

Member Batten: Yep.

The Chair: I wish you would not have told me that you have a Krispy Kreme now, just off Macleod.

I'm going to allow the commissioners to ask some questions. Mr. Evans, any questions or comments?

Mr. Evans: Good morning. Thank you. I just want to make sure that I understand a couple of things. One, Manchester is located where in your riding?

Member Batten: I'm calling it Manchester, however, basically – sorry, I'm looking at the map here beside me – it is north of Glenmore. It's between Macleod Trail and, basically, the Bow River, north of Glenmore.

Mr. Evans: Okay.

Member Batten: It goes all the way up kind of between Inglewood and Ramsay.

Mr. Evans: And you're anticipating what kind of growth there?

Member Batten: There are two LRT stations that are going in there. The big one that I'm excited about is going in Highfield. It's just down the road from the Calgary Food Bank, which also happens to have some local businesses around it. Manchester tends to be, right now, a lot of places of worship, regenerative farms, warehouses, that type of thing, but there's a lot of opportunity inside that space. It's an area that we really haven't spent a lot of time developing and it's huge. So, yeah, I would anticipate that, especially with our housing crisis, we would be looking at all options, including this giant parcel of space.

Mr. Evans: Excuse me – I'm just short on time. Are there any actual developments happening in Manchester? Then can you also tell me – I didn't capture the name of the development that you said was going to be like midtown and you anticipated 5,000 to 10,000.

Member Batten: Yes. Great questions. In terms of known development that LRT station is the only one I know of right now that's actually rolling. The development east of Chinook or just north of Glenmore, east of Macleod: I don't have a name for it. I say that because it is very much in the early stages. That being said, the stakeholders, like the physical businesses that sit in that space, are aware of this coming forward and are already in the works to basically negotiate how can they have their business there and also

this new space. I anticipate that it would be, I mean, in the next five years, I would hope.

Mr. Evans: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Susan.

Mrs. Samson: No questions. Thank you.

Dr. Martin: None for me.

Mr. Clark: I do have a couple of quick questions, just a little bit more following on in terms of timing, but I think Mr. Evans asked those. You'd mentioned the green line LRT stations in the north part of the constituency, and I understand some of the green line is going ahead in the near term and some is still under consideration through downtown. Is this the part that is delayed, or is this the part that's going ahead now?

Member Batten: It's the part that's going ahead now.

Mr. Clark: Okay.

Can you just remind me exactly where Manchester is? Is it north or south of Glenmore Trail?

Member Batten: It is north of Glenmore.

Mr. Clark: Okay. Perfect. Thank you.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Ms Batten, for that very enjoyable presentation. You've painted a picture, a better picture, for us of your electoral division. Thank you.

Member Batten: Perfect. All right. Thank you so much.

The Chair: Our next presenter is Al Olsen. Please introduce yourself. Tell us where you're from and begin your presentation.

Mr. Olsen: I'm from Lethbridge-East in the south side. Okay. Justice Miller, members of the commission, I recognize you've taken on this onerous task and will respect your time and try not to speak to points that you've heard numerous times. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak. I've been a resident of Lethbridge for coming up to four years. After retiring, I relocated to Lethbridge from the tricities area of B.C. You may ask why, and understandably. It was my family. My daughter and son-in-law live here and kept singing the praises of Lethbridge. They love it here and convinced us it's a great place to reside away from all the traffic congestion and noise we grew accustomed to.

After my first retirement from commercial building supplies I joined Elections BC and held the position of district electoral officer for three elections and was regional field officer after that, covering 13 electoral districts. I also worked for Elections Canada, three elections as service point supervisor. Although my B.C. knowledge won't fully translate to Alberta's electoral districts, there are many similarities. The ridings in close proximity to where I lived had populations varying from 53,035 to 60,743, representing a deviation from minus 1.4 per cent to plus 14.3 per cent. The greatest majority of these ridings I was RFO for were mainly either contained within their own borders or were part of another city with common interests and values.

11:05

From Statistics Canada, in British Columbia the vast majority of the population lives in urban areas. According to the latest census, from 2021, 89.5 per cent of British Columbians resided in census metropolitan areas or census agglomeration. In Alberta in 2021 that

was 82.3 per cent of the population of Alberta lived inside metropolitan areas. That represented 3,509,966 persons. That was lower than the national rate of 83.9 per cent. A more recent estimate has the population closer to 4.8 million. In 2024 Alberta's population is increasingly concentrated in urban areas, with 87.7 per cent of residents living in urban municipalities. Specifically, the growth is most noticeable in large cities like Calgary and Edmonton.

Our area of Lethbridge continues to grow, albeit at a slower pace, with the larger ones north of us. We're divided into two electoral districts, Lethbridge-West and Lethbridge-East. While there is a discrepancy in the number of voters from Lethbridge-West to Lethbridge-East, there may be a need to adjust the boundaries, as previously mentioned. As the city continues to grow, it only makes sense to have electoral districts contained within its own boundaries.

Lethbridge is a larger melting pot of ethnicities than the rural areas tend to be. If a hybrid district were to be implemented, it could place these groups in a situation where they may never see like-minded people running or winning a seat in the Legislature. An example would be the Filipino community. In Lethbridge 14.35 per cent of the visible minority population identifies as Filipino according to StatsCan. That makes them the second-largest visible minority group in the city. In 2021 the total visible minority population in Lethbridge was 15.3 per cent.

An urban centre has much different needs than rural areas such as increased school needs as a population increases versus in rural areas where schools are either closing or due to the desire of having religious schools versus public ones. This would be a challenge to the individual trying to represent a hybrid riding. The ridings that have Indigenous reserves in them will have different issues than those of the urban areas like Lethbridge. They may be unique in their own right but be closer connected to the rural parts of Alberta versus the urban.

I submit that Lethbridge needs to have its ridings within its own boundaries. Thank you for your time.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Olsen. I'm going use the prerogative of the chair to ask you a question first. In view of your experience in British Columbia, tell me about hybrid or blended ridings in B.C. Do they exist at all?

Mr. Olsen: There is an existence in some of the areas that I was responsible for. I look at the Chilliwack area. It was a small city with some of the outlying rural areas. As well, Abbotsford east was a similar situation, and Mission-Matsqui was a small city with an urban area attached to it.

The Chair: Okay. How many MLAs are in the British Columbia Legislature? Do you know?

Mr. Olsen: There were 87. I believe that's now been increased since I've left.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Evans, any questions of this presenter?

Mr. Evans: No questions. Thank you.

The Chair: Susan.

Mrs. Samson: No questions. Thank you.

Dr. Martin: No questions.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much for presenting. Yes. Very much appreciated. The outside of province of Alberta perspective is helpful, and we do appreciate your presentation. Thank you.

Mr. Olsen: Thank you.

The Chair: Linda Ensley.

Ms Ensley: Yes, I'm here. Good morning.

The Chair: Good morning. Please identify where you're from and begin your presentation.

Ms Ensley: Linda Ensley from St. Albert in Sturgeon county. I'll tell you that the perspective that I'm bringing is that I run the St. Albert Seniors Association, and we also have a large grant to oversee Sturgeon county to help them with some of their issues.

To begin to split off these voting wards: I can already see the issues. The issues I see for the seniors in St. Albert are so different than what I see in the rural part of our county, and to not have the proper representation for their needs is a grave concern for me. There's a certain – I don't even know what to call it – level of help that's needed in rural areas that's not needed in the cities. To split that representation, for instance, around transportation. The people who live in St. Albert: they can get to most of the places they need. The people in the rural part can't. Transportation for older people in the rural parts, especially as we get further and further out, becomes a huge issue for them, especially if they don't drive or they're very ill.

Same thing for food security. There's a big food bank here in St. Albert. In the rural areas they have to drive quite a ways to get to those food banks. Part of our mission is to ensure that they have meals taken to them in the rural part. But to not have the representation that they need to be able to address the issues that are so central to their ability to age in place in those communities, like I said, is a concern. We don't really want to see that split off for fear that neither one of those groups are going to be properly represented when it comes to what they truly, truly need.

I think there's also just a kind of efficiency in public services for both that are quite different and need to be advocated and planned in a way that really meets their needs. I'm not sure that can be done if we're splitting off those different segments of our population.

There's a history and a cultural continuity, I think, amongst the two different groups. Rather than splintering them, I think it's better to represent them as a whole. I only represent about 1,800 seniors in this area, so I certainly don't represent everybody, but I know it's a concern amongst a lot of them about who's going to be their political voice if all of a sudden they're lobbed into a big part of St. Albert and they feel like their rural voice is going to be squished or if they feel like in St. Albert: oh, we're going to be lobbed off into a big part that's very rural, and our needs are not going to be met.

I'm just here to be a voice for those seniors who have expressed their concerns around this particular move. I thank you all for taking this on. This is a huge undertaking. I know there are a lot of different opinions and a lot of different variables to consider, but I'm hoping the senior voice will be one of those variables that you will consider.

11:15

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Ensley, for your presentation, and thanks for your empathetic conclusion to this commission.

Any questions, Mr. Evans?

Mr. Evans: No questions, but thank you.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for your presentation, Ms Ensley. I wanted to ask you your comments, because the city of St. Albert is split between St. Albert, period, and then the other half – it's not quite half – Morinville-St. Albert. I assume you live in the St. Albert side? Can I assume that correctly?

Ms Ensley: Yes, that's where we're based.

Mrs. Samson: And do you have any comments on the people that live in Morinville-St. Albert, particularly the seniors? Do you feel that their needs are being met? Like, speak to the thing that you know the most about, because that is a different type of riding.

Ms Ensley: It is a different type of riding, but, also, Morinville isn't exactly what I would call a rural city. They have their own voice and representation, and I really feel that they have been represented properly in many areas by the person, Mr. Nally, in that jurisdiction. But it also doesn't include huge swaths of rural areas, and Morinville and St. Albert are very tied to each other. I see that even in my membership. I have a lot of people from St. Albert who are members here at our association. So, yes, it's split, but I don't see that that has been a big issue with regard to Morinville, because it is already so closely tied to St. Albert. Many people come here for their doctor's appointments. Many people come here to take classes at our organization.

Heaven forbid that I should ever say anything like this, but it's almost an extension in a way of both communities. I know both of them would say, "Oh, no. We're unique," but they do share a lot of things in common. Morinville is growing and continues to grow, and I think their needs are going to be changing in the future. When I'm talking about the rural parts, I'm talking about the very rural parts of our county.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

Mr. Clark: I might pick up on your comment on growth. First off, thank you very much for being here and sharing your perspectives.

When I look at the numbers we have, the Morinville-St. Albert constituency is almost exactly right on the number we're looking for, or at least the average number anyway, of 55,929, just a shade over our 54,929, but it hasn't grown as quickly as St. Albert, and then neither of the two constituencies have grown quite at the same rate as the rest of the province. I know you indicated that Morinville is growing. Are there active development plans or growth opportunities in one or the other of these constituencies, or are they reasonably steady and stable?

Ms Ensley: I think they're stable. I mean, we're all experiencing growth, but let's just be frank and honest. St. Albert isn't the cheapest place on the planet to live, so I expect its growth to be steady and not explosive, just because of the cost of living here. Is that too honest?

Mr. Clark: I want you to be nothing but honest. That's all we can ask. That's wonderful. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your presentation. We did have a bit of presentation when we were in Edmonton on this area, on these ridings, but thanks for stepping up and giving us a better picture, Ms Ensley.

Our next presenter is Mr. Barry Morishita.

Mr. Morishita: Hello. How are you? Can you hear me?

The Chair: Yes. We can hear you, and we're doing fine.

Mr. Morishita: Perfect. Justice Miller and members of the commission, thank you for the opportunity to present. A little bit of history about me. I am the former leader of the Alberta Party. I ran in Brooks-Medicine Hat in the last election, against the Premier. I have been in municipal politics for about 16, 17 years; five years as the mayor of Brooks and the rest of the time before that as a councillor. I'm a lifelong resident of Alberta, although I'm currently doing quite a bit of work in Saskatchewan. That kind of gives you a quick, brief overview.

I just wanted to talk about some of the things that I think are very important from a local community perspective as you work through this very intensive and important exercise. I think one of the core principles the commission should be considering is that electoral boundaries should align as closely as possible with existing municipal boundaries, both urban and rural. I think sometimes those words are used a little bit loosely. In lots of small communities, in cases surrounded by counties, they are entirely rural even though they have towns, villages, or even small cities within them.

This really matters a lot because municipalities are responsible for developing those key public services and planning for the communities. The work that they do with their provincial representation, whether they're in opposition or in government, on infrastructure, emergency services, health care, education, and economic development, it's really important to have a cohesive message, and it's really important for your MLA to understand your region and be very intimate with its issues. While we suppose that should go without saying, it doesn't necessarily go when you have a hybrid that tugs at different loyalties. And, beyond that, when you have, you know, split ridings, whatever you want to call them, hybrid ridings, whatever the word is these days, where the two communities are significantly different in a lot of ways.

One of the other things. When it comes to just straight governance, when we talk about governance, it does create a lot of confusion and inefficiency for agencies. When you look at, for instance, the city of Brooks and the county of Newell: we have eight corporate entities that all share the same boundaries. That's five municipalities, a seniors' foundation, a water and landfill corporation, that all surround the same area, that have the same members, that have the same strategic plans. It would be difficult if you hive off pieces of those, regardless of what community it is, in order to meet the number. And while I know the number is important and you have some restrictions there, I think we should really be thinking about how people interact with government and how the confidence is created in their representation.

As you well know, there's a lot of anxiety about government these days and trustworthiness and responsiveness, and I think part of this process that you're going through, the listing process, is certainly important, but probably more important is that however you present your findings, they resonate with Albertans and that they are done – or they feel they're done, for the most part, in their best interest.

Brooks is an interesting community because it has kind of bounced back and forth across, down the highway 1 and back and, you know, we've gotten the best representation, I think, when the community is kept intact. While I know you have to combine to put numbers together, it's been more difficult in Medicine Hat, I think, as an illustration, because Medicine Hat and Brooks are significantly different communities. Our demographics are significantly different, age, makeup in terms of ethnic, types, the amount of diversity in Brooks compared to Medicine Hat, the working age groups, the type of work that happens: significantly different. When we were with Strathmore, although we were less linked kind of communally, I would say that it was easier to manage

governance-wise because Brooks and Strathmore and Wheatland county – Strathmore and Wheatland county were a very cohesive unit, I think; well, you know, we all have our disagreements from time to time. At least we technically pretty much all work together all the time.

So that's kind of bounced back and forth. There have been proposals to hive off a little chunk of the county to meet the population thresholds, and while I appreciate that those are important things, I think we should be more concerned about the representation and how the MLA is able to represent those areas. It's a lot more important.

11:25

I can't tell you enough how, like, first, the city of Brooks and the county of Newell really do form a unit. Whether the unit is attached to another unit is probably less problematic than if it's pulled to a unit that has very little to do with it. And having to engage with an MLA – I know that MLAs are very busy and they have a lot of responsibility. To have sometimes an actual conflicting interest when it comes to economic development or hospitals, health care, or education, when you essentially create a competition in some ways, I think, should be something that's considered as you go through this exercise.

I certainly understand the need to balance population among ridings, but I think it's maybe an important thing for – I'm not sure what, like, the mandate of your commission is, but I think it would be more important to maintain municipal integrity and, if necessary, to invest in increased constituency resources, whether they be virtual, whether they be extra manpower. You know, we understand that the physical space of some of these boundaries or some of these constituencies can be daunting, but, again, in this time and age where there are a lot of resources available that could manage it differently, when you have common interests and common values, lots of specific topics and specific culture, that's important. It should be a consideration.

In closing, I think, really, I hope I made the case that not splitting municipal boundaries, whether they're urban or otherwise, is very important. You know, we have, for instance, in the county of Newell, the doughnut surrounding Brooks, two-thirds of the population of the county, and they have only 2 out of 10 of the representation. The reason why they're effective, not because they have more people to look after, is because the interests of those people around the doughnut are significantly more cohesive, and that makes for better governance. While some of those ridings, I know, probably are varying in population, the exercise of governance is far more efficient when that's taken into consideration.

However you go, I appreciate the effort. I want to just leave you with the idea that if it's within your mandate to recommend other options besides being plus or minus 25 in every single case, you certainly make those recommendations. I think the key to the public's confidence in your exercise and the public's confidence in the next election will certainly be around whether their thoughts and considerations were heard and recommendations made that reflect those very important perceptive and governance issues that Albertans face daily and with their MLAs.

Thank you very much for your time. I appreciate you listening to me.

The Chair: Thank you very much, sir. Much appreciated.

I'm going to open it up to questions. Mr. Evans, any questions, speaking of Brooks?

Mr. Evans: Yeah. Thank you. Good morning. Thank you for your presentation. In terms of thinking about municipal boundaries, obviously, you'll agree there's a problem in terms of the numbers. Brooks and the county of Newell would total at best 24,000, just under 25,000. Having grown up in Brooks, I would say there's less of a connection between the county of Newell and Wheatland and more of a connection between the county of Newell and special areas. Would you agree with that?

Mr. Morishita: I would not disagree with that, no.

Mr. Evans: And probably more of a connection to parts of the MD of Taber than there would be to Vulcan county, for example.

Mr. Morishita: Yeah. I think historically, yes, that's true as well.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for your presentation this morning, Mr. Morishita. You indicated that you felt it was a better fit previously with Brooks, Strathmore, and Wheatland county as opposed to Brooks-Medicine Hat with parts of the Newell county. Can you give me a specific example or elaborate slightly on that?

Mr. Morishita: Sure. Currently, right now, it's Brooks-Medicine Hat. While we take this kind of strip down towards Medicine Hat, Medicine Hat proper, the north part of Medicine Hat is significantly different in terms of its priorities than Brooks and the county of Newell. While I appreciate that Brooks and the county of Newell are a unit, that is the more important part of this to me. Prior to that it was Wheatland county and Strathmore.

You're right. Our natural kind of trading goes – as the other panellist Mr. Evans just said, you know, it kind of runs in that ranching area in the rural area back and forth up that highway. There are lots of common landholders, common settling. That's happened from that perspective. But for an MLA to, like, have kind of more – it seems kind of odd, kind of almost opposite of what I just said. When you had Strathmore and Wheatland, they had their set of issues. When you had Brooks and the county of Newell, they have their set of issues. While they weren't always the same and somewhat nuanced, at least there was one unit to deal with versus kind of a multitude of perspectives.

I believe there's a multitude of perspectives towards Medicine Hat and Medicine Hat proper, in particular, that are significantly different than what Brooks and the county of Newell face. From a governance perspective, I think it makes more sense to be mindful of that consideration versus that we need X amount of people from the north part of Medicine Hat to get that riding to 55,000. I think that's not the right consideration.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: Julian.

Dr. Martin: Thank you, sir. I want to pick up on that very last point that you alluded to but perhaps not fully digested. The instructions given us in the act are that anything between 25 per cent below the mean and 25 per cent above the mean is considered acceptable.

Mr. Morishita: Oh, okay.

Dr. Martin: Yeah. I think it widens the range for us somewhat from just looking at a population mean figure. Given your suggestion that boundaries should align as much as possible wherever possible with municipal boundaries, would you, then, be amenable to the final population numbers being highly variable in different areas?

Mr. Morishita: Yes, I would be. I think that makes a lot more sense than cutting up municipal boundaries.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: Great. Thank you. Maybe I'll ask you a question that I asked an earlier presenter just, I guess, about some of the areas that connect or are closer to Brooks, places like Vauxhall, Bassano, or maybe even points east out highway 555. Is that sort of part of, I guess, the kind of, quote, unquote, natural catchment area of Brooks? If so, maybe tell me about that. If not, tell me that and if there are others that you think would fit.

Mr. Morishita: Yeah. Again, well, in the rural area there's some natural movement, you know, like for Vauxhall in Vulcan county – or is it the MD of Taber? Actually, I think Vauxhall is in the MD of Taber. While Vauxhall might have a tendency to come to Brooks in some regard, the natural flow of things, I guess, Mr. Clark, in a way doesn't really matter to any person. The boundary isn't something that they think about crossing.

When it comes to governance, you know, when you have the MD of Taber that has the representation and the town of Vauxhall that has the representation and they're kind of that closest level to people, if you keep that unit intact to deal with an MLA versus kind of trying to pick these individual spots that do, I think you'd be better served.

I would say that if you look at the MD of Taber as a unit and everything that's in it, including the town of Taber and the town of Vauxhall, you know, having that unit to deal with versus the city of Brooks and the town of Taber – are you kind of getting what I'm saying? – don't hive those off. Kind of look at those units as they exist. As you move that threshold around, that should be the higher consideration versus whether Bassano goes to Strathmore or whether Bassano comes to Brooks type of thing. Bassano is already in the county. We have joint meetings every month. We meet together as a group. We have all these other corporate entities that meet together as a group. How do you get that efficient governance? How do you have a voice at the table?

I realize that with 5 million Albertans, you know, not everybody is going to feel they have a voice at the table, but at least through their municipal representation and a thoughtful boundary that the MLA gets to do, I think that can be improved.

11:35

Mr. Clark: That's great. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your presentation. It's always helpful to hear from people who are involved in governance, local government, and how our work will eventually impact the communities that you just represented. Thank you very much, Mr. Morishita.

Mr. Morishita: Well, thank you very much for the opportunity. Good luck with your work.

The Chair: Thank you.

Our next presenter is Danielle Larivee. Please correct my pronunciation, ma'am, if I mispronounced, but just tell us where you're from and begin your presentation.

Ms Larivee: Sure. I actually live in the community of Slave Lake, so in the constituency of Lesser Slave Lake, and I have been here

since 1979, so I'm very vested in the community. I grew up here. I have raised my children here. I am with my aging parents here, looking at my kids now starting their own lives here, and certainly very invested not just in Slave Lake but in the whole region that I'm in.

I did want to speak quite specifically to effective representation in rural ridings. I had a chance to go through and review some of the transcripts from the hearings of the commission that have been hosted in rural Alberta before now, and I did read that some participants described challenges of representation in large rural ridings. I was quite disturbed to see that they used it as a rationale for creating hybrid ridings in which rural communities would be lumped into rural ridings.

I formerly was the MLA for Lesser Slave Lake from 2015 till 2019. Lesser Slave Lake is one of the geographically largest ridings in the province, so I certainly can speak to challenges with a large rural riding. I also was formerly the Minister of Municipal Affairs, so I had many conversations with people representing rural communities and many municipal leaders like Barry, who just spoke, so it was great to see his face.

I'd like to think, actually, that I was able to represent the riding quite well despite the size of it. I still regularly run into individuals who speak to how happy they were about the support and connection I was able to provide. I did have two staffed offices, one in Slave Lake and one in High Prairie. The one in High Prairie had a part-time assistant there, and I certainly made myself available to either travel to communities, meet at one of my offices, or meet in Edmonton if that worked better for folks, and between myself and my staff we were able to make sure that constituents did have the opportunity to share their thoughts, their concerns, and address their issues. Admittedly, it would have been nice to have some additional funding to help with supporting multiple offices, but we made it work even within the structure that we had.

I really do feel I was able to be visible and accessible to my constituents. I attended as many events as possible in communities from one corner of the riding to the other, and while time didn't allow me to attend every single event, and I don't think that's any different than urban ridings either, I did attempt to ensure that by rotating events, constituents saw me in their community as often as possible.

The only community that posed real challenges due to travel was Chipewyan Lake, and if any of you have looked at a map, you will know why. There is literally no way you could build any grouping of constituencies that makes access to Chipewyan Lake. It's very, very, very isolated down a one-way road that's many hours. Even then I was thankful to at least meet with their leadership even though I didn't make it to the community as often as I would have liked.

Between attending events, I hosted open houses at my office, and I shared newsletters with constituents by mail. I have to say that I was also a cabinet minister of multiple portfolios at different times, and I was able to prioritize my constituents anyways by taking the time I needed to be visible, accessible, and to connect. With many, many Indigenous communities, municipalities, and school districts, I made it a priority to meet with their leadership whenever I could to ensure I was aware of the unique needs that each of their communities represented.

I really want to challenge the idea that hybrid ridings are the solution to increasing effective representation. I actually think they would do the opposite, that they would negatively affect representation in rural ridings. The composition of hybrid ridings would by their very nature include communities of interest that share very little in common. The question then becomes: which

community of interest gets to have their needs and their concerns and their interests represented? Realistically, in hybrid ridings I would see rural voters being outnumbered by urban voters, which would truly create a position in which rural voters would be more likely to be undermined. Realistically, rural communities do have a lot of unique things about who they are and how they're built up, and the idea that that would be able to be balanced with a mix with urban would be incredibly challenging. It's already challenging just trying to recognize the different needs of different rural communities.

Then, last but not least, especially given the riding that I represented in Lesser Slave Lake, I want to address the importance of representation for Indigenous communities in this province. Along with a very dark and difficult history, Indigenous people and their communities have continued to struggle to have their voices heard. We have to ensure that whatever option we have going forward for representation for First Nations and Métis settlements, their needs and their concerns and their interests are heard. Legitimately, that continues to be a challenge to this day, and I cannot state that enough. We need to make sure that the nations for sure for each tribal council are connected together, that each treaty organization is ideally clustered together as much as possible, and keep as many Métis settlements together as possible so their voices can be amplified and ensure that we can work together to address the many challenges they continue to face and need to be resolved in order to have true reconciliation and justice.

There's a very quick rundown of my thoughts on it, but I'm happy to answer any questions you might have.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much for your very winsome presentation. My goodness, you must be a good juggler, having represented what we call a 15(2) riding under such demanding schedule.

I'll turn it over to the commissioners for questions. Any questions, Susan?

Mrs. Samson: Yes, thank you, and thank you for your presentation. With the numbers we're faced with today, with the census numbers Lesser Slave Lake is sitting right at minus 50 per cent. We were up in the area. Actually, we were up in Slave Lake last week, and it's a phenomenal, hugely, immensely expansive area. When I think about the riding, we need some more people. Like, the legislation demands. What do you think would be reasonable to pull in with your experience?

Ms Larivee: Yeah. You know, realistically, I don't profess to fully have all the answers for you in this. What I would say is that the last part that I focused on is most important, making sure that as changes are made to Lesser Slave Lake, as much as possible, rather than going further south, for example, there would be an opportunity, if at all possible, to include additional settlements or Indigenous communities as part of the riding. About half of Treaty 8 nations are part of Lesser Slave Lake, but I really worry that the more and more non-Indigenous communities are included in the riding, the more watered down their voices would be.

There are so many incredible challenges with Indigenous communities and ensuring those relationships to help with healing, to help restore those communities and build capacity. There needs to be protections to ensure that at the very least collectively there are opportunities to meet with them and speak about concerns, their unique concerns but also their collective concerns, and work on that. I mean, that's probably a little difficult. I imagine Peace River is also having some of those challenges. I'm not sure how that would look, but I do think that needs to be a key part of this review,

making sure that as many of them continue to be together as much as possible, to make sure that those voices are part of it.

11:45

I mean, the whole idea of hybrid ridings is not even relevant for Lesser Slave Lake. We're a long ways away from that. You know, my former hat as Municipal Affairs minister was more the voice speaking to that aspect of it. I recognize that there are less and less people in the north in comparison, particularly, to Edmonton and Calgary and that there are challenges, but I really would highly hope that you would contemplate the Indigenous communities and protecting their voices in the decisions that you make.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

The Chair: Julian, any questions?

Dr. Martin: No, thank you.

The Chair: Greg?

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much. Yeah, we had a great trip up there last week. It really does give you a sense of the vast geography. I think that such an important part of this process is actually going to the communities and just understanding that, right? Maybe I'll ask a specific question. Then I'll ask maybe more of a general question, just really building on what Susan had talked about.

Some of the feedback we've received from different places. The mayor of Peace River suggested perhaps moving the Woodland Cree First Nation out of Lesser Slave Lake into Peace River. That doesn't help us arithmetically, but I just wonder if you can comment on that. Then some of the other suggestions were that there's a portion of the MD of Lesser Slave River or even perhaps Swan Hills that we might want to consider. Can you speak to any of that in terms of the kind of connection and continuity of community interests amongst those different communities?

Ms Larivee: Sure. Speaking specifically to Woodland Cree, they're part of the Kee Tas Kee Now Tribal Council. I think it's really important that all the members of the Kee Tas Kee Now Tribal Council continue to be together, and that includes a number of nations broadly across the north. I don't think that it would necessarily be in their best interest, considering they work very closely together, to hive them off. Realistically, the numbers are small enough. I don't know that it would be of any benefit to that. While I do realize that they do travel to Peace River, there also still continues to be engagement with Slave Lake. I think, from a representation of their leadership and their identity as collectively being part of a number of nations together, that would pose its own challenges.

I do think that where municipal boundaries are cut up, there are opportunities there. There are parts of Lesser Slave River MD that aren't part of the riding. There are parts of Big Lakes county that aren't part of the constituency. I mean, realistically, those would be the easy places to go. I'm not sure that they're going to get the numbers that you're really hoping for, but as much as possible – it was difficult always. I would talk to the leadership of Big Lakes county, for example. They were frustrated that they had to talk to multiple MLAs, despite the fact, to address their concerns. So that is an area potentially where it makes sense to expand into.

Mr. Clark: Great. Thank you.

Mr. Evans: Good morning. Thank you. I'm going to ask you the Costco question. If you're a Slave Lake resident and you're going to go to Costco, where do you go?

Ms Larivee: Edmonton. I mean, High Prairie would go to Grande Prairie.

Mr. Evans: That was my very next question, so thank you.

Ms Larivee: I knew exactly what you were going to say.

Mr. Evans: Great minds think alike.

Ms Larivee: Yeah. There you go.

Mr. Evans: Thank you so much.

Ms Larivee: Although, I would say that where I go to Costco is different from where my everyday connections and interactions are. So I'm not sure how valid that particular example is but happy to answer your question.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much. We're doing fairly good for time. I've got a question about the 15(2) nature of your riding. As the MLA, I mean, when you deal with your colleagues in the Legislature and they say, "Oh, you've only got 27,000 people, and your colleague in Edmonton has got 63,000," tell me how a 15(2) MLA interacts. Do you get pitied, criticized? Are people envious? What's the interaction in the House?

Ms Larivee: Well, I mean, admittedly, I was a cabinet minister and a well-respected cabinet minister in our government, so I'm not sure that I could say that I would be able to speak to everybody's experience with it. But I didn't get a sense that there was any resentment on the part of any of my colleagues for the fact that I represented less, I think, because I spoke very passionately about the unique needs and challenges of the north and made it clear all the time what I was facing and what it was like to have 12 First Nations and three Métis settlements as well as a number of municipalities that I was dealing with. I think part of it was that my colleagues were very supportive of Indigenous reconciliation. That was helpful because to me that was a big part of it. When you have so much complexity in terms of the needs, then there continues to be a benefit, not just because of geography but because of the complexity of the riding, to ensure that that representation looks a little different.

I don't know. I thought it was fine. I felt respected by my colleagues. I felt heard by my colleagues, and I think they felt the same. We just made sure to share different perspectives with each other and acknowledge that things look different in the north than in some of the urban centres.

The Chair: Of course, as you're aware, the legislation allows for up to four 15(2)-type ridings. Do you think that that is something this commission should do; maximize the 15(2) ridings given the vast areas in the north?

Ms Larivee: I don't know if I would say "should." I think it should be something you're considering in terms of when we're looking at representation and when we're looking at this massive shift of people from rural to urban over the last number of decades but also recognizing, in particular in the north, a lot of the contributions economically and some of the unique challenges there as well. I think if there are areas that would benefit from that representation, then I would hope that you would utilize that and expand the

number of them to ensure that those opportunities for high-quality representation continue to exist.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you. Thank you very much. It's always beneficial to hear from people who have represented or are representing a particular electoral division. So, thanks so much, ma'am. Much appreciated.

Ms Larivee: Thanks. Take care. Have a great day. Bye.

The Chair: That leaves us with one more presenter before we break for the afternoon. Mr. Andrew Knack.

Mr. Knack: Good morning.

The Chair: Good morning. It's still morning.

Mr. Knack: Yes. Yeah. A few minutes left.

The Chair: Tell us where you're from and proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Knack: Certainly. Thank you. My name is Andrew Knack. I live in the riding of Edmonton-Riverview, and also I'm very fortunate to serve as a city councillor in ward Nakota Isga within the city of Edmonton, which overlaps with four provincial ridings. Edmonton-West Henday, Edmonton-Glenora, Edmonton-Riverview, and a little bit of Edmonton-McClung.

I wanted to take an opportunity to come and speak to this. I know you're going through some important conversations right now about how the boundaries should be distributed and wanted to just share a bit of what I've learned through some of our ward boundary conversations within the city and also some of what I've heard through the recent federal changes, as that impacted some of what I've heard has been discussed.

I'll start, maybe, with the federal piece, the recent federal election. We used to have a riding, a few ridings in Edmonton, but the one that I overlapped with in the west end of the city included Edmonton and St. Albert. What I found over that time is that, you know, while there is great connectivity and we always are looking for great regional collaboration between us and our regional partners, being able to stay contained within the city boundaries, within the city of Edmonton, allows for our issues to be better addressed, better heard. I think when you have that split between two different municipalities, when we have a large city that can essentially sustain its own riding, that does become a concern of not being able to fully address the issues that we're dealing with in the city.

11:55

The other piece. I appreciate that we're coming up on lunch, so I don't want to take up too much of your time. I also wanted to give an example. In the ward that I currently serve – so we did a ward boundary review in 2020, as our populations within the wards were getting quite a bit of a disparity. Through that exercise there were two communities within the city of Edmonton – sorry, just as a quick point of information for everyone, we have a pretty active community league system. We have 163 community leagues in the city of Edmonton. We use those boundaries quite heavily in a lot of the work that we do because that really ties into this notion of communities of interest.

When that ward boundary review occurred – and it was, again, an independent commission that went through that – they did end up making a recommendation that included splitting up one of the communities that I served for my first eight years on council. In this term it was split between two wards now; I cover half of it and

Councillor Sarah Hamilton covers the other. We found that it does actually create a lot of confusion from the residents even within that community league, because, you know, they share similar issues. They're working on the same things, and when they are split, then they feel, like: who do you go to? Do you go to the one where you live within even though the issue might be on the other side of the street?

At the end of the day, I always like the independent commission's recommendations, and I believe that's the right process. That was one of the few areas I wish had changed. I wish that recommendation hadn't come forward because even within a local community league having that split makes it really hard to address the issues that are being raised to us as city councillors.

I give that example and the federal example because I have heard a conversation and dialogue about should any part of the city of Edmonton include spots outside the city of Edmonton. You know, at the west end of the city where I overlap with West Henday, could that include Parkland county or Spruce Grove or Stony Plain? I've seen it at such a local issue that it still creates challenges, and we've seen it federally that it was an issue, that they actually changed it so it was contained within Edmonton. I would hate to see us have to go back to a system where we're overlapping. I mean, I'm a former Spruce Grovian. I love the city of Spruce Grove. It's great. But my needs when I lived in Spruce Grove were very different than the needs when I live in Edmonton.

I just wanted to make sure, as we're having this conversation and having this dialogue, to really reinforce the importance of the city of Edmonton continuing to have our ridings contained solely within the city of Edmonton. That ensures the best possible chance for good representation to address the issues that we're dealing with and to not spread any elected representative too thin. If you start expanding the boundaries of that and go into the county and into the other towns and cities, I do worry you're going to lose that for a city that has a lot of diverse needs and challenging and complex things that we have to deal with each and every day.

I think maybe I can leave it there. I have more if you want, but I know you're coming up on your noon time, and I don't want to hold you long.

The Chair: No, no, don't worry. We've allotted 15 minutes for each presenter, 10 for presenting and five for questions. I'm sure we'll have some questions. Let me turn it over, starting with Mr. Evans.

Any questions?

Mr. Evans: Yes. I certainly understand the concern that you expressed as it relates to the municipal government responsibilities and how that could be confusing for the residents when we're dealing with a ward system, but I'm a little less understanding of your position as it relates both federally and provincially. The jurisdiction and responsibilities of those representatives don't really overlap significantly with your municipal responsibilities. Can you give me any specific instances where we have a confusion as it relates to the MLA representing the interests, the community interests that we're talking about here, especially focusing on the communities? I can't remember the word.

Mrs. Samson: Riverview.

Mr. Evans: Well, no not the – you have a very significantly developed group of community associations.

Mr. Knack: Yes.

Mr. Clark: Community leagues.

Mr. Evans: Community leagues, there we go. Thank you.

Mr. Knack: Community leagues, sorry. Yes.

Thanks for the question. I'll actually use an example at the west end of the ward that I represent in our newer suburban communities. I think where we need to have that continued connection point within our city boundaries – even something like our school system. We're going through, like many municipalities right now, very rapid population growth that's creating a lot of demand and a lot of pressures for more provincial infrastructure on the schools. I'm going to particularly focus on schools; we can talk about health care at a later time if necessary. What happens right now is that within the city of Edmonton there's a lot of advocacy together from many of these communities that exist within – I'm going to pick on Edmonton-West Henday as an example right now, which is the area that has the greatest lack of schools of the areas that I currently serve in. Those communities have come together, really almost through that riding association, to be able to work towards advocating to the provincial government, to bring together residents to speak to those issues. I think the worry that we run into is that if you start including the counties and if you start including the other towns and cities – I would be worried that a provincial elected representative would not be able to dedicate the necessary time needed to addressing these very localized issues.

Yes, we need schools everywhere across this province; that's understandable. We've heard the provincial government talk about that and put forward an action plan to address that. But when you have such a demand in an area contained within two school boards, Edmonton public and Edmonton Catholic, I just don't see a scenario how somebody who is serving even Spruce Grove, as close as it is, as someone that grew up there – how are they going to be able to adequately address what is a very large population on the western edge of our city, to be able to advocate for more schools, to expand on the overall supports and infrastructure that we need while at the same time trying to respond to issues that will look different?

Schools are an understandable – yes, we need schools everywhere, but what you need in each area is going to look very different. There are similarities within Edmonton. That's not going to be the same thing as you would see in Parkland county or in Spruce Grove or in Stony Plain. The growth that we're seeing is more rapid and it requires a different focus point, and I'm just not sure how I could see that being adequately addressed by somebody who's trying to split their time between potentially an urban and rural riding.

I'm not here speaking on behalf of Alberta Municipalities, but as somebody who's sat on that board for the last six years, yes, I love travelling to the villages, I love travelling to the towns and talking about their needs. They have similar overall needs, but the scale is entirely different. I can't see how you'd be able to adequately respond to both of those by having an overlapping riding of urban and rural.

Mr. Evans: Which ward are you in? Which one do you represent?

Mr. Knack: Ward Nakota Isga, so the west end of the city that goes, give or take, from Groat Road out to 231st Street, from either Whitemud or 95th Avenue, out to the northern boundary of the city up against St. Albert.

Mr. Evans: Thank you.

The Chair: Susan.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you, and thank you for your presentation.

You indicated that a concern you have within your own provincial electoral district would be the splitting of wards or the splitting of community leagues. Do you have specific examples that you want to bring to our attention when we're looking specifically at your electoral district?

Mr. Knack: Sorry. To clarify, my example was on the municipal ward system. When we went through, there was a splitting of the community of West Jasper Sherwood. I gave that example as a bit of the reason of why – if that's happening locally, I can see how that would materialize provincially and federally, and I think it's why the federal commission made the changes that they did. Thankfully, the provincial ridings I overlap with: all of the community leagues are contained in that, so there's no split of a community league in the provincial boundaries that I overlap with at least.

Mrs. Samson: Good. Thank you. I think we've heard loud and clear from other presenters the importance and the work that community leagues give back, and that was something I was interested in. Thank you again.

Mr. Knack: Thank you.

12:05

Dr. Martin: Thank you, Councillor. I wanted to direct your attention to the question of growth. As you know, it's lumpy around Edmonton. In particular, I've been looking at some of the inner provincial ridings, including Riverview and Glenora, whose MLA we spoke with a few weeks ago, and Strathcona as well. One could probably identify a few more. These are particularly low growth, which rather surprised me. I know that you and your colleagues have instituted a series of land-use alterations to encourage infill and the like, but I'm particularly interested, as I was with Glenora, that Riverview, which is particularly slow growing, will be, in my estimation, positively impacted by the LRT. Is that your understanding of its imminent effect?

Mr. Knack: Yes. Correct. I wasn't on council when the original route decision was made, but I served as the vice-president of Meadowlark Community League over the years of that route decision. One of the core principles of approving that LRT route along Stony Plain Road and then down 156th Street was to create redevelopment opportunities. Certainly, we expect to see a lot of redevelopment on Stony Plain Road. In fact, there has already been an approved rezoning application right at the corner of 149th Street and Stony Plain Road. That project hasn't advanced yet, but it has the potential to be a dramatic change of significant high-rise developments. I think once we start seeing the first, you'll see a lot of uptick in that space.

So yes, we are expecting and, in fact, we have also approved land-use rules that will prioritize higher scale development along the corridors of the LRT, Stony Plain Road being one of the biggest ones, but even as you come along 156th Street at major hubs, you will see more and more larger scale residential development, which, in turn, should start to help to change the trajectory of our mature neighbourhoods, which, yeah, unfortunately, in many cases, have a lower population today than they did back in 1971. That's part of why we've made as many land-use decisions as we have, to start to change that.

Dr. Martin: Excellent answer to the puzzle I was looking at. Thank you very much.

Mr. Knack: Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Thank you. I'd love to hear a little bit more about – you've referred to it a couple of times – the federal boundary changes that had originally had a blended urban-rural hybrid and then went away from that. Can you just tell me a little more about what that was exactly and if you are aware of what the rationale was for going back?

Mr. Knack: Yes. I don't know all the inner workings on it, but the riding that I overlapped with was in the very northwest corner of the city, which included St. Albert. It was an Edmonton-St. Albert riding that I think expanded even outside the boundaries of St. Albert, if I understood.

There were five communities that were contained within the city of Edmonton that were part of this one larger riding represented by current MP Michael Cooper. Now it's made up of the new federal riding, I believe called Edmonton Northwest, which is solely contained within our boundaries now. MP Billy Morin is now the MP. It's a solely Edmonton riding.

What I found to be the challenge is that, because there were only a handful of communities that were part of this Edmonton-St. Albert riding, that connectivity between the Member of Parliament that I overlapped with and myself was quite different than my connectivity with the Members of Parliament for Edmonton West or Edmonton Centre, where we would regularly get to run into each other, regularly get to speak about issues that we were dealing with. That rarely happened where we had a riding that had a small number of Edmonton-based communities. What ended up happening is that the Member of Parliament – again, this isn't a criticism of it. It's just their time was more heavily spent outside of the city of Edmonton.

When we have a lot of issues that we need to work on – this applies provincially and federally – we need those opportunities of connection; we need to be regularly speaking with one another. It's one thing to, you know, schedule your regular working meetings with an MLA and MP, which we do. It's something else entirely to be able to regularly run into each other at these community events,

these community meetings where then we can have, "Oh, I'm hearing this at the doors right now," or "This community reached out to me. Hey, did you hear about this yet?" "Oh, no. I haven't. Thanks. Let me take over." I know that seems minor, but it's actually a really important part of our work. So I worry about that loss.

You know, I'm picking on West Henday because I could envision that one being the most likely of a conversation to say: are you going to go further west into Parkland county and Spruce Grove? How will I have that opportunity that I currently have with the four MLAs that I overlap with? I don't see that as likely because I've had a track record of that on the federal boundary that essentially proved that point to me. That's why I really do worry about splitting up the city of Edmonton with any other municipalities. I want to continue to work with our regional partners, but there are other tables to be doing that at. I think our provincial boundaries should be contained within the city.

Mr. Clark: That's very helpful. Thank you.

Mr. Knack: Oh, I think you're muted.

The Chair: You're right. You're right. Thank you very much.

It's always helpful to hear from people who are on the ground dealing with the community members, the community associations, whether they be MLAs or city councillors.

Thank you for adding to our lexicon. I didn't know what you called someone from Spruce Grove.

Mr. Knack: I actually don't know. That's what I used to call myself. They might yell at me now, so let's not.

The Chair: Thank you very much. You're excused. We will adjourn for lunch.

Mr. Knack: Thank you.

[The hearing adjourned at 12:11 p.m.]



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission
Public Hearings

Virtual

Monday, June 23, 2025
7:02 p.m.

Transcript No. 28

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Electoral Boundaries Commission

Justice Dallas K. Miller, Chair

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John D. Evans, KC

Julian Martin

Susan Samson

Support Staff

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Clerk Assistant and Executive Director of
Parliamentary Services

Administrator

Manager of Corporate Communications

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Managing Editor of *Alberta Hansard*

Electoral Boundaries Commission Public Hearings – Virtual

Public Participants

Malcolm Adams

Gian-Carlo Carra, Councillor, City of Calgary

David Carpenter

Amanda Chapman, MLA, Calgary-Beddington

Paul McLauchlin, Reeve and Division IV Councillor, County of Ponoka

Trevor Sloan

Courtney Walcott, Councillor, City of Calgary

Wendy Whitehouse

7:02 p.m.

Monday, June 23, 2025

[Justice Miller in the chair]

The Chair: Good evening, everyone. We are just commencing our first session of the Electoral Boundaries Commission hearings virtually as part of our last evening of public presentations. I see that we've got, I believe it's Ms Whitehouse, Wendy Whitehouse. I know you are scheduled at 7:30, but we've decided to pull you forward if that's okay with you.

Ms Whitehouse: Sure. Can you hear me all right?

The Chair: Yes. Yes, we can. Let me just give you a quick little intro. You can see the five of us here. My name is Justice Dallas Miller. Mr. John Evans is on the far left, Mrs. Susan Samson to my left, Dr. Julian Martin, and Mr. Greg Clark. We're from across Alberta, and for further details you can find everybody's bio on the website. Our task as a commission is to redraw the boundaries of Alberta, and there are a couple of things that are causing us to do this. First of all, the legislation demands at this stage that a good look at the boundaries be made and redrawing. We're having to do it for a couple of reasons. The legislation has increased the number of electoral divisions from 87 to 89, so we have to deal with two new ridings, and we have a huge population growth increase, so we must deal with that as well.

By way of background, we were established as a commission in late March of this year, and from the time of our establishment – we're on a time clock. We have a one-year time clock. We've had a full round of public hearings across the province, today being the last day, and we begin deliberating after today to consider the basis for our first report. Our first report will be due to be delivered to the Speaker of the Legislature in late October. After we deliver that report, it'll be made public, and the public will have an opportunity to respond to that in written form throughout November and December. We'll have further public hearings in January, and then we'll fine-tune the report for a final report, which is due in late March. The Legislature will then take that final report and enact enabling legislation to deal with our recommendations.

Just to give you some background in terms of population. The last Electoral Boundaries Commission had a population of just slightly over 4 million. We have a population of almost 4.9 million to deal with, so a huge population increase. When you look at the mean average for each riding's population, it's 54,929, but that's not necessarily the target. The target range is 25 per cent below or 25 per cent above, and that ranges from 41,000 to almost 69,000.

Our task is to establish effective representation for the province of Alberta. In doing that, we look at several factors that are outlined in the legislation: sparsity and relative density of the population throughout the province, common community interests, geographic features, communication and transportation lines. Our task is to come up with understandable and clear boundaries, and we are entitled to take into consideration other factors that we may find of benefit and of use through our public hearing process.

Now, as I state, I've kind of condensed my typical introduction into about a third of the time I usually take, ma'am, but we want to hear from you. Please tell us your name again for the record, tell us where you're from, and begin your presentation.

Ms Whitehouse: Okay. Well, I want to start by saying thank you to the members of the commission for the opportunity to speak this evening. My name is Wendy Whitehouse. I'm going to apologize at the outset for reading. I know it's a small group and it's online; it still makes me nervous. I'm going to read what I wrote out, and

then I understand that there's a time for sort of discussion or questions or anything like that afterwards, if I understood correctly.

The Chair: Sure. Yes.

Ms Whitehouse: Yes. Okay.

It's Wendy Whitehouse. I'm addressing the concerns related to the boundary changes for Calgary-East provincial electoral district. I have lived in the riding for 11 years and worked teaching English to immigrants in the riding in the late '90s. I also volunteer for the Southview Community Association and 12CSI, which is the 12 community safety initiative, and the 12 communities in the safety initiative are represented by many of the communities in Calgary-East.

The city of Calgary refers to our area as traditionally underserved. This you will hear said by the councillor for ward 9. You'll hear it said by planning people. We had a local area plan. They started the local area plan by referring to us as traditionally underserved. I understand this to mean that working-class and immigrant populations are often treated differently when it comes to providing services. It is clear to me that systems developed to accommodate the needs of professional, English-speaking, technologically adept citizens often do not serve the needs of Calgary-East constituents, resulting in their voices and concerns going unheard.

Government's job is to ensure that all citizens' voices are adequately heard. As I understand it, the primary goal in changing electoral boundaries is to ensure the electoral districts reflect changes in population distribution and maintain fair representation for all constituents. Electoral boundary changes should support inclusion and should not be used to create favourable voting blocks regardless of the party in power at the time. That's my personal opinion. I have three main points for your consideration.

First, I think that the provincial riding boundaries should stay aligned with municipal boundaries. It is critical that the voters of Calgary-East who have chosen to live, work, and build their lives in Calgary have fair representation. If our riding is lumped in with communities outside of Calgary, our vote will be diluted.

This brings me to my second point. Calgary-East is a unique riding with a large visible minority population, 35 per cent based on the 2021 census and I believe that it's probably closer to 50 per cent right now. This demographic includes Filipino, Southeast Asian, and many African countries such as Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, and so on. There are several others, but I just mention those three. This is a unique demographic which is not seen in other parts of the city, so much so that the business district is named International Avenue. The large Filipino population is a unique characteristic of the riding. The communities in this riding need to be kept intact to ensure that they have access to fair representation.

If our riding gets lumped in with neighbouring communities, then the racialized voters in this community will lose their access to fair representation. I believe it is important to keep the communities of Calgary-East together and closely aligned with the municipal boundaries. This is important for the constituents of these communities to have a voice in the electoral system. Concerns identified by Calgary-East constituents are often different from those of Calgary writ large and communities farther east such as Chestermere due to the unique demographics of this district.

7:10

Concerns identified in Calgary-East. I asked some people I know to send me some things about which they were concerned. Some of them, of course, are similar to what many people in the province are concerned about and some of them are the concerns of many but

really stark in this community. Some of their concerns are access to adequate and affordable housing, access to purpose-built rental housing – 40 per cent of the area is rental housing – free, universal health care, multilingual doctors and health care workers, having a living wage, a wage that allows any full-time employee to pay for rent, food, utilities. Many people here work two, three jobs just to get their basic needs met. The high cost of insurance, the high cost of utilities, of course these are huge burdens on working-class people. Food insecurity is an issue in this area of the city.

In working-class, multicultural communities it is already challenging for constituents to raise their concerns and be heard. I believe that the creation of a hybrid urban-rural riding would further dilute the voices of Calgary-East constituents. It would create confusion, lead to constituents feeling even more unheard, discourage engagement, and have an unnecessary negative impact on this riding.

My third point is regarding the creation of the two new seats. I think the two new seats should be allocated to areas with the most current and future population growth. All areas of Calgary have experienced population growth. However, north Calgary, ward 5, has seen the most population growth, followed by the far southeast, ward 12.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak and to share my perspective on the impact of the electoral boundary changes for this riding, Calgary-East.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much.

Aaron, can you tell me if there's anybody in the room just so I know if I have to . . .

Mr. Roth: Paul McLaughlin.

The Chair: Okay. But he's not till later.

Okay. Thank you.

Questions, starting with Mr. Evans.

Mr. Evans: Thank you for your submissions in addressing and just speaking to your concerns. If I understand your position correctly, the concerns that you listed off, you would say that those would be unique to Calgary-East as opposed to any other riding, or are you saying that it's unique to rural versus urban ridings?

Ms Whitehouse: I think both. I know that there has been some discussion about a hybrid district with Chestermere. I don't know how much discussion there's been about that, but I did read some things about that. In terms of the rest of the city, the demographics are quite different here in that we have many new immigrants landing in this community. The income levels, the education levels, people learning new languages, those things are really concentrated. It's not that they don't exist in other communities. Yes, there are immigrant and racialized people in many areas of Calgary and in rural areas, but the concentration in this area of the city is significant. The economics are different in this area of the city and in this electoral district.

Mr. Evans: You would be in ward 9? Is that primarily in ward 9?

Ms Whitehouse: Yes, we're in ward 9. Most of it's in ward 9. Some of it would be ward 10. I think the northern edge might be in ward 10.

Mr. Evans: And ward 11?

Ms Whitehouse: No, I think just ward 10. If anything, it would be ward 10, and we're only the east part of ward 9.

We already experienced the disparity. We refer to it. You'll hear people in this community, we talk about ourselves – now, I've only lived here for 11 years now, but you'll hear people talk all the time about being east of Deerfoot. Communities, even in ward 9, who have smaller ethnic populations, greater incomes, and are west of Deerfoot have many more amenities and services and access, so we often talk about how, you know, when you go east of Deerfoot, it's like we sort of drop off the radar in a way. I think it's very telling when our city representatives and our city planners refer to us, traditionally, like it's embedded, that it's an underserved community. If you pull up Google Maps and you look at Google maps of Calgary, you can see the disparity just looking at the map of the difference in this area of east Calgary versus west Calgary.

Anyways, I digress, but yes, I think the differences hold true when you compare us with other districts, both urban and within the city.

The Chair: Susan.

Mrs. Samson: Mrs. Whitehouse, thank you so much for your presentation. I found it quite informative, and thank you for bringing up – I didn't realize that the minorities are such a high percentage in your riding, and I want to thank you for bringing that to my attention and the concerns that come with it. Thank you.

Mrs. Whitehouse: You're welcome.

The Chair: Julian.

Dr. Martin: Yes. Thank you. On a similar note, I take your remarks that characterize the various new immigrant communities as being an opportunity for a community of interest, even if it's rather like common concerns as much as anything else. But by your comments in that regard, then, I think you're arguing – are you not? – that the present riding boundaries contain a cohesive point of view?

Mrs. Whitehouse: Yes, I would say. I mean, nothing is ever 100 per cent cohesive, but I would say a fairly cohesive and distinct point of view, yes.

Dr. Martin: Thank you, and a rather different point. Is it your personal experience that there is housing growth in the district?

Mrs. Whitehouse: Yes. We're in a period of what I would call revitalization, as I'm sure you're familiar with Calgary's recent city-wide zoning change. Previous to the zoning change, two new areas had been designated. I don't know how much more is going to be built, but there's Belvedere out by East Hills mall, and then there's another area just south of that that is currently being built. Those are both very high-density areas, and the housing appears to be geared to low to low-middle income. Like, it's not high-income housing. It's new housing, but it's not super expensive housing relatively speaking.

The established communities of this area – Forest Lawn in particular and Albert Park, Radisson Heights – are experiencing a lot of row houses being built and smaller, more increased density. I would expect that over the next few years – and this is just an expectation – we'll begin to see more condominiums and things of that nature being built in the area.

7:20

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Thank you. That was similar to the question I was going to ask, but maybe I just – I like that term: cohesive point of view. It's amazing; we've been in these hearings for some time,

and that's the first time I've heard those words. That actually sort of lands, I think, in terms of a good description of a community of interest.

I guess maybe if you can just talk to me a little bit about: you'd mentioned that Belvedere and I think it's Huxley, which is just next to it, are developing. There's some growth there, but beyond that there's still quite a bit of land before we get to Chestermere. I think you've made your point that there's a cohesive community of interest in east Calgary, but maybe just talk to me a little bit about sort of the orientation of that in terms of where the services are. If you're travelling from your neighbourhoods, do you ever go into Chestermere? Do you know if your neighbours go east, or is it all within the community and neighbourhoods and elsewhere in Calgary?

Ms Whitehouse: I would say that it's predominantly in Calgary-East, and when people for the purposes of work leave this district and go elsewhere and come back – honestly, as I say, I'm involved in volunteer groups, and I can't say that I have a deep knowledge of what people are doing in the community. I don't know anyone who goes east to Chestermere ever for anything. All of the services that people need are available. The farthest east people go is the East Hills mall, the new shopping mall. For a lot of people in the community that type of travelling is difficult. When you have people who don't have a lot of money, there are limitations on what they can do in terms of travel, so transit access and C-Trains are helpful, and a lot of the activity remains local.

Mr. Clark: That's very helpful. Thank you so much.

The Chair: Well, thank you so much, Ms Whitehouse, for your presentation and for taking the thoughtful time you put into it, obviously. We're going to excuse you now. I am told that if you want to participate by at least listening to the rest of the presentations, you can go on our website and hear the audio on our YouTube channel. If you're so inclined to hear what other people say this evening, that's your opportunity.

Ms Whitehouse: I just have one quick question because I didn't have any previous information. Do you need the PDF of what I was reading for your files?

The Chair: Well, if you want to send it to info@abebc.ca, we'll certainly retain it and put it with the other written material. If you wish to do that, feel free to do so.

Ms Whitehouse: Okay. Thank you very much for your time. Good night.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you for coming.

I'm going to call the next presenter. Is Amanda Chapman in?
Is there anyone previous to Wendy Whitehouse here?

Mr. Roth: No.

The Chair: Okay. Our next presenter, then, if that individual is still here, is David Carpenter. It's a little earlier than we had you scheduled, but we assume flexibility on our presenter's part. Please identify yourself, tell us where you're from, and begin your presentation. Maybe unmute, too.

Maybe I didn't make it clear. Is David Carpenter in the waiting room and ready to present?

Mr. Carpenter: Okay. Can you hear me?

The Chair: Yeah, we can hear you. Sorry; we brought you up a little earlier because we've got some gaps. We assume you're flexible. Please identify yourself, tell us where you're from, and begin your presentation.

Mr. Carpenter: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm David Carpenter from the city of Lethbridge. My purpose in submitting this presentation is to assist the commission in considering recommendations respecting constituencies representing the city of Lethbridge. This will not be a partisan political presentation. I've been a lifelong provincial Conservative member, and my reasons have been quite simple. In my view, provincial Conservatives have shown integrity, honour, truthfulness, loyalty to Canada and citizenship and combine those qualities with a modicum of business acumen. As Alberta currently does not have a conservative option which meets my minimum stated standards, I am not a member of nor do I represent any political party.

My presentation must therefore be anchored in my personal history and experiences, which I'll briefly recount for you. I was born in Lethbridge, as were my mom and my siblings. After graduating as a chartered accountant, I completed the CICA in-depth tax program, wherein I concentrated on agricultural tax. I served three terms as a Lethbridge councillor and an additional five terms as mayor, concurrently representing Alberta municipalities on the board of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the special forces pension plan.

Provincially I served as chair of WCB Alberta, a director of the Association of Workers' Compensation Boards of Canada and also served on the Alberta Capital Finance Authority as official administrator of Alberta Health Services and as chair of the finance committee and audit and risk committee of AHS, having been appointed by both the UCP and NDP as well as the PC government before them. I served on the board of Calloway Real Estate Investment Trust, which is now SmartREIT, and was publisher of the *Farmer/Stockman Ad-Viser*, *Lethbridge Living Magazine*, *Taber Times*, *Vauxhall Advance*, and Coaldale's *Sunny South News* as well as serving as president of Robins Southern Printing and the southern Alberta web press group. I believe I can provide a unique perspective on both urban and rural southern Alberta political representation.

While the commission must honour the principle of one person, one vote, their recommendations must consider other elements, a significant one of which will be to ensure that communities with shared interests are kept together within electoral boundaries. Additionally, the danger of mixing disparate groupings of people such as both rural and urban in the same constituency will make the job of the political representative almost impossible, with the result that one group or the other is not fairly represented in the Legislature.

In my tax practice most of my large clients came from the ag sector surrounding the city. Combined with my urban and rural publishing experience, I believe I've acquired a solid understanding of the economics and values of rural southern Alberta. As I operated several businesses in Lethbridge and grew up and raised my family here, I also understand the importance of urban issues. My interactions with Alberta MLAs, various members of Executive Council of differing political stripes, as well as deputy ministers, Auditors General, and senior staff have given me some insight into provincial representative realities.

I sit on my back deck and look across the river at the Galt Museum building, where I was born three-quarters of a century ago. It's about eight miles south of the portion of what is colloquially known as Feedlot Alley in the county of Lethbridge. As a local I understand the value of those operations, but not everyone does.

Should northwest Lethbridge and the county feedlot operations, each with their attendant ancillary issues, be represented by one MLA, enormous pressure will be consistently applied to eliminate one or the other of the competing uses.

I served almost a quarter of a century on Lethbridge city council, and concurrently my cousin served on the county of Lethbridge council. Lethbridge desperately needed a site for a new solid-waste landfill, and city council was convinced the best possibility was the county. What we in the city thought to be the ideal location was not, however, in the view of county council the best choice, and my cousin cast the tie-breaking vote in opposition to the site. While subsequent Thanksgiving dinners were somewhat challenging, the whole process required both councils to rethink and come up with a better solution. Put simply, and this is important, the urban council did not properly appreciate the importance of rural concerns.

7:30

Joint urban and rural jurisdictions do not work well. Rural concerns and urban concerns differ. Both are important to Alberta's continued prosperity, and both need to be independently and properly championed in the Legislature. Treating the city of Lethbridge as a rural outpost or treating its surrounding agricultural lands as just another civic subdivision does not recognize their value. Urban and rural must be represented separately. Both are crucial.

That's my presentation, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much, sir.

Mr. Clark, any questions?

Mr. Clark: I don't have any questions. No questions from me. Thank you very much for your submission.

The Chair: Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: No questions, but thank you for your presentation.

The Chair: Susan.

Mrs. Samson: Just a comment. Thank you for your presentation. I assume that you are in agreement with the current electoral boundaries for the city of Lethbridge as they stand right now.

Mr. Carpenter: That, of course, is going to be your decision. As I understand it, we are within the norms of the median population on both sides, so it doesn't make sense to change them from that perspective, but, again, I don't have all of that information.

Mrs. Samson: Yes. Thank you.

Mr. Evans: Thank you for your submissions. I don't have any questions.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, sir, for coming, and thank you for your flexibility, for letting us pull you up sooner on the agenda. I'm not sure if you heard my comments to the previous presenter; we'll excuse you now, but if you want to continue to hear the rest of our presentation, you can go to our website and listen to the streaming audio on our YouTube channel.

Mr. Carpenter: Thank you very much, sir.

The Chair: Thank you.

Again, Mr. Roth, has anybody before Wendy Whitehouse appeared?

Mr. Roth: No.

The Chair: Okay.

Is Paul McLauchlin in?

Mr. McLauchlin: Yes. Good evening.

The Chair: Good evening. Please identify yourself and tell us where you are from and begin your presentation.

Mr. McLauchlin: You bet. Well, thank you for having me this evening. I'm Paul McLauchlin. I'm currently a fifth-term municipal councillor in Ponoka county. I'm the reeve of Ponoka county. I'm the former president of the Rural Municipalities of Alberta, and I've really been fighting for rural voices for a long time. I couldn't believe I've done a fifth term, and you know what? I'm going to step in for a sixth term. Pretty excited to chat with you today. I live in a cow pasture on the northwest end of Ponoka county.

What I'd like to tell you today is, really, I think what I've heard in a few of the presentations, that we are different, and I think our differences are important to point out. When I was elected in 2007, 21.2 per cent of the population was rural, and right now 15.2 per cent of the population is rural. This hyperurbanization, I think, is evident. We know it's happening. Rural places are growing but not at the speed of our urban friends, but it's important, and there are some important statistics for you to understand. We punch above our weight. The fact is that rural municipal folks represent 26 per cent of the GDP, 41 per cent of the capital investment. Again, low population, but still doing a lot. Six hundred and fifty thousand of us live rurally. Many of us know our septic system intimately. I've gone on my journey with mine. I know it extremely well.

Really, the point that I'm trying to say is that definitely there's a different lens and a different view. I was on the board of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and fought hard for rural issues for those folks. We do have a lot in common with our urban friends, but the reality is that blending that representation is different. I'll give you a few reasons why.

I imagine in this conversation is population density. Ponoka county has 721,000 acres, so we're three times the size of the good city of Calgary, almost three times the size of the city of Edmonton. Our population is 3.6 people per square kilometre whereas the city of Calgary is 1,592 and the city of Edmonton is 1,320. What do those numbers mean? Population density means we're spread out. We have a different world view. We have a different view of things, and this hyperurbanization is changing our politics significantly.

I think that for you to actually be a representative of both a rural and an urban riding at the same time is extremely complex. I'm dealing with cattle prices. I'm dealing with transportation issues. I heard some of your folks talking about urban issues, which I don't discount, but I'm not talking about row housing in Ponoka county. I'm talking about market conditions for canola. I'm talking about oil and gas fracking, and I think it's important to understand that lens is a different view.

I can't deny that with hyperurbanization we're starting to lose our representation. Many people have complained that the rural vote gets 2.1 of strength to an urban vote, but I think it matters, because 41 per cent of our wealth, 41 per cent of our investment, 26 per cent of our wealth, everything that you talk about being Alberta is beef, blue skies, grain, oil and gas, and mining. I think that it's important to understand that those folks need to have a strong voice in moving forward.

We brag about our clean air, our clean water. We're the stewards of those areas, and I think it's important to understand that we need to be recognized in that capacity, much like our Indigenous friends do as well and our Indigenous neighbours. Their worldview is much like ours, in some cases, being stewards of the land.

I think that one of the difficulties I've always had is telling our voice. More than once I got to – at the RMA conference we would have a credenza, and we'd have all the MLAs there, and I could sure tell an urban MLA from a rural MLA, only in as much as they knew the language, they knew the plain talk that many of the municipal councillors have. That's so refreshing to me, and I think it'll be diluted. I hear words of rural ridings and dividing a city in half, and I know we need to still have that voice. I think that if you really push that 25 per cent envelope, I think it's important to have that rural voice, because it's not just about row housing and it's not just about energy. It's about both, but those voices can sure help one another, and we can actually build and prosper together.

A lot of decisions are being made in the urban centres about rural Alberta. I'd sure like to have a rural voice in that conversation. It's not as simple as some people think. We saw the biodigester in High River create some stir, the coal mining up in the front ranges, decisions being made in Fort McMurray, renewables, and not having that voice. I think it's important.

One of the final things I want to give you is that a lot of folks look at the rural landscape and they think: wow, there's a lot of land there. Every farmer you'll meet doesn't have enough land. They do not believe they have enough land. I'll tell you what's probably the best thing about the community that I live in. My land has been farmed since the late '50s as one of the first cleared in the area. It doesn't matter what I do. My farming friends and neighbours will tell me how I've done it wrong and how they did it better in the past, and I appreciate that conversation. That plain talk, I think, makes good politics. Honest people that work on the land, that punch twice above their weight need to maintain their voice.

The reason why I've come before this commission today is I think that I've been fighting hard to have that rural voice, and I'd sure hate to lose it. I know what the demographics are doing. I know how things are shifting. I remember that I used to catch frogs on the north side of highway 16, the Trans-Canada highway, which is now Whitehorn. So I've seen those changes in my lifetime, but at the same time I live rural, I've raised my family rural, and I think our population of four people per kilometre here in Ponoka county needs an important voice.

I think a lot of people talk about trade centres. The reality is that our trading centres – I would not choose Red Deer or Edmonton. I choose where I can get the best price, and I happen to be going to town to get us something else. I think people really think that we're travelling to one centre or the other. We're choosing to make our best choices.

The one thing that I want to leave you with at the end is that I think that this hyperurbanization is occurring worldwide, and I travel quite extensively. Rural is rural, and the one thing I find about our immigrant populations that are new Canadians that come here: if someone's grown up in rural anywhere, rural India, rural Africa, they are still rural, and they want to become rural again. They're looking for any opportunity to be on the ground. The fact that I have chickens, horses, and cows is fascinating to all of our new Canadians, so we need to recognize that these new Canadians would love to be out in the country. If you're born in the country, you want to be back in the country as well.

I'd love to ask questions. I wish I had three hours to present, but I was told I'd have a pretty tight timeline, so I'd be open to any questions. I could discuss this topic for hours. I have a huge passion for rural Alberta. Please don't blend that much. We still need that strong voice at the cabinet table. We need a strong voice for rural Albertans.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Evans, any questions or comments?

Mr. Evans: No. Thank you for your presentation. Your enthusiasm and voice for the rural constituents is loud and clear, so thank you.

The Chair: Susan.

Mrs. Samson: If I can just echo my neighbour, thank you for your commitment to the province and the past work you've done and the current work. It's refreshing to hear you. Thank you.

7:40

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much. I'm just looking at some of the numbers here. Lacombe-Ponoka in particular has grown actually. It's not grown, like you say, at the same rate as the rest of the province. It's up about 10 per cent whereas the province of Alberta has gone up about 17 per cent in the time between boundaries, but that's not bad, and certainly compared to some other parts of the province it's still showing some growth. That's certainly a positive thing.

Maybe if you could just tell me – and that was really an interesting comment about opportunities for new Canadians in rural Alberta. I guess I'm curious what you think it would take to encourage that and what the role of an elected official, be it an MLA or yourself or even federal, would be in making that happen?

Mr. McLaughlin: For sure. Yeah. Definitely. You can imagine as a new Canadian maybe family was there or you might have been attracted through job opportunities. I'll take a personal example. The Filipino population in Ponoka is probably the greatest thing to ever happen to the town of Ponoka. That Filipino community is just energy, youth, and openness, and that community has embraced the Filipino community. You know what? You can get a really good meal there now, too. Not that it was bad before, but you can get a really good meal there now, too. Amazing people. They've been embraced by the community. What we can do is look for those opportunities, recognize that there aren't just the cities.

I think that only about between 6 to 9 per cent of new Canadians actually go to rural centres. There really needs to be more welcoming, a stronger voice from folks in the rural communities. We need ambassadors, and I'm starting to see that. We're starting to see some programs that are developing. The greatest thing to happen to a lot of these rural towns to really energize them has been this immigration, these new Canadians moving into these communities. They're being actually embraced. They're being welcomed. They're being shepherded by this community to get the services they need to ensure that they're not held out.

Amazing performers in school, and you know what? They've added so much flavour to the Ponoka Stampede, which by the way is the best stampede, best rodeo in Alberta. I have to throw that in. Sorry, but it is. Just that energy has been so refreshing for a town like – and this is happening in other places. I think that we just need to make sure that that's our goal. We need to grow our rural centres. Definitely, I think that's critically important.

The one thing to talk about is the growth around the corridor. The highway 2 corridor is a blessing for many of us. That growth has occurred on the highway 2 corridor. The folks that are proximal to the highway 2 corridor have just not seen that growth. You go to the east of the province and even further to the west. It's probably the greatest resource that Ponoka has other than, I would say, good governance, but I can't say that. That highway 2 corridor and that number 2 soil are the greatest assets we have in Ponoka county. That's an important consideration that those main arteries are an important part of that growth as well.

I think that we need to embrace more new Canadians; 6 to 9 per cent is not a great number. Definitely, I think that there need to be

opportunities, and I think it's important for everybody to identify the opportunities in rural Alberta for sure. Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Mr. McLaughlin, you said that you wanted three hours. We've used 10 minutes of your 15 minutes. So I'm going to put a proposition to you. Someone earlier had said something about the principle of one person, one vote. We don't live by that principle in Canada. Our legal principle is effective representation, and thank goodness for that, that we don't have one person, one vote, which causes all the problems of gerrymandering that we see south of the border.

Effective representation. That principle actually is derived to some extent from section 3 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In other words, we are constitutionally bound to provide boundaries that give effective representation to Albertans. You cited a couple of statistics, which are very helpful, and it shows a serious drop in the percentage of the population of rural Alberta from 21 per cent just not even 20 years ago down to 15 per cent now, if I understood you correctly.

Okay. As a strong proponent for a strong voice, let me suggest that this commission has really – well, not only this commission but the Legislature and this commission really have only three choices dealing with population change: one, vastly increase the number of seats in order to provide a narrowing of that effective representation target; number two, eliminate rural seats in order to give them to the fast-growing cities; number three, create more blended or hybrid ridings. Those are really the only three options. Am I mistaken in saying that your position for a strong rural voice may in fact produce a diluted rural voice? Does that make sense? I'm interested in your response to that.

Mr. McLaughlin: I think your logic is extremely sound. You know, I always like to like to use some folksy terms, but in my community if you're wearing your cowboy boots and your jeans on the inside and on the outside, I know where you're from. Do you want someone to fake it or do you want someone to truly be a rural voice? I think that these blended ridings – because you used to hang out at your grandma and grandpa's acreage doesn't necessarily give you a rural lens. I'm not trying to disparage anybody. But I think that the important conversation is that a strong rural voice may be diluted, but it's a strong rural voice. If I'm being represented by someone in Beaumont and I live in Ponoka county, I'm going discount that person's ability to speak for me as a rural Ponoka county person. That's an important piece. They could be the best person in the world and maybe they did hang out at their grandma and grandpa's farm and maybe they'd come out to my place and chuck some square bales for me, but that voice is diluted.

Hey, the reality is that in the next census it's going to be 90 per cent urban and 10 per cent rural. Like, you can't – you know, your finger's in the dike. You're just not going to be able to stop that flood. But I'd rather have less genuine rural voices than people faking it because you're going to be faking it. I think one of the people beside said that that battle between the two – I love my urban friends. My family lives urban. I grew up in an urban centre, but I have a rural lens, and I always have had a rural lens. I'm going to basically probably die rurally if I could get a doctor, which is a whole other conversation. I think that we do have a different situation. I think that, when you start blending it, it will dilute maybe the numbers but not the quality. I'd rather have a strong rural voice than a watered-down rural voice, if that makes sense to you.

The Chair: Yeah. Well, you seem to be rowing against yourself, but I understand your position.

Mr. McLaughlin: I've looked at the situation in Europe, and I'm actually heading there in a couple of weeks just to look at some project work in Europe, and I know they've had this problem as well. They've actually created a proportional – they've changed the whole voting structure, to be quite honest, but they have created those extra blended seats as another “in addition to.” It is an effective model. It would probably be outside the scope of what you're doing, but I do think that the number of seats might be the solution.

The inevitability in the next census: 10 per cent rural, 90 per cent urban, and everything is going to be about housing, and we're going to stop talking about agriculture. We're going to stop talking about trade goods in agriculture and more about energy or energy conflicts with agriculture because it's hard to have that conversation unless you have a rural lens. I think that's what I'm really worried about going forward.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you very much. We've maxed out your 15 minutes. Much appreciated. I presume you didn't have prepared notes. You went right off the cuff. A very, very coherent presentation. Thank you so much, Mr. McLaughlin.

Mr. McLaughlin: Thank you for having me. Appreciate it.

The Chair: It appears that Ms Amanda Chapman may be here.

Ms Chapman: I am.

The Chair: We're only five minutes late for you, so why don't we bring you in. Please identify yourself. Tell us which constituency you're from. We generally give 10 minutes for presentation, and five minutes for question and discussion.

Ms Chapman: Sounds great. My name is Amanda Chapman. I live in the community of Huntington Hills. That's part of the Calgary-Beddington riding.

It was really interesting just listening to Paul talk. I wish I could have given him some of my time because I think my presentation is going to be fairly simple and straightforward.

Should I just launch right in?

The Chair: Yes, please.

Ms Chapman: Okay. Perfect. Really what I want to talk about today is essentially how great I think Calgary-Beddington is as a riding, the way it stands right now. There are a few reasons for that. One is that it has a very logical flow and shape to it. If you look at Beddington on the map, you know, you can see that we're bounded by a couple of major roads: by Deerfoot, by 14th Street, by Country Hills Boulevard up at the top. The communities are all in a nice clump together.

7:50

One of the reasons I think it works really well is because when we're serving these communities, they have a lot of similar needs. The communities in Calgary-Beddington have not experienced any kind of dramatic shift in their population. Of course, we're a more – I mean, heck, with the way Calgary is now, we're almost an inner-city suburb at this point. In terms of the way that people move around through the riding, it all has a very logical flow. You know, we are lucky to have a rec centre, a small one right inside the riding and then a big one right up at the top.

Everything around here is very like to like. It's a really similar population. We have a lot of newcomers, of course, because we still have some affordable housing. There's not so much of that left in the city, but we are lucky to have that in the riding. When I talk

about kind of the ease I find in Calgary-Bedlington, it's just that there are similar needs. The people who live here have very similar needs. Access to public transit is a huge one because we have so many newcomers. You know, lots of these folks are using public transit to get around for all of their day-to-day. Centre Street, of course, is the busiest transit corridor in the city. It's a really natural path through the riding that people travel a lot.

Actually, I just heard the end of Paul's presentation there, but I just wanted to comment. He was talking about that, like, the difference in city voices and rural voices are in their priorities and what they want to see. You know, I grew up spending summers on my grandparents' farm, and he's absolutely right. That does not make me a country mouse. I'm a city mouse. I was born in Calgary, I've lived here my whole life, and when I look at what the priorities are of the people who live here, they are very different than the priorities that I see in some of the smaller communities around Alberta.

I'm going to go back to public transit because, honestly, that is the biggest one in this community because it is a reason that people choose to live here. It's one of the only places in the city that you can live outside of the downtown core where you literally can leave your house and walk the four blocks to Centre Street. You don't even have to check to see if a bus is coming because we've got that BRT line that runs through. That desire for public transit and for easy access – honestly, as a driving place it's really great, too, because we've got all this road access. That's something that I definitely hear about from a lot of my neighbours and people I talk to in my communities, that the desire to live in Calgary-Bedlington comes from that ease of transportation, feeling like it becomes very easy to move around the city.

Oh, the one piece that I wanted to talk about – I don't know if you've heard this from other people. One of the pieces of Calgary-Bedlington right at the top is Country Hills. There are four communities up there, hills communities: Country Hills, Coventry Hills, Panorama Hills, and Harvest Hills. I've interacted with these folks quite a lot through my job. They have come together. Essentially, they have one community association, which is actually a really smart model for doing it. I see in a lot of communities – again, this is a very urban thing, too, your community associations. A lot of communities are really struggling to have their community associations have enough volunteers, kind of the manpower they need to go. So those four hills communities have essentially come together, and they have one community association that serves all four of them.

I would be remiss if I did not bring it up to you, as they have mentioned to me so many times: those communities very much desire to be within the same riding. They're thinking about that across levels of government: municipal, provincial, and federal. They struggle a little bit with, you know, they have three different provincial representatives who are responsible for their areas. They have two different municipal. So I know that those folks would love to see a boundary map that actually grouped those four communities together because they kind of think of themselves as one community. I did say that I would mention that for them here.

I think those are all of my sort of key points that I wanted to say about Calgary-Bedlington. Like I mentioned at the beginning, we're a really different beast, I think, than some of the communities that are out towards the edge of Calgary because we haven't experienced the growth that many of those communities have. I do think that the riding works really well right now for how its boundaries are. I think that we're able to provide really fair representation for newcomers in this riding simply because we have a large population of them, so we're able to, you know, try to spend our focus on how to make things in the riding that serve their needs.

Then I guess I would just mention, because I know that a lot of the discussion here has been around the blending that we're looking at on the city-rural boundaries, I really think Calgary-Bedlington is kind of a case that shows why that's not a great idea. It is a lot more straightforward to serve a population when you have a little bit of similarity in it. Like Paul said, it does not matter how many summers I spent on my grandparents' farms; it's not the same. Like, I understand more fundamentally what urban populations are looking for in their communities, and I think that those things are very different when we are switching over to – I mean, honestly, even small municipalities can be very different than a big urban centre like Calgary is.

Those were all my points. I don't know how much time I took.

The Chair: Thank you. You're right under 10 minutes.

Can I just get a clarification? I'm sorry; if you said it, I missed it. Are you the current serving MLA?

Ms Chapman: Oh, yes. Oh, my gosh. Did I not say that? I'm sorry.

The Chair: Well, if you did, I missed it.

Ms Chapman: Oh, okay. I'm sorry. You know what? I actually never expected to have a job like this, so it's still a weird thing for me sometimes. But yes, I am the MLA for Calgary-Bedlington.

The Chair: For how long? When were you first elected?

Ms Chapman: In the previous election, so just for two years. Yeah.

The Chair: Okay. Good. I did want to clarify that.

Mr. Clark, any questions?

Mr. Clark: Thank you. Yeah. You pre-empted my question, but I'll ask it anyway. I want to say that Country Hills looks like a shark fin on the map.

Ms Chapman: I call it a penguin. I say the riding looks like a penguin and Nose Hill is the belly of the penguin.

Mr. Clark: Oh, sure. Yeah. Okay. I see that.

Ms Chapman: Right?

Mr. Clark: That's my only question. No, that's not my only question, but you did pre-empt that question. You have been contemplating community associations and natural, quote, unquote, boundaries of roads and things, and I appreciate very much what you're saying. Perhaps Country Hills would find a new home in a provincial constituency north of Bedlington Trail, then. I don't know if I can promise that we can put all of those ones together although it certainly would form part of our consideration based on your input. We're wrestling with substantial population growth.

Interestingly, Calgary-Bedlington has grown 23 per cent in the last six, seven years, which is a little higher than the provincial average of 17. I guess that maybe takes me to the question of: where might that growth be? If you could, there's a map that's just been put up. Where is that growth happening? Maybe you can just sort of expand on that. It looks like it is fairly well developed, but is there some infill or densification, and where might that be happening?

8:00

Ms Chapman: My suspicion, because there are no – yeah, there are no new development areas. But there are quite a few – we have a really great mix of housing in Calgary-Bedlington. Like, we've got it all – right? – apartments, duplexes, row houses, single-family

homes. But there definitely has been a growth in secondary suites, so that would be my guess. That's my experience certainly from being out in the community, that there are a lot of single-family homes that now are also having a basement suite as a part of them.

The infill development hasn't quite come up this far. You know, it's definitely working its way up from the core, but of course the homes here, like in the oldest part of the community, in Huntington, would all be mid-60s builds, so the homes are all still, actually, in quite good condition. So we haven't gotten to the point where too many of them are being knocked down for the infills.

Mr. Clark: That's really helpful. Thank you.

Dr. Martin: He pre-empted my question, but if I may pursue it a bit further. Do you anticipate these trends to continue unabated? I mean, how many basements are there left to be converted? You know, the whole area is quite mature and reasonably endowed with people who are doing personal renovations of their homes and the like, so do you see the turnover demographically? Are people aging in place, or are they selling to their kids, to put it crudely?

Ms Chapman: Yeah. We're at the point now where, I would say, because there are still quite a few original owners who live particularly in the Huntington and Beddington area, there is a demographic shift that's happening there because those people are increasingly moving on to more care-based facilities. My experience of the community is that every time one of those houses empties out, it is immediately filled by a family. Calgary-Beddington is very blessed to have many schools, so that's another reason. Like, in addition to ease of transit and rec facilities that we have, the schools make the community really attractive for young families. A good point, too, I should have mentioned, Greg, is that some of that population growth is probably just happening there, where we have one or two folks moving out of a home and we're having families of four or five move in.

In terms of a trend going forward, I suspect that there are still quite a bit of spaces and homes available for redevelopment here, because it's not something that has been happening at a super quick pace. You know, on every block maybe one or two homes is adding a secondary suite. But there are just so many people looking for housing out there and affordable housing that I think that that is a trend that's going to continue. I don't know how fast it will accelerate, but I wouldn't be surprised if it just kept going at the pace it's going at now.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

Mr. Evans: Good evening. Thank you for your presentation. I've just got a question about – my colleague referred to it as a shark fin. I see it as a shark fin; I'm not exactly sure how I see the penguin. In any event, tell me what the connection is with that Country Hills Drive NW, that area and everything, I guess, west of Beddington Trail.

Ms Chapman: Everything west of – I'm trying to picture. Like, the hills communities that I was talking about: those are on all sides of the shark fin, I guess is what we're discussing. When I think about the riding, Country Hills is the only piece that maybe feels a bit disconnected from the rest of the riding, which is partly just how the road network works, like, how you drive when you're going to get over to Country Hills, but the riding shape is so funky because of Nose Hill, too, right? If I had seen any more logical way to package up the riding, I for sure would have presented it. It's hard, just the way the community is shaped.

Now, the only thing I will say about Country Hills – because I love them; it's not like I want to get rid of them – is that it is definitely a path that a lot of people flow to, because that's where the big rec centre is. Like, that's where the Vivo is. There's a huge commercial area up there, so for people who live in Calgary-Beddington, that is a naturally travelled path and a natural destination spot for them, which just speaks to how I feel like Country Hills is still a part of the community. How I think of it is: do I run into people, parents from school when I'm up in that area? I sure do, so people from Calgary-Beddington have a natural flow up into that part of the riding.

Mr. Evans: Thank you.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Ms Chapman. As I always say, when we have an elected official that knocks on the doors, walks the sidewalks of a riding, we gain and we appreciate so much more. So thank you so much for your presentation and for coming. If you wish to hear what goes on later or for the rest of the meeting, it's my understanding you can go to our website and click on the YouTube channel and hear the audio. Thank you very much for coming.

Ms Chapman: Great. Thank you so much for your time.

The Chair: I am of the view that we should probably just keep soldiering on through a break, if that's okay with everyone else, although we may have our own man-absent, person-absent break.

Mrs. Samson: Do we have somebody in the . . .

Mr. Roth: There's somebody, but I'm not sure who it is.

The Chair: Oh, okay. Good evening. The person that we just welcomed in, could you please identify yourself and tell us what riding you are living in? The individual with the initials RN.

Dr. Martin: Has the mute on.

The Chair: Oh, okay. I'm going to ask one more time. For the person with the RN logo: if they could identify themselves, maybe unmute yourself if you're muted.

Okay. Well, it must be a mistake, a wrong room. Is there anyone else that you are aware of, Mr. Roth, that may be hanging around?

Mr. Roth: There's nobody.

The Chair: No?

Okay. We will have a break then.

[The hearing adjourned from 8:08 p.m. to 8:28 p.m.]

The Chair: Good evening, Mr. Carra. Gian Carra, can you hear me?

Mr. Carra: Yeah, I can hear you. Can you hear me?

The Chair: We can, and we can see you. We appreciate you coming. I understand you probably had other commitments this evening or meetings of some sort.

Mr. Carra: I just walked away from the soccer practice for the team I coach. I told them: finish your scrimmage; I've got to go and talk to the provincial group that's organizing MLA ward boundaries.

The Chair: Good. Well, what I'd like you to do is just simply identify yourself, tell us which riding you want to talk about or

which riding you live in, and proceed for the next 10 minutes, and then we'll have a five-minute interchange of questions and answers.

Mr. Carra: Okay. My name is Gian-Carlo Carra. I'm the city councillor for ward 9 in the city of Calgary. There are a number of MLA ridings that overlap with ward 9. What's motivated me to reach out to you guys is a very similar conversation I've had with the city of Calgary's Ward Boundary Commission about striking the right balance between meeting the population where it is, chasing the population from where it's been, and heading to where it's going.

Let me start off with sort of the global picture that's confronting Calgary. In 1999 our transportation department came to the realization that as we grew to a million people and beyond, we needed to make significant changes in how we plan to move people around our city, otherwise we would not be able to keep on keeping on. There had to be a greater mode shift away from just private automobile use otherwise things would not work.

In 2009, 10 years later, we produced a municipal development plan. That municipal development plan said that for the first time in Calgary's history, over the next six decades we are not going to exclusively grow just on the edge of our city; we are going to balance growth on the edge with growth in the established areas. The six-decade plan, that is our statutory plan in our municipal development plan, is to balance over six decades 50 per cent growth in the established areas and 50 per cent growth in new areas on the edge of the city.

In 1999 to 2009 our growth ratio was 105 per cent on the edge and minus 5 per cent in the established areas. In 2009 to 2019 we achieved 10 per cent redevelopment in the established areas, 90 per cent growth on the edge. That means that over the next five decades, 42 per cent of our growth has to occur on the edge and 58 per cent in the established areas of the city.

We are bending in that direction, and what is really important is that we establish ward boundaries that are reflective of where the population is going as opposed to where it's been, if that makes sense. I know that there is always a conversation about, you know, with the city of Calgary: do we give everybody a little piece of the downtown and then create a pie-shaped city? The reality is that we need to be able to elect representatives who are not only representative of the population as it is today but representative of the population of where it's going.

If we create too many wards that are reflective of where it's been, and we're chasing that demographic, the ability to get to where we need to get is going to be increasingly compromised. You know, I don't think it's a political conversation about balancing growth, growing out. We don't have much more than 42 per cent available on the city's edge, and people are pouring into this city.

I know that you guys are considering, you know, potentially shifting the boundaries outward to accommodate more growth on the edge. I want to assure you that more and more growth has to occur within the established areas. To chase the boundaries out, you're going to be coming back in no time and chasing it coming in, and on top of that, you're going to make the project of redevelopment harder if we don't elect representatives who understand and are reflective of those demographics that are moving towards higher urban densities.

That's my basic pitch to the ward boundary commission. I know that you have to be very thoughtful about reflecting the populations that exist today, but the population is constantly shifting. You know, I think transportation planning is a great example of that because if you're trying to meet the demand today, by the time

you've met it, you're already behind, and you have to get ahead of that.

That's my basic pitch. I have very similar conversations with our own ward boundary commissions as they try to find the right balance of more inner-city or more suburban wards.

The Chair: Mr. Carra, I'll turn it over to the other commissioners, but the question that comes to my mind is: how often do you do the redrawing of the ward boundaries?

Mr. Carra: Well, we try to do it as infrequently as possible. We are mandated by the province to maintain a certain population balance. I would say that we had a demographic challenge in our northeast because our northeast in Calgary has a huge number of South Asian families who live multigenerationally. Generally what we did was we said: we have planned for this many housing units, and we expect there to be this many people – you know, 2.1 people – living in each of those housing units, as it is through the rest of Calgary. What happened in northeast Calgary is we had something like a population of six for every dwelling unit, so we really had to create a massive shift.

8:35

In 2017 when Councillor Chabot decided to run against Mayor Nenshi and abandon ward 10, that gave us the opportunity to do a major shift because we weren't pulling the rug out from underneath an existing elected official. That allowed us to do a massive, massive shift. We basically split ward 3 into half, and then everything shifted from there.

You know, we had been nibbling around the edge of that problem for almost my entire time in office. My first term involved a ward boundary shift. I was stepping into a ward 9 that had never existed before. It adjusted in the next two election cycles, but in 2017, with the opportunity to do a grand change, we haven't moved it, and the expectation is that there doesn't really have to be another shift because I think we've equalized that for at least 10 years or so.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Evans, any questions or comments?

Mr. Evans: Do you live in the Calgary-East electoral district?

Mr. Carra: I live in, I think, Calgary-Buffalo. I think NDP MLA Joe Ceci is my riding. North I also have Kathleen Ganley. I also have Peter Singh. I also have Tanya Fir. Yeah. And I think I've got one more MLA in my riding.

Mr. Evans: Well, you're well represented. Thank you.

Mr. Carra: Yeah. I mean, that's the question: am I well represented? Like, that's the big challenge you guys have. Do you create more representatives, or do you – I mean, we have that same question. Our downtown is one of the major economic engines of the province and of the country, and, you know, we have one city councillor, basically, representing it. We said, "Should every councillor represent it?" and we made the decision: no because, actually, that would be less good representation if everybody had a minor piece rather than it had one representative who was born out of that.

That's, I guess, my pitch to you regarding: don't be too quick to chase the population outward as the population wave is coming back inwards.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you for your presentation tonight. I'm just going to let you know that we had lots of people from Calgary present to us, and I have heard many times about the redistricting

overlay that the city has put in place to increase the densification, and we are certainly paying close attention to that as we look at the boundaries.

Thank you again for your presentation.

Mr. Carra: Thank you.

The Chair: Yeah. Thank you. We wish you'd have been here the first week we were hearing.

Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Thank you, and thank you very much for your presentation. I found it illuminating to hear some of the history of Calgary's planning cycle. Nerd that I am, I regard those things with a lot of respect, and I sympathize with the struggle to keep it flowing in the directions suggested by the planning documents. I found it very interesting, the notion to balance the density of periphery and core, because I take it that a lot flows from that about budget decisions and allocations as well.

You know, the densification in northeast Calgary is only possible because of many budget decisions about subsurface infrastructure on the one hand and permitting on the other. How's it going? I mean, Calgary is very full on the periphery, and some of the more mature neighbourhoods have nowhere near that kind of growth rate even though you have land-use bylaws that permit the conversion of – allow you to have secondary suites and the like. We still, at this moment at least, seem to have a very different rate of growth in the periphery as opposed to the old core. Can you comment on that?

Mr. Carra: Yeah, I can comment extensively on that. Thank you for the question. I will also nerd out with you. The first thing I'll say is that in the 1980s the city of Calgary created, like, R-1 zoning, which allowed a single house on a single lot. It was adjusted in the 1980s, and we created R-2 zoning. R-2 zoning just allowed for an organic subdivision of some of the wider inner-city lots. The analysis shows that that netted us 80,000 units that wouldn't otherwise have come into existence organically over time.

The universal upzoning that the city just undertook in response to the housing crisis I think will do the same kind of work. If over the next five decades, between 2019 and 2069, which is the life of our municipal development plan, we need to now get 58 per cent of our growth for those last five decades into the established areas, I think the universal upzoning will account organically for maybe about 30 per cent of that 58 per cent. The other 70 per cent plus probably has to occur in significant transit-oriented development receiving areas like the East Village, The Bridges, the new University District, Truman West District. Those are four examples, and we need 40 to 50 of those over the next five decades.

The challenge is that Calgary is unbelievably efficient and excellent at developing high-quality peripheral growth, and that growth is getting denser and denser. We have yet to crack the code both from a market perspective – I mean, the market is responding every time you build it. More developers who can do that work, more communities who are accepting of that work, and a regulatory system and a planning system that can actually help those things happen is our current planning challenge. We are winning the day on that and getting there. It just takes time.

Dr. Martin: A secondary point, if I may, is – again, this is classic stuff, and I commend you for doing it – building out along the transit lines, establishing high-density nodes at the transit centres, and the like. The net effect, then, implicit in your description of Calgary's various planning documents is a multinodal city.

Mr. Carra: I think a multimodal city is the exact correct term for what we are going for. We are looking outside of our downtown core of, you know, minimum 30, maximum 50 over the next five decades to get to that point. That's a significant shift, but that's happening. I think it's really important that our representation boundaries reflect where the puck is going as opposed to chasing it.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Yeah, this is great stuff – thank you so much – and, I think, timely because we're starting to really grapple with some of these things. The data that we have here seems to really reflect a lot of what you were talking about in terms of that the growth in the past over the last seven or eight years has been largely on the edge but also downtown. Places like Calgary-Mountain View and Calgary-Buffer have grown really substantially, but primarily it's northeast, south, southeast that have really grown. I guess I just want to validate with you that your perspective is that those edge areas are going to continue to grow and perhaps grow in a more efficient and densifying way, and we're going to have some growth in the core. Just validate that that's correct.

Then you listed off, I think, four: East Village, The Bridges, University District, and Truman West District. I know where most of that is, but maybe can you just let us all know where those things are specifically? We want to make sure we're aware of that if we need to make some adjustments.

Mr. Carra: Yeah. Well, The Bridges and the East Village are our two best examples of these sorts of high-density, transit-oriented receiving areas. The East Village is a neighbourhood off the eastern flank of the downtown between city hall and the Confluence, and it's a significant success. Just south of that is the new entertainment district, which is part of the provincial community revitalization levy, the new entertainment district with the new Flames arena and all of that.

8:45

Across the river in Bridgeland you have The Bridges, which is the rebuild of the general hospital, which is achieving build out. East of that, we have the East Riverside lands. The province owns a big chunk of that land, and we are actively redeveloping that.

Then we've got all of our transit stops which are growing up. The green line is going to have significant density nodes along every step of the way, you know, from Calgary-Buffer into Ogden, where Tanya Fir represents right now. I'm sorry; I'm not as familiar with the names of the provincial ridings as I am with the city.

I guess what we saw was that from 1999 to 2009 105 per cent of our growth was on the edge. From 2009 to 2019 it was 90 per cent, and we're going to see a decreasing trend of that. We're still going to have significant growth there, and we're going to see an increasing amount of growth in the established areas. Some of that's going to be organic infill through the upzoning, but most of it's going to be significant nodal development along all transit stops on our primary transit network.

Mr. Clark: That's really helpful. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you for a very enlightening presentation, sir. Much appreciated.

Mr. Carra: My pleasure.

The Chair: Okay. You're excused.

I see that our next presenter, Mr. Trevor Sloan, is present. Mr. Sloan, if you could just identify yourself, make sure you're

unmuted, tell us what electoral division you are from, and begin your presentation. We usually have 10 minutes, and then we have about five minutes for questions.

Mr. Sloan: Yeah. Absolutely. Can you guys hear me okay? Excellent.

This is going to be a lot less data centric, a lot less interesting, a lot less useful and informative than Gian-Carlo's work there. That was great. I didn't want him to stop. I can just quit and he can come back if that's better.

I'm Trevor Sloan. I'm a constituent of the Highwood district just southwest of Calgary, just on the outskirts here, so I'm going to come at it from a little bit of, I guess, a different viewpoint than the city focus. The only reason that I'm here is, really, a bit of a concern around the change in legislation that removed that requirement around establishing electoral divisions remaining within the boundaries of the cities of Calgary and Edmonton. It's a bit concerning to me in a couple of respects, I guess. You know, I understand the initial impetus. I guess the explanation makes some sense. We're going to need the ability to incorporate places like Chestermere or Spruce Grove or whatever it is into existing electoral boundaries.

My concern is a little bit twofold, I guess. One is kind of practical. It's a little bit of accountability. This is still a rural district, largely. It becomes rural very quickly when you leave the city, and the concerns of rural constituents are pretty different from those of the city. I just think that we have different sort of representation needs around those, you know, things for us or around water use or land use, land development whereas in the city it's really more, as we just heard – right? – about density and infrastructure and how growth gets managed. Out here it's a pretty different world.

I don't live in Calgary, and I don't live there for a reason even though I benefit a lot from all of the pieces of the city that I can take advantage of. You know, my representation and where I live and where I pay my taxes to are a little bit different. I think from an accountability perspective, for me anyway, it's kind of important to have – if we start sort of elongating and blending the rural-urban divide, it makes accountability a little tougher, right? If I've got an MLA that's where the urban and rural interests are in tension, I think accountability demands that you have a representative that's going to speak to your interests. It just makes it a little bit easier to chastise those that aren't really representing you the way you want them to. That's really kind of what our system is designed around – right? – both accountability but also tension between competing interests. Those are always going to exist. I kind of want a representative that understands and is going to advocate for my interests out here.

The second is really longer term, and it's just about sort of the erosion of democratic accountability more broadly that's concerning in this province. This isn't gerrymandering itself, but it's a first step towards being able to do that. You know, the maintenance of a highly qualified and independent commission – which you all are, and I'm very thankful for that – is a really good breakwater, but it opens ever so slightly the ability to start to have politicians pick their voters as opposed to have voters elect their politicians. In a time when democracy is under threat in a lot of different ways, I don't like that advancement.

It seems like a benign thing. It's like: well, it's a municipal boundary, you know, who really cares? I would argue that it's pretty important to maintain that division, even if it's only a suggestion now as opposed to a requirement and that only under really the most extenuating circumstances do you erode that line both for the reasons of accountability, as I've suggested, but also as one step

towards drawing the really most ridiculous districts to maintain certain power centres.

Anyway, that's kind of about it and all I have.

The Chair: Well, thank you, Mr. Sloan. I will turn it over to the other commissioners, but I have a question about the name of Highwood. Are you happy with that name?

Mr. Sloan: Sure. Well, I mean, I guess I wouldn't say that I'm happy. It doesn't really concern me.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Sloan: Is that an issue?

The Chair: Well, part of our job is actually to provide names for the electoral divisions. Tell me: where in the riding do you live?

Mr. Sloan: I live just basically about three miles south of the city limits on the west side. If you know where Spruce Meadows is, I'm about two miles south of it.

The Chair: Okay. Good. Thanks.

Mr. Sloan: I guess the only point just in terms of district names: Highwood is perfectly acceptable. The Highwood river runs right through the heart of the electoral division, so that makes a lot of sense. I am generally opposed to long extended hyphenated names. I think simple, clear concise names are – even if sacrificing, you know, certain assignations or trying to honour certain people or places. You can try to do too much with too little. Keep it simple, is my view.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Evans?

Mr. Evans: Would you consider yourself to be in any way connected to the city of Okotoks?

Mr. Sloan: It's interesting. If we're thinking about going to Costco – let's call it going to Costco. We're pretty much equidistant between the Okotoks Costco and the new Costco on the Tsuu T'ina reserve. One of my kids went to high school in Okotoks. One went to high school in south Calgary. My kid played basketball in Okotoks. Do I consider myself a part of that community, though? No, probably not. I worked in Calgary most of my career, so I wouldn't consider myself an Okotokian at all.

You know, I would consider myself aligned in some ways. I mean, I read the local community newspaper pretty regularly. I'm very concerned about the deer issues going on in Okotoks. But no, I wouldn't consider myself either aligned with Okotoks any more than I would be with Calgary.

Mr. Evans: Just a question in relation to your child that went to school in Okotoks. You had to drive your child there because there wouldn't be busing, would there?

Mr. Sloan: There was no busing. Thankfully, we delayed him a little bit, so he had his driver's licence for most of high school, and it was just for high school.

From K to 9 they went to Red Deer Lake, and we drove them there every day. Yeah.

8:55

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you very much for your presentation.

Mr. Sloan: Yeah. You bet.

The Chair: Susan.

Mrs. Samson: No questions.

Dr. Martin: I have a question about growth. We always ask this because we're all about population as well as about communities of interest. In your experience, where are significant and imminent growth opportunities occurring in your district?

Mr. Sloan: From what I understand, it's pretty similar, I think, to the rest of the western world, frankly, and urbanization continues apace. My understanding is that, you know, predominantly Okotoks and High River, which are the two larger communities in the district, are where the majority of people are growing. I see there are new builds out in the country. I live very rurally. We live on five acres in what is considered country residential surrounded by kind of a 160-acre cattle farm, and we've got some horse people to the north. I see a little bit of development and the odd house popping up here and there, but from my understanding and from keeping my ear to the ground from the real estate perspective, the whole country living thing isn't really where people are going. I think both the amenities and the ease with living in smaller towns is really, in this area anyway, where most people are gravitating to: Bragg Creek, Millarville, Okotoks.

Dr. Martin: Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. I'll just build on that. Would you say that Okotoks and High River and maybe Diamond Valley: are those sort of fairly connected communities? I mean, those are the three largest urban areas, I imagine, in the general area. Is that fair to say those three have a pretty close connection?

Mr. Sloan: Yes and no. They're not very far away from each other, similar in size, and surrounded by rural communities. I think Okotoks stands out probably a little bit from those in terms of size, pace of growth. They all have their own very distinct entities in my experience as well. From an electoral perspective, if you were to group them: yeah, I think that's pretty fair. Would having one in one district and one in another be, you know, avoid at all costs? No. Not necessarily. I think they wouldn't need to have contiguous representation necessarily. It's certainly better, I think, than, say, splitting one of the towns. Right? They're certainly not of that size or importance. Individually I'd say that they should probably have the same MLA, but to make sure that they're all combined: no, not necessarily, I don't think.

The Chair: Thank you very much, sir. Much appreciated. If you want to hear the rest of the evening, you can go to the website and go onto the YouTube channel.

Mr. Sloan: That's great. I appreciate all the work you all are putting in on this. It's very valuable, so thanks so much for doing all you're doing. We appreciate it.

The Chair: Thank you.

Where are we at? Courtney Walcott. Can you bring her in?

Mr. Clark: It's a guy. It's a male. It's a him. A city councillor of Calgary.

The Chair: Oh, okay.

Mr. Walcott: Get it all the time.

The Chair: Okay. Sir, please identify yourself and tell us your home base. Yeah. We look forward to hearing from you. Ten minutes and then five minutes of questions and discussion.

Mr. Walcott: All right. Thank you, all. Can you hear me okay? Perfect. Thank you so much.

My name is Courtney Walcott. I'm one of the city councillors in the city of Calgary. I got here just in time to hear you listen to Councillor Carra and the questions you asked him, so I'm going to do my best to try and skim over anything that is of similar nature so that you're not hearing anything too repetitive. The only thing I'd offer is, hopefully, anything that's in addition to his comments plus the rest of my own.

Ward 8 is the area that I represent, and it overlaps with three separate ridings at the provincial level: Calgary-Buffalo, Calgary-Currie, and Calgary-Elbow. Primarily it's Calgary-Buffalo, where Calgary-Elbow and Calgary-Currie just edge into the area that I represent. To build out on what Councillor Carra was describing earlier with looking toward the future of where development is going to go and looking toward the future of where the population growth is going to be, I really wanted to identify one of the areas in which Councillor Carra didn't go into too much detail.

When he looked at the relationship between the external growth versus the inner-city growth, he went all the way back to 1980 to describe the R-1 zoning description and what we were experiencing in some of the city, but I actually want to just go back, just in the last decade, to 2015. In the city of Calgary when they were experiencing such a massive downturn following the oil and gas, one of the biggest engines that we had was construction: home building and new community growth. To crosspoint about the long history that existed with suburban growth in Calgary over the course of the years, creating new single-detached suburbs that were massive land sucks, they required such a significant amount of geography to be able to put the appropriate number of houses in to match the growing population underneath the single-detached zoning that was allowed for so many decades.

Later, closer to 2015, they started to shift how they built out suburban communities, and what you'll hear, actually, in the zoning world about Calgary is that our new communities are coming back denser. They're less suburban and more urban in nature because we finally started to abandon that single-detached development type and move toward true multifamily communities, massive nodes. I believe one of you mentioned multimodal, so massive nodes. You'll see that with things like McKenzie Lake; you'll see it with Seton, where there are these massive work centres that will be drawing people to these spaces almost so you can have complete communities on the edges.

But in that gap between 1980 and 2015, we weren't creating those types of suburbs, so it's the new suburbs that are starting to come online in the years since then that are seeing that high-density growth. That's what you're experiencing in the northeast, in Cornerstone and Skyview, this new form of suburban growth that's being developed in those spaces where the communities that are coming online are 40,000 people strong whereas the communities that were being built in the '80s were about 7,000 or 8,000 people to 15,000 people and were twice the size because of the physical geography.

What we're seeing now in our rapid growth in Calgary is the fact that there's about a 10- to 15-year build-out period for many of these communities. The experience of suburban growth is a result of a policy that came into effect 10 years ago where we started to look at building out those communities in a different way. They're

no longer that traditional single-family suburban development, which is why there's such a rapid population growth that's happening on the edges. That change: the reason why I talk about it as so significant is because that change that we would have done 10 years ago in the external edges of the city, we have finally matched it in the inner city.

He mentioned the R-1, R-2 zone. We created something called the R-G zone in the new suburban communities. That's that multifamily. When you heard all about rezoning in Calgary, the suburban communities already had it, right? They were being built with this new zoning, which allowed more density, more flexibility, more housing, more people. That has finally only last year, eight months ago, been established across the entire city. It was because of that rapid growth that we were seeing at the edges that we finally matched the political energy that we had put towards suburban growth, changing from the single-detached to multifamily, multinodal communities. We matched that energy in the established areas in the inner city all around where communities used to be stagnant because of the massive land and geographic uptake of single-detached housing. That is no longer the norm.

9:05

The trend that Councillor Carra was speaking about is that there's going to be a slowing of suburban growth because we finally allowed the policy to catch up to the intentions of our municipal development plan. He spoke about the 50-50 split. The reality is that that 50-50 split was a title in nature, something that we could speak about, but it was something that wasn't able to be matched in policy. We never actually built the policies to enable that 50-50 split that we promised in the MDP, municipal development plan – sorry; too many acronyms – whereas now we have. We finally have the policies in the established areas of the city of Calgary to start to experience that population shift back to the established areas, where we historically have seen it go out to the suburban places. That's just the one part of the story that I felt that Carra didn't get.

Then I'll talk about kind of one of the challenges of being a city councillor, this idea of geographic/urban representation versus population-based representation. One thing many of you will know is that when we look at population-based representation – that's what the city of Calgary does as well with our ward system. We look at trying to balance our wards to about 100,000. The result has been pretty diverse in the sense that you're going to get some words that are massive like ward 5, which is the northeast ward where you have about 110,000 people, and then you get some wards that are – when I say massive, I mean, geographically, not populationwise because we're all the same population for the most part, whereas you look at my area, my density, we're about 90,000 to 95,000 where I have the Beltline. I'm a dot on the map. If you zoom out to look at the entire ward system of city of Calgary, you can barely fit the word ward into the area that I represent because the population density is so different, and that's because of an area like the Beltline, which is what is in Calgary-Buffalo, which is experiencing a massive population growth upwards of single communities growing at a rate of about – it's going to be about 31,000 pretty soon and it was 25,000 in the '20-21 census.

The reason why I stick on that so much is because the creation of a population-based ward system or a population-based riding system versus having a better understanding of the geographic and urban representation that can come with these different areas and how they're created. The impact is that it creates these arbitrary distinctions where elected representatives become tasked with governing communities that they have very little legitimate connection to.

It takes good, strong representation to speak to the realities of being able to be a diverse representative across unique changing demographics. That's a good elected leader. But the capacity of that representative to be effective, to be a good elected leader across these unique demographics is almost determined by the range and spectrum of that diverse demographic.

When I look at what we talk about with being an inner-city representative, I do not experience the same needs as people who are in the suburbs of Calgary. And that's just within my own city boundaries, let alone to speak to that urban-rural divide, about what it means to be a representative of an urban space and to be a representative of a rural space. That conflict creates a tension where your representative is diluting their focus and unable to actually be a true representative of everybody because to serve the infrastructure, to serve the people, you are always trying to figure out how you serve their interests, and when their interests are so diverse, you struggle to be that representative in that larger landscape.

That's probably an interesting way, for me, of describing what it means to be a representative for people based on where they live. I find that representation and choice in where you live is in many ways a demonstration of the chosen interests of an individual. Since effective representation and governance to me is best demonstrated in the most valuable exercise you can have as a city councillor, which is the budget, when representation is split between areas with diverse and unique budgetary needs – from health care to education, transportation infrastructure, income supports – you choose where you live based off what you either need to create a good life or what you believe is a necessary ingredient to a good life, a similar way that people would choose to live on an acreage, where it's the space, it's the connection to nature, or maybe it's the connection to a farm or an agricultural lifestyle. Whereas in an urban space, it might be actually the employment opportunities that come from a denser, urban living environment. Where you choose to live is – essentially, what you're also simultaneously suggesting is that you're hoping that your representative is going to support that infrastructure that helps them build out the way of life that you've chosen.

When you have ward systems, in Calgary for example, that are too large, you end up seeing those experiences very closely, where the inability for a representative to be that close to the ground to such diverse, changing, unique physical landscape, infrastructure changes, health care, education, across diverse geographic landscapes. They are constantly diluting their ability to represent their people, picking and choosing winners depending on the time. And that is why I just wanted to speak to this.

When you're starting to look at some of the edge growth in Calgary and no longer having the responsibility to stay within the city's boundaries, I find that there's a risk, that I already experience on a more microscale at the city of Calgary, where the scale of representative across geographic and distinct, unique interests, based off where people choose to live, is becoming really challenging for me to be effective in my representation of the public. And I have one of the denser, smaller wards. I only bring this up to suggest that in the potential future where we have an urban-rural riding, if I'm experiencing the challenging ability to be an effective representative, based off the diverse needs of the people that I serve, because of the geographic challenges that come with a growing city, and, of course, just the fact that every community is a little bit different than the last, to do so outside of the city is almost like that probably times 10.

With that, those were my thoughts that I wanted to share with you. Thank you, guys, for taking the time to hear me out.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Walcott.

Mr. Evans, any questions or comments?

Mr. Evans: Yeah. Thank you for your submissions. You've talked about the difficulty in representing diverse interests within your geographic area. You're in ward 8, but you also have a portion of ward 6.

Mr. Walcott: Correct. Right now. And that is probably the perfect example of some of the growing challenges.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Let me ask you about the challenges you face in trying to represent a portion of ward 6, ward 8, and then bearing in mind that ward 8 alone – I think, if I got it right – you have Calgary-Buffalo, Calgary-Currie, and Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Walcott: That's correct.

Mr. Evans: And you're boots on the ground under the MGA. I understand your roles and responsibilities, and they're different than the MLA. So I'm interested in how you are able to manage the diverse groups that you're representing in those two wards.

Mr. Walcott: Yeah. I think probably one of the best examples is to contrast the spectrum of socioeconomic statuses that I represent. That is probably the best way of kind of describing it. The Beltline has the largest concentration of low-income people in the city. It's not to say that it's the poorest neighbourhood by far. It's not. It's just because of the scale of it. Out of 25,000 to 30,000-strong people, you have the largest concentration of low-income Calgarians in that space, so there are some very particular needs and requirements that I have to spend my energy on to support that community, one of which actually falls into the space of provincial jurisdiction with regard to poverty reduction.

There's a natural overlay between poverty reduction at a municipal level and poverty reduction from the provincial level. And that's just the Beltline. But then when you go out to ward 6 or even some of the edge communities within my own ward, you experience a very different space where you're still undergoing suburban development. They're still pushing to the edges of the city in this experience where they are looking at acreages, and they're looking at a very different socioeconomic lifestyle where their focus is on the education system. That's actually what comes to my office the most, quality of schools, parks, and open spaces whereas with the inner city, you're often focusing on the different types of housing supports that would be required of a lower socioeconomic group. That diversity means that, at some point, I have to provide a focus to be able to solve one problem; just one at a time every single day, one at a time. Because some of my inner-city issues do function around the concept of life safety, I spend a lot more time on life safety issues than I do on some of the challenges that are being faced by some of my suburban communities.

9:15

Mr. Evans: Can you explain to me: what's life safety? What do you mean by that?

Mr. Walcott: Yeah. When the Beltline experiences a higher rate of drug overdoses, there is an experienced – we have our supervised consumption site in that area. Traditionally you have a higher population of homeless people. I consider homeless people to be my constituents because they're still living within my ward even if it's not in a home. So you end up seeing that these particular challenges cross from policing to health care to education to housing. They cross different orders of government. I end up doing a lot of intergovernmental work to try and support some of those needs, that I'm not actually – those are not the needs that are being presented to me by constituents in the portion of ward 6 that I

represent or in some of the higher socioeconomic areas that I also represent.

Mr. Evans: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Susan, any questions?

Mrs. Samson: No questions. Thank you.

The Chair: Dr. Martin.

Dr. Martin: Yes, I do, actually. Thank you. I wanted to follow up on remarks made by your colleague, and you yourself began your remarks by picking up on some of the history of zoning, so to speak. If you will forgive me for being slightly mischievous, I'd like to contrast what Calgary is experiencing in accordance with its various planning regimes and what I think we are seeing in Edmonton. Edmonton, at this time, seems to be on a very different part of the cycle, by which I mean that its inner, traditional neighbourhoods are very low growth whereas, as you would expect, the periphery has been growing at a more robust rate. Now, confronting this contrast, would you look to a difference in zoning regimes and transit and LRT build-out as contributing factors?

Mr. Walcott: To be honest, actually, no. Primarily what I would attribute it to over the last several years, in particular the last decade, has been about the economic opportunities that are represented in the Edmonton area when dealing with population demographic shifts. I think that leading up – like, let's exclude the 2023, '24, and '25 kind of massive changes to the city of Calgary. I would argue that one of the reasons that Edmonton experienced its suburban growth at the scale that it did versus its inner city is primarily also because they were experiencing a lot lower degree of population pressures and they were getting closer, with the establishment of the St. Albert, Sherwood Park municipalities, to being these larger, almost urban places that are just directly at the edges of their city whereas Calgary, as a unicity model, instead of building out Airdrie, Okotoks, and Cochrane, absorbed Bowness and absorbed, historically, Forest Lawn.

That landlocked nature of Edmonton meant that people could be in Edmonton and be in an urban municipality without actually being there, because of the Edmonton metropolitan area, whereas in Calgary the Calgary metropolitan area – I think we're 1.7, but 1.6 of it is Calgary, whereas Edmonton's metropolitan area I think is 1.6 and 500,000 of that is the surrounding municipalities, right? So they have much larger and more affordable urban centres that are closest to the edges. As this changes with higher population growth and the requirement of economic development in the city of Edmonton, that will likely come from Calgary pricing out the affordability opportunities that we've seen, I think that focus will shift back into Edmonton. They will start to experience pressures, and they'll need to start accommodating, but they're effectively landlocked by surrounding municipalities.

Dr. Martin: Thank you. That's useful. Thank you very much.

Mr. Walcott: I appreciate it.

Mr. Clark: That's great. Thank you. Thanks so much for being here. I guess I just wanted to ask specifically about growth in the inner city. We talked to Councillor Carra about some of the bridges in East Village and some of those areas. Do you anticipate that, with things like the downtown office-to-residential conversion or,

frankly, any other factors, that trend is likely to continue, sort of plateau, or is it going to accelerate?

Mr. Walcott: I think it'll actually continue. I don't know if it will accelerate. That is dependent on CMHC and how much money they want to give Calgary builders. I'll admit that one of the reasons why last year our rents went down just over 10 per cent on a year-over-year basis was because of the fact that the established area of growth in multifamily developments was so high that it created a supply stream in the market that started to shift our rents down. That was really fundamental to the – that was primarily based on the availability of federal funding for multifamily building. So as long as these streams are open, and they appear that they're going to be open for a while at the federal level, the development industry is really building at an unchecked pace.

Right now I can tell you that I know of 2,000 units in ward 8 that are about a year and a half away from completion, so the population that will be moving into those spaces: we're just waiting for the doors to be finished and the keys to turn. That's just the pipeline that I know that started last year, let alone the pipeline that's coming right now. So I think it'll continue. Accelerate will be dependent on the federal government's finance policies, but it will definitely continue at least in the short term.

Mr. Clark: It's been a pretty steep line. Those 2,000 units: are they scattered around? Are they in a particular neighbourhood? Are they right downtown? Beltline? Any clues you could offer us?

Mr. Walcott: I mean, 1,250 of them are in one single community alone, Crowchild, in the site called Viscount Bennett. There's probably 350 of them that are split between the community of Shaganappi along Bow Trail and 37th Street just behind Westbrook Mall, and I know of another 600 units going up in the Beltline in one single building. Another 500 going up in Marda Loop is proposed right now. Should all these proposals go through, there is going to be significant growth in these areas for years to come.

Mr. Clark: That's really helpful. Thank you so much.

The Chair: Mr. Walcott, thank you so much for coming in and for the very easy to listen to presentation. You just presented it so winsomely, and it gives us a better picture, especially those of us who are not from Calgary. Thank you so much.

Mr. Walcott: I appreciate it. Good luck with the rest of your meeting.

The Chair: Thank you.

Our next and I believe last presenter is Mr. Malcolm Adams. Mr. Adams, please identify yourself, make sure you're unmuted, and tell us what electoral division you are in.

Mr. Adams: Yeah. Hi. Good evening, commissioners. I live in Calgary, Alberta, and I live in the Briar Hill area. I actually haven't looked on the map of which electoral division I'm in. I apologize.

The Chair: Okay. Ten minutes for presentation and then about five minutes for exchange and discussion and questions.

Mr. Adams: Okay. Super.

Do I put the slides up, or how do we proceed here?

The Chair: Oh, no. We will do that for you.

Mr. Adams: The slides I sent out included the notes. I'm the CEO of a tech company, so I haven't had tons of time to polish the presentation here, but I wanted to have the full content in for you.

My perspective is a little bit different maybe than some of the other ones you've seen. I don't know; I haven't seen those presentations. I believe there's a greater responsibility beyond just the provincial electoral reform. I'm hoping this process and the changes that can be made going forward will actually help also trigger some federal election justice for Alberta. What I mean by that, on slide 2, is the unfairness that's happened on the federal level. Just for some context, these are the shocking stats of Alberta right now: 3.2 million people had 37 seats in the federal election, where five provinces with roughly 300,000 less people got 46 seats.

9:25

You could say: why are you talking about federal election stuff? Well, it really comes down to – I tried to bring this up with an official from the UCP over a year ago. If you go to the next slide. So this is all about voting power. At the end of the day, in the last election the average Albertan had the least amount of voting power in this, quote, unquote, democratic Canada. You can see provinces in some cases are 1.2 all the way up to 13.3 times. I'm not really focused on the three territories – you know, I'm originally from New Brunswick – but there are provinces out there with over three times the voting power of Albertans.

That impact, you could say: so what? Well, when I brought this up, as I mentioned, with a senior UCP official over a year ago, his response was surprisingly honest. He said that we can't challenge federal representation imbalances because the UCP benefits from a similar imbalance of power provincially between rural and urban ridings. So the proverbial pot, you know, calling the kettle black is one of the reasons, I've been told, that Alberta is not challenging the fact that we're underrepresented in federal elections based on power.

If you go to the next slide: Is That Truly the Case?, this is my analysis of the 87 ridings. Black bars represent rural ridings, and yellow bars represent urban ridings. An easier way to see this would be to go to the next slide where I just take the smallest 10 ridings and the population in those ridings versus the largest ridings in Alberta. As you can see, the top 10 largest ridings are all urban, and the lowest 10 are all rural. Now, I understand this is based on the 87 seats, and there are two new seats coming in. By quick math and looking at the balances here, one of those should go to Calgary, one of those should go to Edmonton. In this case 420,000 people are voting in 10 elected officials, where it takes over 750,000 people in Alberta to elect 10.

If you go to the next slide. What that really means is that those 10 rural ridings have 1.8 times the voting power of the top 10 ridings. This is today's reality. This isn't, you know, taking projections of population growth. I'm no expert in which areas are going to see more population growth or not. This is just sort of the current reality.

Every day that we delay rebalancing, we're telling 334,000 Albertans in our largest ridings that their votes matter less than their neighbours. Of course, your mandate is to consider effective representation, but, once again, effective representation means more than just population balance. It means credibility. Like I said, you're not just redrawing maps for 89 constituencies; you're potentially unlocking Alberta's ability to stand up for our democratic justice federally. Once again, we can't do that if it's a pot calling the kettle black situation. My recommendation is that we need to fix our house first. Then we can demand Ottawa fixes theirs.

Observations and recommendations from the data that I looked at. Obviously, my first comment – and this is on the act,

beyond maybe the scope of what you guys are looking at, but, once again, I'm not sure of the recommendations you're putting in place. Letting the boundaries be redrawn every 8 to 10 years, or eight years at a minimum, in my opinion, is archaic. You know, predicting population changes 8 to 10 years out is like trying to predict what the price of oil is going to be in 2035. It's virtually impossible. You know that you're going to be wrong. My recommendation on that front is to do this every four years and match the election cycles and adapt faster to the population trends and changes that are going on in our province.

The second point, observation, is: why should democracy lag behind, for example, a ride-sharing app in technological sophistication? Like I said, I get it when it's years and years ago, and it's a very arduous task to rebalance boundaries, but in this day and age we can leverage AI and technology and open source tools. I have nothing to do with Uber, but Uber's hexagonal mapping, it's called, or H3 mapping, would allow with very little effort either the panel or others involved that do this work to balance out these boundaries and get a proper balance within the province. It can be done on a more dynamic basis. You know, someone with a few years of software engineering ability and the balances and using forward sortation areas could do this very fast for you guys. So that was my second recommendation, to lever the existing technology that's out there.

Going to the next slide. This is just an example, with some links in it, for those that are interested of exactly how – this is open source code. This is free code that people could use to create a more dynamic and sophisticated balancing system for Alberta.

Next slide. As I said, you know, in terms of the solution, getting to a sort of Olympic-style frequency, the benefits are a more responsive democracy.

Technological leadership. Alberta leads all kinds of industries right now in tech development. Why not lead the country in how we balance these things out? I've looked at the data, for example, in the federal election for the largest and smallest ridings in Ontario, and it's actually the opposite trend federally. Rural ridings have the largest populations per seat, where the urban ridings actually have the smallest populations, so that one is completely out of whack as well.

Finally, it provides federal credibility. You know, with balancing the Senate, we will actually gain the moral authority to demand Ottawa fix their 1985 Representation Act that has been disastrous for Alberta.

Of course, economic efficiency. Continuous small adjustments cost less than massive, decade-long disruptions.

Final slide. The point I'm trying to make is that, obviously, the stakes are higher than just drawing a couple of changes, you know, adding two or three, whether it's coming to the urban or potentially taking one away from the rural based on the percentages and numbers I've seen in the trends. Right now, in my opinion, the commission's work will determine whether Alberta continues accepting second-class status in Confederation federally or if Alberta has the opportunity to finally step up and have democratic credibility to demand equal treatment. Every riding you balance fairly strengthens our case against Ottawa's grandfather clauses and Maritime vote multipliers, or every imbalance we continue to live with undermines our federal arguments for the next decade.

Thank you very much. I'm happy to answer some questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Adams.

Questions? Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: I guess, yeah. I'm not quite sure. First off, I appreciate your presentation. I think one of the challenges, and perhaps Justice

Miller is better to explain this than I am, and the fundamental difference between Canadian and American is the one person, one vote versus what we call effective representation, which isn't to diminish, I think, your broader point that perhaps the situation we have now is not exactly, I imagine, in your opinion, entirely effective. But we do have in Canada the ability to have larger and smaller sort of constituencies within a range, basically plus or minus 25 per cent or, in up to 5 per cent of the constituencies, up to 50 per cent, just reflecting the vast geography that we deal with.

I guess maybe my question to you would be: how would you respond to a rural MLA, say, that says: "Listen, the entire top left-hand corner of Alberta is my constituency. It's larger than Germany. How do I deal?" There may only be a few tens of thousands of people who live in that area, but they still deserve representation, and there are other factors we ought to be considering. What would your response be to someone who would bring that up?

9:35

Mr. Adams: Yeah. No, that's obviously a fair question. Like I said, I've been diving into some of the math on that area piece because I went through and read the act lately here. I actually had someone send me the square kilometres of each of these ridings. As an example, Peace River – and you guys probably know this – but it's over 109,000 square kilometres and has a population of 43,700. Down below that, which is one obviously based on the new math of going to 89 ridings, Lesser Slave Lake, for example, is technically below that 50 per cent threshold even after you've got the new 89 ridings average of 54,929.

When I look at that in terms of representation, in my opinion, Lesser Slave Lake and Central Peace-Notley: those two actually should be combined into one riding. When you go down to the bottom of the list and look at what ridings are not represented based on the volume of seats – I'm just going to that right now. Got to get to the right slide here. Here we go.

Right now in Calgary, for example, when I did the math, three of the ridings have 233,000 people in them, which works out to over almost 78,000 per riding, which is 1.42 or 42 per cent obviously above that threshold of 25. Then, of course, Airdrie-Cochrane, when I look at the math quickly, is growing so quickly, and they're also underrepresented based on population.

The balancing for me, if it's actually 89, is that Calgary and Edmonton should each get one more seat, and the Lesser Slave Lake and Central Peace-Notley areas should be combined into one region, which would have a total square area similar to the square area of Peace River.

Dr. Martin: Yeah, thank you. Thanks for running all the numbers. We think about it a lot ourselves.

I wanted to bring to your attention something. You're assuming that AI could solve the problems of the distribution of numbers, but it cannot. You, I think, presume that a census is an empirical outcome, but they're not. There's no census ever created that is empirically accurate, which is part of our fundamental problem because it is necessary to find, first of all, census data that is evenly distributed across the working area, province, in this case, and that the data being deployed can be evaluated and refined and adjusted as all census material is. The minute, for example, a federal census is created, the demographers turn around and start assessing the probability factors of all the component parts that led to that outcome number. Building a census is more like making a sausage than pressing a computer button. That part of your argument – the professor in me can't help it – needs to be reassessed for certain assumptions that you're making about the direct application of AI.

A second point is that if those kinds of tools were available, you wouldn't need a commission, but then this is sociological, not mathematical. The act speaks very directly and pointedly to the need for, for example, plus 25 or minus 25 range, and then it speaks of a variety of other more sociological as well as geographical factors. The net effect is that the legislation envisions a patchwork quilt, not a uniformity, as being normative.

Thank you.

Mr. Evans: Mr. Adams, thank you for your presentation. Like Mr. Clark, my colleague, I have a question for you, and it relates to overlaying on your analysis the inequities that exist in terms of if you think about an electoral district like a country and the GDP of that country or even like a province and the GDP of that province compared to other provinces.

Let's say, Cold Lake, for example. The Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul electoral district has a population of 53,763 people but generates a GDP which is very significant. Some would say it's – and I don't know if this number is accurate, but it's one of the numbers that was tossed around – in excess of 80 per cent of the oil revenue in terms of tax revenue base that rolls through that electoral district, yet they don't receive in kind anything like that, you know, in reciprocation in terms of the benefits they receive from the province. How do you ameliorate that issue when looking at, from your perspective, one person, one vote and the power involved there?

Mr. Adams: Yeah. Like I said, you crunch the numbers on GDP per capita or GDP based on Alberta: yeah, we would have an outrageous – we should have way more seats in the federal government. I mean, it would be a huge number. The economy aside, once again, I'm just looking at the definition of what is democratic, and democratic, in my view, once again, is that it shouldn't matter where I live in Canada, or provincially it shouldn't matter where I live in Alberta. My vote as an individual, as a taxpayer, but also as just a citizen shouldn't be 1.8 times or one-third the power based on where I live in a province or where I live in the country even though I might work in a job that generates more revenue than someone else does. I don't equate economic power to democratic power.

Mr. Evans: I think that's what Ottawa says to us.

Mr. Adams: My analysis that I showed at the beginning has nothing to do with economics. It's purely based on population.

Mr. Evans: I understand that, but I don't know that we can discount economics. I don't know that we can discount a number of factors in terms of determining effective representation. Certainly, the act spells that out as does the Supreme Court of Canada's decision in the reference case that really is the foundation upon which we're operating.

Mr. Adams: Yeah. As I said, my point is that, in that 1985 act, that was done on purpose to give eastern provinces more power and to lock in their power and grandfather in the number of seats they should have regardless of population growth. It has nothing to do with economics, but in turn it does have an impact. Economics does have a factor in population growth.

The population in Newfoundland between 1976, when this all came in, and 2021 actually declined by 2 per cent because some of those people actually left and moved to Alberta, which grew by a population of 140 per cent. Once again, based on population, in some ways, the population growth is a bit of a proxy for the economic focus of where things are happening in a country. You

know, people are moving away from areas that don't provide jobs, and they're moving to areas of the country that do provide jobs.

At a baseline, once again, if you want to do it on GDP, yeah, the numbers are outrageous in terms of the power Alberta should have in the Parliament. I'm not saying that's the case. I'm saying that right now on a population basis we have 300,000 more people than five provinces in this country combined, and they have nine more seats than we do in Ottawa. You know, as I mentioned, the individual I met around the UCP said: we can't take this issue forward because we benefit from having smaller rural ridings in Alberta that typically vote UCP.

9:45

Mr. Evans: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Adams. Thank you for your presentation. You've obviously put a lot of time into it and have thought about this considerably, but I just want to touch on a couple of things where I don't want to be seen as talking past each other.

First of all, we are not an electoral reform commission, okay? We are an Electoral Boundaries Commission, so we have to stay in our lane and live by the terms in our legislative mandate. Secondly, every eight years; you may think it's archaic. That's what the legislation says. We'll get lots of arguments and complaints about changing too often. People don't like change too often. In fact, some people have said that maybe it should be every three elections.

You made reference to Ontario as well. It's my understanding that Ontario's provincial ridings are based on the federal boundaries, so I'm not sure if that makes any difference in your equation.

Most importantly, your suggestion is well made about the north, and that may very well be a solution. However, if we just looked at a map and we just looked at square kilometres and population, you know what? People have to drive on roads. People have to have access to things. It's not as easy as just collapsing it. Transportation is a big factor. We were just there last week, and we can tell you that transportation is a limiting factor.

One final comment. I would encourage you to look at the constitutional requirements of some of the ridings in eastern Canada. I believe Prince Edward Island is protected in that respect.

We've got enough to worry about. We don't want to be tasked with sending a message to Ottawa. I think I can say that on behalf of the commission. But it doesn't mean that what you say isn't valuable. In fact, maybe it should go to an Alberta legislative committee of some sort, many of your points.

Mr. Adams: I appreciate all those comments. I agree, not talking by any of them. I said that I didn't come here tonight to say that I've got the answers. I think you guys have a super tough job. I don't have all the answers in terms of how these boundaries are balanced out. The point I just wanted to have on the record because, like I said, my attempts to bring this forward to the Alberta government have gone nowhere. That's my point in terms of the Maritimes, P.E.I., and others. Like I said, it takes 35,000 people in P.E.I. to vote in an MP, and it takes over 80,000 people in Alberta to vote in an MP, right? Economics aside, that was a raw deal back in 1985. When we talk about being heard federally and being taken seriously federally and watching on election nights and realizing that even before the Alberta votes or the B.C. votes are in, CBC or CTV has already called the election and who the next government is when we're underrepresented, someone has to stand up for us at some point to do that.

I understand that's not the mandate of this electoral commission. I understand, and I appreciate that, but that's what I just wanted to

have on the record because I don't know who else to talk to about this.

The Chair: Okay. Well, I'm sure there's a legislative committee somewhere that you could raise this with, but thank you so much, Mr. Adams. Like I said, we all agree that you put a lot of time into your presentation. You also have the distinction of being the very final presenter for our public hearings.

Mr. Adams: Yeah. I'm the last one.

The Chair: Thank you so much for closing us out this way. Good night.

Mr. Adams: All right. Thank you, everyone.

Mrs. Samson: Thank you.

[The hearing adjourned at 9:50 p.m.]

